

1 Corinthians 14 (Part 1): 1-17 • The Gift of Tongues Explained

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We're in the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians. We've been dealing for the last several weeks with the subject of spiritual gifts. I did this in first service too, and I was a little surprised with the response, but I'm going to ask you to be brave for a moment. I want to see a show of hands. If you have ever been involved in the past with any kind of a Pentecostal/charismatic church, or you've just experienced worship in that genre of things.

Pentecostal, charismatic experiences – put your hands up. Yeah, a lot of you, a lot of you. Very interesting. Well, me too. Me too.

When Sue and I really gave our lives to the Lord after the first five years of marriage, we decided to get serious about God and walk with him. And the church that we connected with at the time was a charismatic fellowship in Montana, and it was pretty wild sometimes. And then I actually went to Bible college at a Pentecostal college strangely enough. So, there you go.

I understand these things and I want you to know, going into this chapter, we're going to take a couple of weeks to get through this chapter, but there's a lot of confusion about the subject of spiritual gifts, and particularly Paul is going to hone in this week on the gift of tongues, which frankly just flat out freaks a lot of people out. And honestly, there are some people that don't even want to hear about it, whether it's biblical or not. They just don't like it, or they've heard or seen things in Pentecostal churches that have just weirded them out, and they just are not interested, sort of a thing.

So, what I want to do here with you this morning is we're going to go through the scripture. We're going to see what Paul says. We're going to break some bubbles as it relates to some things that maybe you've seen and heard in the past, and hopefully clear away some of the confusion and misunderstanding so that these things have a greater, I guess, understanding in your heart.

Let's go ahead and read the first 17 verses of the chapter, and then we'll pray and then we'll unpack these things.

Paul writes this:

“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.

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

⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

⁵ 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.

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?

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

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

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.

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

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.

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.” (ESV) Stop there, please. Let’s pray.

Heavenly Father, we come to You this morning and we ask You to help us to understand what's here in the Word so that we can apply it to our lives. Teach us today, Lord, because You are the teacher and we know, God, that You desire to illuminate our hearts and fill us with understanding and we are asking that You do that today.

And I pray specifically, Father, for any who are among us who may have been adversely affected by the misuse of spiritual gifts and particularly the gift of tongues to the point where they are frightened or concerned about these sorts of things. And I ask You, my Father God, to bring peace, clarity, and understanding. And I ask it in Jesus’ name, amen.

Now when we first look at this chapter, before we get into the specifics of the gift of tongues, which Paul, as you can see in these verses, really does talk a lot about and gives a lot of detail about, the first thing we need to do is we need to ask ourselves, first of all, why is Paul saying this to the Corinthian church?

Well, it's not hard to figure out. In fact, if you take the first four verses that we read out of these 17, and you highlight certain portions, you can see very clearly what his emphasis is. Let me put these on the screen for you. And I've highlighted these in red. These are the emphases that he's making, he says:

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. ³ On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

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. ³ On the other hand, (And then down in red, he says,) the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, (And finally, in verse 4,) but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

See, this is what Paul was concerned about when he wrote to the Corinthians. I want you guys to be thinking about what's going to build each other up. When you come together, don't think about what's going to build you up. Think about what's going to bless other people.

That's the idea. When we come together as the church, like we're doing here right now, what's our goal? Is our goal just so that I'm going to be strengthened? Well, we come to church to be strengthened, certainly. But when we're exercising spiritual gifts, whether we're praying for somebody or just encouraging somebody or whatever it may be, think about what's going to affect and bless most of the people or the majority of the people rather than just thinking about yourself.

Now, please understand Paul is not criticizing things that we do to build ourselves up, because you need those things. You need to be built up. He's simply saying when you come together, make sure that you're thinking about other people. You remember that we just went through the chapter on love, just last week. What was the love chapter all about? It was all about how they operated in spiritual gifts. Guys, when you operate in spiritual gifts, do it out of love. Be caring about other people, loving other people, thinking about other people. And that's the essence of what Paul is saying in this passage.

And he reiterates it, look with me again in verse 12 in your Bible. *“So with yourselves, (he says,) since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit,”* In other words, since you guys are all about spiritual gifts, excel in the ones that are going to build up the body; encourage one another and so forth.

That's the theme. That's the message of the chapter that Paul is conveying to the Corinthian church. It's not a difficult message. He's been saying it since chapter 12. He emphasized it in chapter 13. He punctuates it here in chapter 14. But now as we move on, we notice that the apostle gives us a lot of information about this issue of speaking in tongues.

You'll remember back in chapter 12, he just mentioned tongues as just one of, like, nine gifts that he listed at that time. He started talking about the gifts, and he finally gets to tongues and interpretation. And he didn't talk about it. he didn't emphasize it. It was like, ...and tongues, and interpretation of tongues, and da da da.

Well now, he changes his thing in chapter 14. Now he's going to get into a lot of specific detail. And these are very important verses for us to look at and understand, because for those of you that have been involved in some

Pentecostal background, you're going to see here that perhaps some of the ways that you've seen things operate in Pentecostal circles was actually unbiblical. And we're going to show you that as we go through these verses.

Beginning with verse 2. Look with me here in your Bible. He says:

“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.”

Now stop there please just for a moment. Give me your attention because some of you may not have been involved in our study before. And you may have absolutely – this is like the first you've heard of speaking in tongues, or maybe if it's not the first time, it's the first time somebody's tried to explain it, and you're like, “I don't get it.” Right? What is tongues?

The Greek word that's used here in the text, because the Bible, the New Testament, was written in Greek, is simply the word languages. Don't get weirded out about the word, it just means language. It's just like the English language. English, we would even say the English tongue. The tongue I speak in natively is English. Not well, but I do it.

The gift of tongues is a supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit to a believer, enabling them to speak in a language which they've never learned. Which means they speak it, but they don't understand it. That's weird. And that's where people, they start freaking out a little bit. Speaking a language that you don't even understand – what is that all about? Well, we'll talk about it.

But what I want you to see in this verse, and this is important, is the direction of the gift of tongues. Notice that Paul says, and I'm going to read the verse again:

“² For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men...”

Stop there. There might be something you need to underline. He says, when people speak in a tongue or speak in a supernatural language that they do not understand when they've, obviously he's talking about when the body comes together, he says, you speak not to men.

The direction is not this way. What direction is it? He goes on to say, “...but to God;...”

So, the direction is vertical, not horizontal. You with me? And he goes on to say, “...for no one understands him.”

Now this is such an important thing to lay hold of because this will clear up a great amount of confusion, which sadly happens in a lot of Pentecostal charismatic churches regarding this particular gift of the spirit. Like I said, Sue and I have experienced this many times in the past when we were involved in a Pentecostal church. When I was attending a Pentecostal Bible college. It was a very common experience. I'll describe it to you like this.

During the worship time, we're worshipping the Lord and we getting toward the end of worship when things are slowing down a little bit. And we're maybe between a couple of songs and there's just this lingering worship going on and people just enjoying the presence of the Lord.

And then suddenly, from somewhere in the room, you hear someone speaking in what either appears or sounds like a foreign language or gibberish, one of the two. And you just hear this thing going on and it goes on for a little bit. And then again, there's silence that falls over the room. And then, eventually, someone begins to give what they believe to be the interpretation of that message.

Now, I've heard this happen dozens of times. And here's the interesting thing about it. What you're hearing, typically, at least in the experience I've had in Pentecostal circles, what you're often hearing as the interpretation is a message directed to the people. And in fact, much like what you heard this morning during worship, which by the way that was a word of prophecy. And what you're often hearing in Pentecostal churches is, somebody will speak in tongues, somebody will get up to interpret the tongue, but the tongue is directed this way.

You see, there's a problem with that. Because Paul says here, in verse 2, he who speaks in tongues does not speak to men. It's not a message to men. He's talking to God. In fact, he's always talking to God. He's never talking to men. And yet the interpretation of that message in most Pentecostal churches that I've been in, in circles, is directed this way. And that's a problem.

See, what they've got going on is a misunderstanding of the Word of God. So, they're hearing somebody speak in tongues, but rather than a genuine interpretation of that tongue, they're just hearing a word of prophecy following that. But they're assuming that this is an interpretation of the tongue, when in fact, it's not. Because, "*he who speaks in the tongue, speaks not to men.*" It is spoken to God.

Now, it's an interesting statement Paul makes there in verse 2, isn't it? Would you expect it to be corroborated by the rest of scripture? Of course you would.

Where do we first see the experience of the gift of tongues happening in the church? Acts 2.

Acts 1, you'll remember, Jesus promises them, He says, guys, don't run off, stay here in Jerusalem. The gift of my Father is coming. He's going to baptize you. And when you're baptized, you will be empowered to go and do the work of the ministry, to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the world. Right?

And then Acts 2, we have the fulfillment of that promise when they're all together. Let's read it together.

Acts 2:1-3,4-7,11 (ESV)

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from the heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

“When the day of Pentecost arrived” – by the way, Pentecost is a Jewish feast. It has nothing to do with speaking in tongues. We call them Pentecostal churches simply because they believe in what happened in Acts 2. And they propagate it. But, listen, the word Pentecost is a Jewish feast name. It has nothing to do with the gifts of the Spirit.

When the day of Pentecost, which was a feast, arrived, they were all together in one place, and it says, suddenly, there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, or other (again, that's just a Greek word for languages) as the Spirit gave them utterance. Meaning as the Holy Spirit allowed them or enabled them to speak.

And it goes on to say:

Acts 2:1-3, 4-7,11 (ESV)

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans – we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

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What did they hear them doing? They were praising God. They were declaring the wonders of His mighty works. It's like what you would hear when you're reading the Psalms, when David is saying, great are you Lord, the heavens declare the glory of God.

It's what they were doing. It's almost like they were quoting the Psalms, but they were doing it and they were magnifying and praising God with their words. And that's what the people heard. They said, wow, we hear the magnifying God. They're glorifying God. They're praising God. But we hear them in all of our own languages because all of these Jews. traveled to Jerusalem for the feast and they came from other lands where they had learned other dialects and other languages.

And so when they came to Jerusalem, they expected just to probably speak Aramaic, I expect, with most of the people, but yet they hear these Galileans speaking in their languages from their homeland. And they're like, what's this? This is crazy. We hear these guys all praising God in our own languages.

But notice what they're doing: they're praising God. They're magnifying, they're glorifying God. What direction was it going? Up.

And then, we come to the situation where Peter shares the gospel with the Gentiles. Remember this? We go on to Acts 10. It says:

Acts 10:44-46 (NIV2011)

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

While Peter was still speaking these words, (which was the gospel) the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. (And it says that) The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy

Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. (Look at this) For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

What were they doing? Talking to the Lord. They're praising Him. Again, it's just like as if you were reading the Psalms. Magnifying God. Glorifying God. Emphasizing the works of God. That's what they were doing.

And then we've read a couple of verses right here in 1 Corinthians 14. I'll just put them on the screen so we can see them together. Paul says:

1 Corinthians 14:16-17 (ESV)

...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? For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up.*

**another way of referring to the Gift of Tongues*

...if you give thanks with your spirit, and by the way, that's another way of referring to speaking in tongues, giving thanks with your spirit or with your spirit, he says, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say, “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he doesn't know what you're saying. Well, he says you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not built up.

Did you notice how many times Paul in talking about tongues operating in the church, talked about it as referring to praise. I'll highlight it for you. Boom.

1 Corinthians 14:16-17 (ESV)

*...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? For you may be **giving thanks** well enough, but the other person is not being built up.*

**another way of referring to the Gift of Tongues*

“...if you give thanks with your spirit,” he says, how can anybody who doesn't understand you say, “Amen” to what you're saying? Because even though you're giving thanks, well enough, they can't understand your thanksgiving.

Do you see how over and over again, he didn't say they can't understand your prophecy. He said, they can't understand your praise because that's what

speaking in tongues is. It's directed to God. It is directed to Him. It's not directed this way. And so you see, there's overwhelming evidence that the gift of tongues is not spoken man to man, it's spoken man to God through the power of the Spirit.

Now, I will be transparent with you this morning and tell you that for a little over 30 years, I have had the gift of tongues. And I do it a lot. But I dare say you don't hear me. Do you know why? I'm not talking to you! I'm talking to God! That's what it's all about.

I do it under my breath, I whisper. I've probably prayed over you while somebody else was praying and I'm speaking in tongues. I'm praying over you that way, but you didn't hear it because I wasn't talking to you. And besides, it might've freaked you out and I don't want to do that.

The point is it always goes this way, but what's interesting is that sometimes it is also prayer, used for prayer. You might say, well, now wait a minute, pastor. You just got done saying it's always praise. No, I didn't. I said it's always upward, but sometimes it's praise and sometimes it is also prayer.

Look again with me in verse 14 in your Bible. Verse 14, Paul writes:

“For if I pray in a tongue,”

Did you notice that? You can go ahead and underline that if you want. He says:

“my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.” He says,

“¹⁵ What am I to do?” I'll pray a little, some with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind, meaning I'll pray with understanding.

He says, *“I will sing praise with my spirit,”* but I will also sing with my mind, or with my understanding also. You can see here that the gift of tongues is always directed to God, and when we come together as a body, it's directed as praise. When I'm spending time in my own prayer closet, it can be a method of prayer.

Now I imagine that somebody who's hearing this is probably thinking to themselves, okay, why in the world would I want to pray in a language I don't understand? I mean, what possible benefit would it be for me to pray in such a way as I don't understand what I'm saying. And, frankly, that's a good question. And thankfully there's a good answer.

You see, when a believer speaks using the gift of tongues, they are essentially giving over the use of their vocal cords, if you will, to the operation of the Holy Spirit. Because their spirit and the Holy Spirit are now one.

You guys remember that from 1 Corinthians 6? This is a very important thing to remember. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6, “*He who has joined himself with God is one spirit with him.*” (1 Corinthians 6:17.)

When Paul says here, “*My spirit prays,*” he's talking about his spirit that is now joined with the Holy Spirit. And now he says, I give over my vocal cords to let the Holy Spirit pray through me, I become an instrument.

How many of you played an instrument in band when you were – cool. Did you ever notice that instrument didn't do anything unless you picked it up? And then you've got to blow through it. Well, some of you had this kind of instrument or this kind. But for those of you that had a wind instrument or a breath instrument of some kind, you'll notice that it didn't start to make noise until your breath went through it. And the gift of tongues is very much like that. You are an instrument given to the Lord, given over to the use of the Lord. And you're allowing His spirit, His breath to blow through you and say what he wants to say.

Here's the point. When I'm praying in the spirit, I know that it's the Holy Spirit doing the praying. I don't even understand what I'm saying. And sometimes that's very useful because many times I don't know what to pray. I've been faced many times as a pastor with situations for which I don't know what to say. I mean you can always fall back on the good old, God, let Your will be done, sort of a thing, which is a great thing to pray by the way. But there are times when I just, I feel like, God I don't get this. I don't understand what's going on here.

And that is when I will resort to the gift of tongues to pray and intercede and allow the Spirit to pray through me and say, Lord, You know what's going on in this person's life. You know what they need best. I might even potentially pray something that's like stupid, that isn't really going to scratch the itch for this person. So, I'm going to let you pray through me now. And this intercession is going to be a work of Your grace. And that's an exciting thing about praying in the spirit, as Paul talks about it here in this chapter.

Now, again, Paul tells us that speaking in tongues is a way of building yourself up. Look with me again at verse 4. Chapter 14, verse 4, Paul says:

“The one who speaks in a tongue builds himself up.” Now he contrasts that in the rest of the verse by saying, *“the one who prophesies builds up the church.”*

Now notice that Paul doesn't criticize one of them. And he is saying that when the church comes together, prophecy is better because that builds up everybody. If I got up here on a Sunday morning and I just said, I'm just really spiritually depleted today, so, if you guys don't mind, just sit back and relax. I'm just going to sit up here and speak in tongues for 45 minutes. Well, I could do that. It would be stupid, but I could actually, sure I could build myself up, and there's nothing wrong with that. But Paul says, when you come together as the body, think about ways you can build others up, right?

But he's not saying that building yourself up is a bad thing. I've actually heard Bible teachers take this verse and criticize the gift of tongue saying it's selfish. They'll say, look at it right there. It says the one who speaks in the tongue builds himself up. That's selfish. And I'm like, are you joking?

For what reason do you sit down and read your Bible, if not to build yourself up? We all need to be built up in the Lord, don't we? We all need to be strengthened. So, God gave you and I yet another tool to get that accomplished. Why not use it? Right? And why criticize it as if it's some kind of a selfish thing to build yourself up in the Lord. We all need that, so it is not selfish to edify yourself.

Now, the last thing we're going to ask here is, why is the gift of tongues not really all that useful when the body of Christ comes together or gathers as a group? And you might even be a little bit weirded out by my wording with that, but let me explain this thing. And look with me again in verse 5. Verse 5 of your Bible, chapter 14, here we go. Paul says:

“Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. (Because) The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless (of course) someone interprets, (it) so that the church may be built up.”

Now notice Paul says that the one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues. What does he mean by that? He's not pitting one gift against another and saying one is greater. It might sound that way. He's saying when you come together, there are greater gifts to be used because they have a broader application.

There are some gifts you don't want to use when you come together because they have such a narrow application. If I speak in tongues in front of you, it's for

me. It's not for you because I'm talking to God. It's like if I'm just sitting and praying to the Lord, and you're just sitting there while I finish my prayer, but I'm not even sharing it with you. I'm just going to go ahead and pray. You guys just do what you're going to do. That's great for me, but why don't I pray in such a way that you're going to benefit from it?

Paul says the same thing with prophecy. Prophecy has a beautiful way of ministering to the people. What you heard this morning during worship was prophecy. You'll notice that nobody spoke in tongues in front of that because, again, tongues go this way, and that message you heard, that was for you. That was God who laid a message on Dawn's heart to come up and share that with you from Him.

Now it's your decision. It's your choice to take that message and to judge it. You're to do that with everything that you hear that is supposedly done in the name of the Lord. You're to judge it to see if it's consistent with the Word of God. We're to test everything by the word. But what you heard was a prophecy. It was for all of us.

And that's why Paul says, when you come together, when you come together, it's better that prophecy be what you're focused on because that's going to have a broader application.

So, he's basically saying when you come together, tongues really isn't all that useful unless of course someone interprets. But when they interpret, what are they going to hear? It's going to be praise, isn't it?

And that's redundant, because don't we do that during our worship time? I mean, Brandon and Amy got up here and led us in a bunch of songs of worship, and I hope you were praising. I was, and I hope you were worshipping God. And that's what we do. If we had a tongues and interpretation during the service, not that it's a bad thing, but it's redundant, because the only thing you're going to get out of it is if somebody interprets it. You're not going to get anything out of the tongue, only the interpretation.

So, why is it some churches fixate on tongues and interpretation? You ready for this? Because it's exciting. And it ends up being a very fleshly experience, a very carnal experience. They want to be able to walk out of church that day and say, oh, God was among us because the supernatural was going on. And it was exciting, and somebody got up and spoke in tongues over here, and then somebody got up over here and gave the interpretation, and wow!

And they're just like, yeah! God is..., and it's all very sensational. And they really weren't praising the Lord along with that interpretation, because again, that's what interpretation of tongues is going to be. It's going to be directed this way. God, You're so great, You're so cool, You're so amazing. We do that in song every Sunday. Every Sunday, every Wednesday.

So, you see, tongues and interpretation, Paul's trying gently to say it to the church here. Guys, he's not trying to trounce on them, but at the same time he's going, "That should not be the focus of why you guys come together and when you come together, don't sit and just spend all your time speaking in tongues. If you do that, people are going to come in and they're going to go, you guys are nuts.

And he actually says that later on in the chapter. We'll get into that next week. He says, literally, people will look at you and go, you guys are bonkers. And, frankly, that's what some people think when they walk into a church that focuses on that sort of a thing.

Notice he goes on in verse 7, he says, even in the case of "*lifeless instruments, (like) the flute or the harp*" or whatever, he says if they don't give distinct notes, you're not going to know what song is being played. You're just sitting there, just picking on a guitar, and you're going, well, that's interesting, but what song are you playing?

Or he says, if the bugle doesn't actually sound the call to battle, but it's some other tune – do you know that they used to use bugles to go, we did it even in our military at one time, many years ago, the bugle was used to rally the troops. But those soldiers understood there was a specific tune that they played.

And when they heard that tune, it's like, jump out of bed, if you're there, get ready. The enemy is coming, right? Well, Paul says, in the case of a bugle, if they don't sound the right notes, who's going to get ready for battle? And the whole idea is if you're sitting here saying indistinct words in tongues, how's anybody going to benefit from it? Because you're just speaking into the air.

Now, some of you may be wondering, so are you saying pastor Paul, that there's no way that a church can experience tongues and interpretation and have it be a good thing? No, I'm not saying that. I'm not saying that at all, because you know what? God is good. And because God is good, He can use all kinds of things for good.

In fact, Pastor Chuck Smith, many years ago, wrote a book called, Charisma vs. Charismania, which was a book about the difference between wild, wacky Pentecostalism and Biblical Christianity and the way it's supposed to be, which is what we're talking about here today. And he actually relates an instance in the early days of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa that I'd like to read for you. Can I read just an excerpt from his book here just a moment? He says,

Several years ago, when Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa was quite small, we were meeting on Sunday nights in a clubhouse. On a particular Sunday evening, which happened to be Pentecost Sunday, at the close of the lesson, as we were softly worshipping God together, I asked one of the ladies in the fellowship if she would worship God in the Spirit, since I knew that when she spoke in tongues, she usually spoke in French.

As she began to worship God, I could understand enough of her French to know that she was thanking God for her new life in Christ and the beautiful song of love He had given her. I thought this was especially beautiful as she used to be a nightclub singer prior to her conversion. At the conclusion of her worship in the spirit, my wife began to give the interpretation to the group. And knowing that she does not know French, I was particularly blessed to hear how accurately the worship with the Spirit was being interpreted for the fellowship.

After the meeting, one of the young men in the fellowship brought a Jewish girl from Palm Springs for counseling. When we sat down together, she said, "Okay, before we get to my problems, explain to me what was happening here tonight. Why did one lady speak to God in French, and the other lady translate to the group what she said?" And I said, "Well, would you believe that neither of those ladies knows French?" I told her that I knew that for a fact because one of them was a close friend and the other was my wife. I then showed her in 1 Corinthians where it speaks of the gift of tongues and interpretation.

She then told me that she had lived in France for six years and that the French spoken was in the perfect accent of what she called the "aristocratic French." She also stated that the translation was perfect. She then said, "I must accept Jesus Christ now before we go any further."

It was my joy to see her find her Messiah and become a member of the body of Christ. There was a demonstration of the gift of tongues followed by the true interpretation which was glorious praise and worship of God. The result was the edifying of the body, and in this case, the conversion of this Jewish girl.

I share that excerpt from Pastor Chuck's book because, frankly, it's a rare and Godly example of what can happen when the gifts of the Spirit operate properly in the church. But unfortunately it's just all too rare. It just doesn't happen that way very often. And it's sad because many people have been so turned off by the misuse of the gift of tongues.

So, here's someone's thought, perhaps. If Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa allowed the gift of tongues to operate, why aren't we hearing it here at Calvary Chapel, Ontario? Well, I want you to, first of all, remember that when I was reading that excerpt, it begins by saying back when Calvary Chapel was quite small, that's an important thing to remember.

When a church is very small or when you're in a small group of people where you know everybody's cool with it, everybody understands it, and we know that nobody here is going to be offended, nobody here is going to have a problem. Great, let her rip.

But on a Sunday morning, on a Wednesday evening here at Calvary Chapel, Ontario, I don't even know half the people sometimes who even show up. And I don't know their background, and I don't know what they've learned or what they've experienced. I don't know if they've been in a situation where they've seen an unbiblical misuse of this gift. And if we just haphazardly just say, we're just going to let her rip, that's not loving. That's just frankly not caring. It's not consistent with what Paul said love should be in 1 Corinthians 13.

When we come together, we're to love one another. And the bigger the church gets, the less we know about each other, and the less we know if somebody is going to be really offended by that sort of thing. And you know what? You may not care if somebody's offended, but the Holy Spirit sure does. He cares. He cares about people. He's an incredible gentleman. And he does not want to freak people out. It's people's carnality that freaks people out. It's not God.

The other reason that you don't hear tongues in interpretation during one of our Sunday or Wednesday night services here at Calvary Chapel is because we're too busy doing what the Apostle Paul told us we should be doing when we gather together as the body of Christ.

Let me show you this. And we'll talk about this verse next week. But he says:

1 Corinthians 14:19 (ESV)

...in church I would rather speak 5 words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

...in church (in other words, when we come together,) I would rather speak 5 words with my (understanding or) my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

And what you see in that verse right there is the apostle Paul speaking through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, giving the Christian Church its priority for when we come together.

What should that priority be? Instruction.

Instruction that will bless and build up the body of Christ. That's why we don't do that here at Calvary Chapel, as far as tongues and interpretation, because that's not where instruction takes place. And Paul tells us here that we should emphasize instruction when we come together.

Like I said, you're in a small home group, and you guys are all comfortable with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and interpretation, and you know somebody in that group has those gifts? Go for it. You're not going to freak anybody out. You're not going to harm anybody. You're not going to offend anybody. There's no problem with that.

But when we come together, you don't know. You don't know where people are from. You don't know what they've learned. You don't know what they've been taught, maybe or mistaught. And Paul says to you and I, we have a responsibility to care for people.

So, we're not just going to let it rip on a Sunday morning around here because we care. We care how people feel. This whole teaching today has been a real stretch for some of you. And that's okay. That's all right. You need to know what the Bible says. What the Word has to say, and hopefully today we've cleared up some confusion.