

Gifted 2, Tongues and Prophecy, 1 Corinthians 14:1– 40

Announcements:

- Love our church
- Everything we do is about the gospel
- We know the gospel sends us outward to take peace and blessing; why we ask all our small groups to be involved
- When I say, “everything is about the gospel,” I don’t mean that we use this tutoring as a subtle way to force awkward evangelism conversations into the mix. See how these numbers add up? You know what else is adding up? Your sins before God.
- We don’t serve to convert; we serve because we are converted. Love and generosity. **1 Peter 3:15**

Introduction:

You ready? Week 2 of spiritual gifts; we’re going to look at tongues and prophecy. Good bit controversial. I’m not going to lie to you—our pastoral team is pretty nervous about this week. Great thing: I get on a **plane tonight to London...**

People in our church are all over the map on this. There are some who have taken what the Bible teaches about these things and gone way beyond it; and there are those of you who, in reaction to that, have gone beyond what the Bible says by denying the presence of these things altogether.

- In other words, there is the error of embracing more than what the Bible says; then the error of not embracing as much as the Bible says.

Good news: God’s word contains everything God intended to say upon this matter. God is not up in heaven wishing He’d been clearer. He’s not like, “Oh, no... they’re confused... I wish I could go back and add this, clear this up... wait until the 2nd edition of my Bible comes out, I’ll clean all this up.

Listen: **There is a lack of hard and fast clarity when it comes to this issue, and I think that is intentional.** God wants us to be open to anything God chooses to do in this area; but He leaves us clear parameters so that we can know when it’s Him doing it.

Now, a little perspective: there’s generally 4 positions when it comes to spiritual gifts like tongues and prophecy:

1. **Cessationist:** gifts (like prophecy, tongues and healings) have ceased
2. On the other end is the **Pentecostal** position: i.e. the gifts are in full operation, and normative for every Christian, and if you are not using them there is something wrong with you, and you need to fix it, or start faking it.
3. **The charismatic: which is that** these gifts are in existence, and part of the normal ministry operations of the church, but not everyone has them.
4. Then there’s a 4th position that **doesn’t really have a name**, but believes that the gifts have **not** ceased, but that most of the ways the gifts are being used today is not really biblical... or helpful.

That’s what we are: why I say we are **charismatics with seatbelt.**

We’re not the kind of church where the **husband and wife are co-pastors** and she has hair the size of Texas and looks like she lost a paintball gun war; and I’ve got a coiffed, charis-mullet haircut.

We don’t smack people on the head so that they fall down and flop on the ground like a **perch on the dock.** (to my knowledge, I’ve never done that...)

We don't have **vans with flames** coming down the sides and the terms **Holy Ghost, anointed, revival, dominion, rain, fire, or Shekinah glory** written in stencil on the sides.

People don't routinely **pull a hammie** during our worship services... and we don't give out **tambourines with ribbons** or banners to fly during service; running lanes built around the sanctuary.

But SUMMIT: I want us to be open to all the Bible tells us the Spirit might be doing, but I also want us to do it in the way the Spirit said He would do it.

With that in mind, **1 CORINTHIANS 14:**

I'm going to just go verse by verse through this chapter.

*How many of you are willing for the word of God to challenge you on this? I'm going to try to take this stuff exactly as is written, and not go beyond it. (**Transcripts are** available online with voluminous footnotes, word studies, etc).*

Prayer: not a STUDY; but to change the culture of our church!

1 Cor 14:1–40

[1] Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. [2] 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.

- Definition of tongues: a “form of prayer and praise you express to God in a language you do not understand.”¹ See where it says, “**tongues are spoken to God?**”
- Let me show you a few examples in Scripture. (Just listen)

Acts 2:1–11

¹ Grudem, *Bible Doctrines*, 421.

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. [2] And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. [3] And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

[5] Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. [6] And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in **his own language**.

[7] And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? [8] And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? [11] —we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

- These were other human languages; they were unknown to the speaker, but known to somebody

[12] And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” [13] But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

[14] But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. [15] For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

- Peter is like, “It’s only 9am; these people are not drunk.” Maybe Peter should have known that doesn't stop everyone. You know who you are. You had your breakfast beer this morning.

[16] But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: [17] “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your

daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;

Acts 10:44–45

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. [45] And the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. [46] For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.

- How did they know? I wonder if they were speaking Hebrew.

And there are a few other places...

Tongues, where they praise God in a language not their own, is being given to these people as a sign that God is bringing them into his family; that God was including these non-Jewish groups in the Kingdom.

That's important; we'll come back to these, but let's keep reading.

[3] On the other hand, the one who *prophesies* speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

- OK, so let's talk about prophecy for a minute. I told you last week that prophecy is speaking God's word into a situation. This takes 3 major forms in the Bible:
 - The first is just **preaching**. What I do each week. When I take the word of God and explain and apply it to you. It's more than just explaining the word of God (you could read a commentary for that); it is God giving me spiritual insight and spiritual timing. It's proclaiming the Word of God with power into your lives. This is the predominant form.²

² This is the proper balance of preaching! Some gravitate to rigid exegesis, and their preaching is devoid of Spirit-living application

- **Wisdom**: insight into an issue where you don't have a chapter and verse.
- **Knowledge** (John 4; You're going to see it down in 1 Cor 14:25). Knowing about a situation; knowing just what to say.³
- The thing that you have to know about the last two is that they don't take on the weight of Scripture.⁴ When I stand up here and say, "This is what God's word says," that takes on a whole different weight than someone saying, "I think God might be leading you to this..."
 - Last week we saw that one of the gifts was the interpretation of spirits. That is a gift to help interpret what and where God is really leading it. You'd never do that to the Bible. Nobody in here has the gift to say, "That verse is wrong; that verse is right."
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:20–21**, Paul says, "*Do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast to what is good.*" Weigh it out.
 - Paul would never say that about his own writings. They were God's words. His MO was "**I'm an Apostle...**" Moses, Paul wrote stuff down from God and it became Scripture that we read for thousands of years. You have an impression from God and write it down and we skim through it an email and delete it.
 - **14:36**, Paul says that even with all these words of wisdom and knowledge the Holy Spirit is giving to them, "the word of God did not come from you." And by "word of God" he means Scripture. So, he makes a distinction.
- Words of knowledge and wisdom are supernatural insights God brings to mind, but they do not take on the level of

to the congregation. Others try to be in tune with the Spirit but do not do the work in exegesis. The best preaching combines BOTH.

³ For more on this, see John Piper, "When Will Prophecy Cease?" <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/90/031890.html>

⁴ For an excellent discussion of this, see D. A. Carson, 160–65. Carson starts with Grudem. Though ultimately sympathetic to Grudem, Carson critiques his position.

Scripture. You report them in your own words, which means they can have errors.⁵

- **Here's a biblical example: Acts 21:10** tells us a disciple named Agabus who "told Paul, through the Spirit, that Jews would deliver him into the hands of the Roman rulers."⁶

Wayne Grudem points out that Agabus was mostly correct, though not entirely. It was the Romans who bound Paul, not the Jews; the Jews did not deliver Paul, but tried to kill him.

"The prediction was not far off, but it had inaccuracies in detail that would have called into question the validity of any Old Testament prophet... This is exactly the kind of fallible prophecy that would fit the definition of New Testament congregational prophecy—'reporting in ones own words something God has spontaneously brought to mind.'"

- Paul expects every NT congregation, every small group to be filled with this gift. "Your sons and daughters will prophesy."
- Just like in the OT there was a special class of priests; but in the NT everyone became priests; well, in the OT there were a special class of prophets; in the NT, every congregation is filled with prophets.
- So here are a few ground rules for **giving it**:
 - **You should never, ever, ever claim the authority of God when you speak.** When people say that to me, "God says this!" I wonder, "How do I respond?" Unless you have a verse of Scripture, don't say that to me. Say something like this, "I think God might have put this on my heart." God has used people in my life a lot to guide me, encourage me.
 - **It's always best when tied to Scripture.** *When you speak a word from yourself, I cannot be sure it's coming from God.* When it is from the Scripture, I have no doubts.⁷

⁵ Grudem, 408.

⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 411.

⁷ Whenever Paul is talking in the epistles, he gives more authority to teaching than to "prophesying." Paul tells Timothy to preach the Word, not give prophecies. Paul told the Thessalonians to hold fast

- **You should use it for the purposes given:** (vs. 3) upbuilding; encouragement; consolation. I remember a Christian leader several years ago saying a 900-foot Jesus telling people that unless they raised 20 million dollars God would kill him. *Not seeing that as upbuilding...*
- Here's a few ground rules for **receiving it**:
 - **Ask:** *Does it contradict what God has said clearly elsewhere?* God told me to divorce my wife. Really? God told you that his word doesn't apply to you in a certain area? I'm sorry, I'm going to need to see that in writing with a notified signature.
 - **Ask:** *Does it accord with what God is doing in your life?* (Girl who tells guy that God has told her they are to get married.)
 - **Ask:** *Does it glorify God or the prophet?*⁸
- **Summit:** We need more of this. Where you are not just praying "to God" but "with God." Where I'm not just preaching about God but "with God." If you're having trouble with this, just ask this. Do you believe God leads and guides you through His Spirit? Do you believe He can place thoughts into your mind and heart as you pray? Do you believe there is a God who lives and moves through the church? That's all we're talking about. You may not have known what to call it, but that's all this is, to varying degrees.

But, let's keep moving...

[5] Now I want you all to speak in tongues,

- Paul is for more intimacy with the Spirit; more interaction with the Spirit. There's nothing, he says, about your interaction with the Spirit I would not desire you to have. In other words, I wish you had every spiritual gift ever known to man.

to the teachings they had been taught by the Apostles. 1 Tim 4:11, 6:2; 2 Thess. 2:15

⁸ These 3 questions from sermon by John Mark Comer on 1 Cor 14.

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.

- Remember... what was the purpose of the gifts? To make you feel close to God? Was that it? To build up the church.
- That's why I told you 1 Cor 13 is between 1 Cor 12 and 14. 1 Cor 13 is the great love chapter, and it comes between 1 Cor 12 and 14, the two spiritual gift chapters, and that's not accidental. Paul wasn't just throwing that in there so you could have something to read in your weddings. Love *for others* was to be the basis for how all the spiritual gifts were used!

[6] 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?

- If nobody understands what you're saying, how could that be building them up?

Then he gives 3 great illustrations of this:

[7] If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?

- Go back to my elementary music school days: Music needs 3 things to be "music." Rhythm; harmony; melody
- "syncopated"

[8] And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?

- That's kind of important, isn't it? You are in battle, and you hear a trumpet. You need to know if that means go forward, or pull back. If half of you hear it and go forward, and half of you hear it and go back... this is bad.

[9] 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. [10] There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, [11] 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.

- Foreigner: barbarian. Word that the Romans used for all foreigners because their language sounded like bar-bar-bar... like blah-blah-blah.
- Me with Indonesian

[12] So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

- What were they to seek for? Very important. For gifts that build up the body!

[13] Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. [14] For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. [15] 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.

- Paul is saying, "Even with me. If I am praying with my spirit but not my mind, I'm not really doing myself that much good." So I'd rather pray and sing with my spirit AND my mind.

[16] 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?

[17] For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up.

- If in worship you holler out in a tongue, what good is that doing? Is anyone being brought along? But if you say, "God you are good and my glorious Savior!" I have been brought along into your praise; I have been edified.

[18] I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.

- Remember, the Corinthians think they are really spiritual because they think they have these Spiritual X-men superhero gifts. Paul is like, "Just for the record, I've got you all beat."

- Some were even claiming, 1 Cor 13:1, to speak in “the tongues of angels.” What’s your spiritual gift? “I speak angel.”
- Paul is like, “For the record. I’ve got you all beat. I speak in more tongues than all of you... and that’s when **I’m NOT writing Bible, taking trips up into the 3rd heaven or bringing people back from the dead with my hanky.** So even if you do speak with the tongue of an angel I’ve got you beat! BOOM. Roasted.

[19] Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

- 10K is highest number in Greek; often meant to say “infinity.” Would rather speak 5 words, “Jesus in My Place, Amen” than an infinity of words in a tongue.
- In other words... Paul is saying, “I am the most gifted, but look how I am using my gifts! To serve.” He essentially says, ‘I would never speak in tongues in church.’ That is why Paul will not permit unintelligibility in the church.⁹ Does no one any good!

[20] Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.

- The Corinthians were immature. What sound do babies make? They talk in nonsense, like the Corinthians. Paul is making a play on words there.
- They thought their gift **elevated** them above others; **made them feel** close to God. Paul says, “That is NOT mature.” Maturity is when you find your identity in the gospel and use your gift to serve others.
- **Maturity is when the finished work of Christ on the cross makes you feel close to God.** The gospel is... speaking in tongues doesn’t make you closer. Having all the spiritual gifts; even living a perfect life; YOU COULD NOT GET ANY CLOSER TO GOD THAN YOU ARE IN CHRIST. And

when you see that, you pour your gifts out for others the way Jesus poured His out for you.”

Vs. 21: Now, listen, this is very important. Paul is about to give you a teaching to make you mature:

[21] 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.” [22] Thus tongues are a sign

- “Tongues are a sign.” They had a point.

...not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers.

- Who was the sign for? Unbelievers. **Question: What kind (of unbelievers) were they a sign for?**
- Vs. 21, “by people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners.” A quote from **Isaiah 28:11–12.**
- Tongues were a sign that to unbelieving Jews that the gospel was not just for them, but for the whole world.¹⁰
- Tower of Babel/Gen 12—God was not to be worshipped in any tongue, only the Hebrew tongue—the Jews had grown accustomed to Hebrew being the language that God’s word came in/Jump forward to Revelation 5, where we see a great throng of people from every tribe and tongue/Acts 2 is a mile marker on the way to that. We are on the road to the salvation of the world in Rev 5.
- And note this: they are a sign of *judgment*. They are not even really a positive sign.
 - Signs can be positive and negative, right? The 10 plagues, were they signs of liberation or judgment? Depends on if you are Moses or Pharaoh!
- They are positive in the sense that Gentiles not get the gospel; but they are a sign of judgment on those 1st century Jews that rejected the gospel. 1st century Jews wouldn’t

⁹ D.A. Carson on the Gospel Coalition.

¹⁰ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology*, 228–30.

listen to God in the Hebrew tongue, so God was showing He was now speaking to people of other tongues.

- That's the purpose of tongues. They were a sign of judgment and the new frontier of the gospel. This is very important, and we'll come back to that.

[23] 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?

- Isn't that what happens when you go into a place and they are all speaking in tongues, people yelling out... *"Uhh... you people have lost your mind. I can see this on cable. Why did I come to this place?"*

[24] But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, [25] 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.

- This is the kind of place we want to be. Where God is alive and working in the church and people cannot deny the power and insight and answers to prayer that the Spirit works within us.
- In a skeptical place, this has a power of persuasion our arguments don't.

[26] What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. (ready) Let all things be done for building up. [27] If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. [28] But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

- If there is no interpreter present, then keep your tongue to yourself.
- ~~Of course, if you have google translator on your phone, you could try typing it in to see if anything comes up: "shamma-lamma-ryah-ton."~~

- What you notice is that tongues are not ecstatic, where you get taken over and can't control yourself. They are self-controlled.
- **Write that down:** "Tongues are not ecstatic, but self-controlled."¹¹

[29] Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. [30] If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. [31] For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged,

- Now: this takes on a different form in a church our size. **In my experience an open mic and a large crowd is like having fly paper for the wrong people.** If I say, "Hey, who's got something to say to everyone?"
 - Believe me. I could tell you some stories: 'I've been lusting for some of you!'
 - I don't mean to offend you, but if it does... you are probably the wrong person. We love that person; they are part of the family; but our size means that we pursue some of these things with a few considerations a smaller group doesn't.
- **For the most part, this happens better on the small group level, which is reason #453 for you to be in a small group. But we are doing certain things even in the large group to encourage this.**
 - **EXAMPLE:** having people speak Scriptures God lays on their heart in a worship service.
 - **THE POINT: MORE THAN JUST ME!**
- What we do in here ought to be reflective of what happens on the small group level; what happens on the small group level ought to be reflective of what is happening in your own private time with God. As the group changes, so do the parameters of freedom.

[32] and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

¹¹ Grudem, 421.

- Again, this shows it is not an uncontrollable urge or possession. **Your eyes don't roll back in your head and go into a trance** and you say, "THUS SAYS THE LORD..." It's very normalized. It's when you put into your own words, under your own control, what God has supernaturally brought to mind.

[33] For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

[39] So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.

[40] But all things should be done decently and in order.

There is a balance: freedom in the Spirit; and decency and order. I think that we, Summit Church, have the decency and order thing down pat. We've got bulletins and orders-of-worship and counting-down-time-clocks. We could use a little more freedom in the spirit. **We don't want to lose verse 40; we want to gain vs. 39.**

Which leads me to the first of a handful of conclusions I want to make for you about this topic:

Conclusions:

1. **Our church services should be characterized much more by interaction with the Spirit than they are (14:25-26)**
 - Worship service is when 3 things are present in abundance: word of God; Spirit of God; people of God
 - We are so afraid of violating 1 Cor 14:40 we don't allow freedom.
 - We need a living God at work in our church! These spiritual gifts of all kinds show that God is living and full of redemption and love. Gifts like prophecy, and tongues and miracles, can authenticate the gospel in someone's life; they can give help to someone who is struggling; they demonstrate God's generosity and power; they can make

the church fear God more.¹² **Romans 8:1; John 3:16; Isaiah 49:15-16**

- Most Christians function like deists. There's a God up there we'll answer for, but we have no interaction with Him in the here and now. He just gave us a book of stuff to believe and a set of ways to behave and a list of stuff to be working on while He's gone. Jesus said, "I'm going away to heaven, but I'm come back to move in and through you in the person of the Holy Spirit."
 - It's about communion with the living God. **Living God who communicates his love real people with real pain in real time.**
2. **We each should come to church with something to give (14:26)** I talked about this last week. Each of you should come with the Spirit, ready to worship; ready to share what He puts in on your heart. What makes for a Spirit-filled service? A great sermon? The band playing all the best songs? The Spirit comes in with you.
 3. **We should not forbid to speak in tongues (14:36)** Some of you might wish we would, but Paul tells us directly not to do that. I'm part of a denomination that does that in some ways, and it is sin. That's where I'm saying you'd gone beyond the Bible... God left a lack of clarity on purpose. Don't need to fill it in! He has no regrets!
So, if you do that in how you worship God and pray, I am not the one to judge it. I will, however, insist you abide by the rules Paul lays down in 1 Cor 14 as it relates to worship, but I am not going to forbid you to speak in tongues in a worship service or discourage you in your private prayer time.
 4. **Not all Christians speak in tongues (12:30)** The idea that this the indispensable mark of receiving the gospel is not true. Paul says it directly.
 5. **The primary purpose of tongues is to signify the spread of the gospel into non-Jewish peoples (14:21-22)**

¹² Acts 2:42-47; Grudem, 405.

- The primary purpose of a tongue is not a private prayer language where the Spirit makes you feel close to God. **You got the BLOOD OF JESUS for that.** ~~I showed you a few weeks ago that the verse people always appeal to to prove that, Romans 8:26, can't mean that; secondly, that's not what Paul says the purpose of the gift of tongues is.~~
 - Tongues are a sign of the gospel for unbelievers (vs. 22) specifically unbelieving Jews. Paul says, plainly, that they are not a sign for *believers*, but for *unbelievers*. When someone tells me their private prayer time is filled with tongues, I always want to ask, "How many unbelieving Jews are present?"
 - On that note, I am a little skeptical at the services where people are speaking in tongues and someone else is interpreting. I just wonder how many unbelieving Jews are present, who were one of the main foci of why the gift was given. Not saying it couldn't happen, just curious.
 - **Illustration: I know of a guy** who attended a charismatic church and in order to fit in he just read part of the Greek NT. A person beside him started interpreting something that was completely off from what he was reading in the Gospel of John.¹³
 - So, I don't believe everything.
 - I'll also say this, I am not sure I buy the whole "I'm praying in the tongue of an angel," thing. Paul mentions it in 1 Cor 13:1, "Even if you pray in the tongue of an angel." I wonder if he was being sarcastic.
 - Paul never says that is a gift: "angel tongue." The language is always hypothetical, "Should I speak in the tongues of angels."
 - Second, there is no case anywhere in Acts or the epistles where someone actually spoke "angel."
 - Third, when angels show up in the Bible they are not like, "Hoogabalooga."
 - The Corinthians are boasting at their spiritual X-men power. Paul's like, "Oh, you speak angel, do you?" and then goes on to explain why they should seek gifts that build up the body, not that inform angels about what is going on down here.
 - But, that said, I cannot say from Scripture that there's not a private prayer language that God gives you in your personal devotion to communicate His closeness to you, so I won't.¹⁴ **I won't clarify where God did not.**
 - What I can say is...
- 6. Seeking tongues is not a sign of spiritual maturity; seeking gifts that serve and build up others is (14:19-20)**

Paul appears to have spoken in tongues, and wants you to as well. But he never tells you to seek that gift; instead he tells you to seek the gifts that build up others (12:31; 14:1, 12, 39)

- 4 times he tells you this:
 - 12:31 – *"Earnestly desire the higher gifts."*
 - 14:1 – *"Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy."*
 - 14:12 – *"So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church."*
 - 14:39 – *"So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues."*

So here is my question. Paul doesn't want to forbid tongues, because clearly there are times God uses it. But isn't he all about discouraging it? He has created a sieve that only a work of God can get through.

¹³ Story from D. A. Carson, "Prophecy and Tongues: Pursuing What is Best," January 1, 2008.
<http://thegospelcoalition.org/resources/a/Prophecy-and-Tongues>

¹⁴ See George Robertson, "Should Every Christian Speak in Tongues?" <http://thegospelcoalition.org/resources/video/Should-every-Christian-speak-in-tongues>

What he wants you to do is to interact with the Spirit and offer yourself to be used by the Spirit for the good of the church.

Summit, we need the Spirit in our church services. You have to bring Him! This is what this whole series has been about. Less of you coming to listen to me give sermons and us become more of a tabernacle for the Spirit of God!

Response:

- Here's who I want us to close. I want to teach you a practice that will help you with this privately. We'll never learn to do this corporately until you start doing it privately.

That practice is what I call "*listening prayer*." The practice of listening to the Holy Spirit while you pray for what He might be leading you to pray about a situation. In my prayer journal... of course, the more Scripture you know, the better this is. 3 keys to an effective prayer time: write it down; be specific; listen. Pray for 15 minutes a day and do those 3 things, and it will revolutionize your prayer life.