

## I. Introduction

- Open up to 1 Corinthians 14, pg. 1220

A. Discovered this week that Compass app on my iPhone is a compulsive liar.

1. It actually tells me that north is south and south is north!
2. But I discovered why. My case has a magnet in it so the iPhone gets confused because there's something other than magnetic north that is closer to it and has a stronger pull.

B. I think that people who follow Jesus are often in this same predicament. We love God and we want to become like Jesus, but we have brokenness and selfishness in us that distort our "magnetic north."

C. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul describes in no uncertain terms what the Christ-follower's magnetic north is. It is LOVE. Love that is self-giving, love that is humble, and love that BUILDS UP those who are around you.

D. LOVE must govern EVERYTHING we do. And not just any kind of love but love that is defined by Jesus.

1. And so now, Chapter 14 is the "lab portion" for Chapter 13.
2. Paul uses a problem very relevant to the church in Corinth and shows them how to govern that problem with LOVE.

## II. Background

A. The Corinthian church was having some issues with how they were using spiritual gifts when they came together to worship, especially the gift of tongues.

B. Very excited about the miraculous gifts; using the gift of tongues to the detriment of other gifts and to the detriment of the mission of the church

C. If Paul would have written chapter 14 to us, he probably wouldn't have addressed the use of this particular gift, but HOW he addresses this gift for the Corinthians still sheds profound light on how love plays itself out in OUR church.

D. Before we dig into the passage, I want to give some definitions so we're all on the same page with what Paul is referring to when he talks about tongues and prophecy. These definitions are by no means exhaustive.

## III. Definitions

A. Tongues: a spiritual gift that allows a person to speak to God and also for the benefit of others in a language that they have not learned.

1. Acts 2 ... feast of Pentecost
2. The Holy Spirit's use of tongues had a **UNIFYING effect**.
3. But now, here in the church at Corinth this gift of tongues was being used in a way that was having the exact *opposite* effect: confusion and division.

B. Prophecy: a spiritual gift that allows a person to receive a message of truth from God and then deliver it to God's people for their understanding, encouragement, repentance, transformation, etc.

1. Not just foretelling the future. (though this is also possible)

2. Old Testament Prophets spent most time: Reminding and calling to repentance
3. In the church, prophecy is a gift that some have to, through God's written Word and even direct communication from the Holy Spirit, receive truth and give truth in a way that instructs, warns, and matures the people of the church.
4. And because humans are not infallible, Paul writes later in verse 29 of this very same chapter that when someone prophesies, the others should "weigh what is said."
5. NOTE: We westerners tend to get very squeamish about the more "miraculous" gifts we see in Scripture and have a tendency to de-supernaturalize life with God, even to the extent that some teach that the miraculous spiritual gifts are no longer given.
  - a. Christ Follower: I want to remind you of the supernatural nature of *everything* you believe. (God, talking snake, virgin-born God-man, healing, raised from the dead)
  - b. I mean no disrespect for those who, by careful study of God's Word, have come to the conclusion that the miraculous gifts have faded away. Very Godly people have come to this conclusion.
  - c. But we, as a church, don't see how this stance is biblically justified.
  - d. We believe that ALL of the gifts seen in the New Testament are still in effect and ***to the degree that the Holy Spirit chooses.***

IV. So with all that said, let's listen to our Father's words to us.

1 Corinthians 14:1-5

Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

<sup>2</sup>For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. <sup>3</sup>On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

<sup>4</sup>The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself [not a bad thing!], but the one who prophesies builds up the church [a better thing!]. <sup>5</sup>Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.

- A. These verses have a very simple but profound truth: In the church, because of LOVE, the things we do that build people up are the most important.
  1. This defines our family values.
  2. STORY: Teaching kids our family values (take care of people who are smaller and weaker), bully at school, water bottle/threat
  3. So what are the family values in the church? Here at CrossPoint? What guides our motives, decisions and actions? In other words, what is our magnetic north?

## **B. LOVE IS OUR MAGNETIC NORTH**

1. Since the very first sin, we've lived in a world that has been preaching a false Gospel that lives on two opposite ends of the spectrum.
  - a. Spectrum 1: You do you. If you want something, take it! If you hate something, destroy it! Expressing who you are as an individual in exactly the way that seems right to you is the highest value, *even if it means hurting another*.
  - b. Spectrum 2: SADLY, many in the church have fought this false Gospel with an opposite and yet still false response: That who you are and how God made you as an individual is of no importance. Step in line, be like everyone else and do the things you see everyone else in the church doing in the same way.
2. The brilliance of what Paul teaches in this passage is that it honors BOTH God's individual design of you AND God's design for the church to walk in love!
  - a. v. 5 "Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy."
  - b. The answer to the excesses and misuses of our individual design is NOT to throw it out.
  - c. The answer is to govern it by the law of LOVE.
  - d. Be WHO God made you *for the benefit of WHO God gave you to*. His family!

### **1 Corinthians 14:6-12**

<sup>6</sup>Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I *benefit you* unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? <sup>7</sup>If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? <sup>8</sup>And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? <sup>9</sup>So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. <sup>10</sup>There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, <sup>11</sup>but if I do not know the meaning of the language, *I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me*. <sup>12</sup>So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to *excel in building up the church*. <sup>13</sup>Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. <sup>14</sup>For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. <sup>15</sup>What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. <sup>16</sup>Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? <sup>17</sup>For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. <sup>18</sup>I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. <sup>19</sup>Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

3. When chaos and confusion are present, love and care have a hard time finding a voice.

- a. Story: in office with girls, Emily screams, runs down hall, “Choking!”
  - b. But in the Corinthian context, speaking in tongues in the gathered church setting was causing confusion and zero clarity in what God was saying.
  - c. It made people who would otherwise feel connected and close feel like “foreigners” to each other.
  - d. So Paul’s answer is: When you come together, choose LOVE by pushing “pause” on one way God has individually gifted you and INSTEAD, speak to each other and to God in a way that *all can join in with you*.
  - e. I find it so interesting that Paul says he speaks in tongues more than any of them! *Validates* the gift while *governing* the gift.
4. Bottom line message is not tongues, it’s *unity through love*: **When you come together, it’s not about you!**
- a. And yet, while saying “it’s not about you”, he’s also honoring and encouraging the reality and individuality of WHO GOD MADE YOU.
  - b. **We don’t leave our unique SELF at the door.**
  - c. **We leave our SELFISHNESS at the door.**
5. **You are NOT the intended recipient of these gifts. The people of the CHURCH are the intended recipients of our gifts. The gift is given to the church THROUGH YOU.**

<sup>20</sup> Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. <sup>21</sup> In the Law it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.” <sup>22</sup> Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. <sup>23</sup> If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? <sup>24</sup> But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, <sup>25</sup> the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

- a. From a surface reading of this passage, Paul’s logic doesn’t seem clear. It sounds like he’s saying, “Tongues are a sign that benefits unbelievers so don’t do it in front of them because they’ll think you’re crazy!” But that’s not what’s going on here.
- b. Paul quotes the OT passage of Isaiah 28
  - 1) Context: God is rebuking Israel for long-term, unrepentant rebellion.
  - 2) I warned you over and over that if you won’t repent, I’ll allow foreign nations to invade you and rule over you.
  - 3) So, since you won’t listen to me in your native language, I’m going to discipline you through people who don’t speak your language.
  - 4) When you find yourself surrounded by the confusion of people ruling over you in a foreign language, that will be a sure sign to you that you’ve been operating in unbelief, in faithlessness.

- c. And so Paul is using this OT passage to warn the church in Corinth:
    - 1) Just like God's people in the OT, when you as a church look around and see that you're marked by selfishness, and the confusion that ensues from that, you too will have a sign that you're not operating in faith and love.
    - 2) Tongues is a GOOD THING! But if it is used in a way that causes confusion, that is a sign, not only to you, but also to unbelievers looking in, that you've crossed a line and *shouldn't be trusted*.
    - 3) The word that is translated "out of your minds" was often used in other literature of that day to describe the ecstatic gibberish "raving" you'd see in a pagan temple of that day.
      - a) People would get drunk at the temple to Dionysius (or some other god), and they'd all be speaking unintelligibly, assuming that they had connected with the divine and were operating on a higher plane.
      - b) So Paul is in essence saying, "If you are all speaking in tongues at the same time, without control, an unbeliever will come in and simply say, "I've seen this before. They're no different than the other people at the temple down the road."
      - c) WE MUST BE DIFFERENT. And the difference is not having an air of superiority, not making a list of rules that everyone is to follow.
- 6. The main difference is how we LOVE.**
- a. When the church operates in love, it's not only believers who are benefitted.
  - b. I have yet to find a person to whom genuine love is not relevant.
  - c. So when a person who is seeking answers to life comes in to THIS church, above all, what they must see and experience is us giving ourselves away to others, us laying down our rights for others. They must see Christ's love IN US.
7. Questions for conversation in groups:
- a. What are the ways I choose self over love on a regular basis?
  - b. What are the signs that the expression of my own gifts and uniqueness are out of balance with loving those around me?
  - c. How am I uniquely designed and gifted by God to build up the church family? (This may be best answered by the others in your group!)



**GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER** (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

- 1** How has love for others been a guiding and unifying value in your life?
- 2** What is something you are really good at? This might be a talent, ability, technical skill, or other gifting. Share with the group. Have you ever used this gift to help someone else? What was that like?

Within a group of people of any size, there are likely many skills and abilities represented both professionally and personally. The church at Corinth was no different. The people possessed many gifts, but some were selfishly exalting their own preferences and the use of certain gifts. This was causing disruption and disorder in their worship. Paul wrote to remind them that their gifts were not primarily for them, but for others. When the church gathers for worship, the purpose should always be to exalt God and build them up together with love being our “magnetic north” or our guiding value.

**QUICK REVIEW** (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY’S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week’s teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

**DIG DEEPER** (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY’S MESSAGE)

**What comes to mind when you think about spiritual gifts like prophecy and speaking and interpreting tongues? Are your thoughts on these gifts based on experience, religious tradition, second-hand stories, or Scripture?**

There are a variety of opinions on the use and practice of “charismatic” gifts. The people in the church at Corinth continued to struggle with practicing spiritual gifts, particularly the more sensational gifts of prophecy and tongues. Paul wrote to help them see the real purpose of these gifts.

- 1** Someone read **1 Corinthians 14:1-5**

*<sup>1</sup> Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.<sup>2</sup> For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. <sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. <sup>4</sup> The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.<sup>5</sup> Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.*

**What is the connection between love and the gifts God gives for us to use, so the church can be built up?**

**Why does Paul say prophecy is superior to tongues? What is the purpose of both of these gifts? How were both of these gifts used to build up the church?**

## 2 Someone read **1 Corinthians 14:6-19**

<sup>6</sup> Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? <sup>7</sup> If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? <sup>8</sup> And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? <sup>9</sup> So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. <sup>10</sup> There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, <sup>11</sup> but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. <sup>12</sup> So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. <sup>14</sup> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. <sup>15</sup> What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. <sup>16</sup> Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? <sup>17</sup> For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. <sup>18</sup> I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. <sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

**In verses 6-11, Paul provides a series of metaphors to explain the use of tongues in the church. What are they and how do they help you understand this gift?**

**Who are the intended recipients of spiritual gifts? Why is this important to understand?**

**Why should tongues always be interpreted? What happens if they are not?**

Even though the Corinthians were misusing the gifts, Paul did not suggest they quit using them entirely. Instead he encouraged them to eagerly desire the gifts. However, Paul did provide some helpful direction and boundaries for the Corinthians. For Paul, prophecy was preferable because it builds others up. Tongues, when not interpreted, only strengthen the individual, not the Gospel community. Paul commended the Corinthians for seeking these manifestations of the Spirit, but reminded them that public worship is not about them and their preferences.

## 2 Someone read **1 Corinthians 14:20-25**

<sup>20</sup> Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. <sup>21</sup> In the Law it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.” <sup>22</sup> Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. <sup>23</sup> If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? <sup>24</sup> But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, <sup>25</sup> the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

Among the Corinthians' problems was their desire to selfishly use unexplained tongues in their worship gatherings. Whereas prophecy communicates a clear message to all who listen, tongues provide a message that is only understood by the speaker. Paul offered them strong words to get them to see the effect their self-centered worship had on outsiders.

**Paul referred to the Corinthians as children. What did the Corinthians' insistence on speaking in tongues with no interpretation reveal about their maturity?**

**What did Paul mean when he said tongues are for unbelievers, but prophecy is for believers?**

### **LIVE IT OUT** (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

- 1** What are the ways that I choose self over love on a regular basis?
- 2** What are the signs that the expression of my own gifts and uniqueness are out of balance with loving those around me?
- 3** How am I uniquely designed and gifted by God to build up the church family?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Thank God for gifting His church to do the work of ministry. Ask Him to help us use the gifts He has given each of us to help others grow. Pray that our worship services would honor God and help point unbelievers to the truth of His Son, Jesus.

### **NEXT WEEK'S MESSAGE SCRIPTURE**

#### **1 Corinthians 14:26-40**

Prepare for next week's message and group discussion by reading through this passage a few times this week and write down any insights or questions you have before meeting with your home group.

### **PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS** (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to record down the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

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#### **How to Use this Discussion Guide**

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and living like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content during your group discussion or to hit on all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your grow in Gospel community.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit [cpmodesto.org/groupleaders](http://cpmodesto.org/groupleaders) to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit [cpmodesto.org/homegroups](http://cpmodesto.org/homegroups) and use the Home Group Finder!

**14:1-4.** Paul valued prophecy over unexplained language (“different kinds of languages” implies that these were human languages). Utterance gifts should be exercised only for the edification and exhortation of others. The phrase “no one understands him” refers to the uselessness of unexplained language for the corporate body. The phrase “in the Spirit” probably refers to the rational faculties of a person (i.e., “in his spirit”) rather than to the Holy Spirit.

**14:5.** Paul discouraged unexplained languages within the church by declaring the supremacy of prophecy for the edification of the church.

**14:6-19.** Paul uses a variety of illustrations to teach that speaking in tongues without an interpretation does not build up others, indicating that building up comes through understanding.

**14:11.** Just as a foreigner is estranged by those speaking a language he does not know, so too members of the body of Christ become estranged from one another if unintelligible, untranslatable languages are spoken in the church.

**14:13-19.** This section includes an apostolic ruling in which Paul declares the necessity of intelligible language over untranslatable languages for edification of the church body.

**14:14.** The comparison between “my spirit” and “my mind” shows that Paul is not speaking of the Holy Spirit but of his own human spirit. When Paul uses the term “spirit” of human beings, he means an inner, invisible faculty that can be especially attuned to the things of God (see 2:10–15; 5:3–5; Rom. 1:9; 8:16). “Mind” refers to the human faculty connected with intellectual understanding (1 Cor. 14:19; 1:10).

**14:16-17.** “with your spirit.” That is, with your spirit only (in tongues) but not understanding with your mind (see note on v. 2). “outsider.” An interested inquirer into Christianity (see vv. 23–24). Uninterpreted tongues in the assembly do nothing to build this person up and therefore nothing to move him or her toward a full commitment to Christ.

**14:20.** Paul is going to tell them not to speak in tongues in church without interpretation, for that is acting like children and not caring for the needs of others.

**14:21-25.** Drawing on Isaiah 28:11-12, Paul states that unexplained earthly languages serve as a sign of God’s impending “strange work” of judgment to unbelievers (see Isa. 28:11,21). In Isaiah 28, the leaders of Judah rejected as unintelligible nonsense Isaiah’s message that would have given Jerusalem rest from their enemies. Paul warned the Corinthians that practicing other languages carelessly would be harmful to uninformed visitors and unbelievers. Churchwide prophesying, however, would serve to convict and convert visitors.