

# SPEAKING IN TONGUES

(Selected Scriptures)

## Review:

**Week 1**---Overview of Spiritual Gifts (definition, key passages, purposes)

**Week 2**---The Gift of Apostleship (= most valued gift to church; unique because they were the church's foundation and possessed every spiritual gift rather than one)

**Week 3**---The Gift of Prophecy (= second most valued gift to church; like apostles, were foundational to the church; predicted future events **AND** gave practical messages directly from God that edified and encouraged)

## Lessons:

### 1. Our spiritual gift has been given to us to benefit others (12:7, 24-25)

1 Cor 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one **for the profit of all...**

**"the manifestation of the spirit"** is a reference to spiritual gifts.

1 Cor 12:24-25 But God composed the body ... that the members should have the same **care for one another.**

### 2. What spiritual gift we get is the Holy Spirit's decision (12:11)

1 Cor 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, **distributing to each one individually as He wills.**

### 3. Certain gifts are more important in the successful functioning of the church than others (12:28)

1 Cor 12:28 And God has appointed these in the church: **first** apostles, **second** prophets, **third** teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

### 4. God did not intend for all of the Corinthian believers to speak in tongues any more than He intended for all believers to teach, heal, or administrate (12:29-30)

1 Cor 12:29-30 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

## 5. Every local church is to earnestly desire the best gifts (12:31)

1 Cor 14:31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

The Corinthians (as well as other first-century churches), was to earnestly desire that God would send it apostles, prophets, teachers, and so on. The “best gifts” are the gifted believers who have a ministry of nurturing the other believers through the Word. Today, we are to earnestly desire teachers (now that the apostleship/prophets have ceased to exist).

## 6. As important as it is to desire the best gifts, believers are to desire having the love of Christ even more (1 Corinthians 14)

Paul said that if you could through your gift of faith move a mountain and yet you lacked love, your gift of faith is nothing.

1 Cor 13:2 ...and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

So the love of Christ for others is more important than any spiritual gift we might possess to help others.

## 7. However, though believers are to pursue the goal of loving one another, it must not be at the expense of the neglecting spiritual gifts—especially prophecy (14:1)

1 Cor 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. [today, “teach”]

Of course, today, the greatest gift as far as the benefit of the church is concerned would be the teacher. Thus, as a church we should be very concerned and be praying that God would keep us well supplied with gifted teachers.

## 8. In church, the gift of prophecy is greater than the gift of tongues, because prophecy edifies the church. (14:1-5)

1 Cor 14:1-5 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. 3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. 4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. 5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, **but even more that you prophesied**; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

**(Note:** the only way the church receives edification is when tongues are interpreted).

## 9. Tongues are not profitable for people who don't understand what is being said (14:6-12)

1 Cor 14:6-12 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? 7 Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? 8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? 9 So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. 11 Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. 12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

Paul's point here agrees with the picture in Acts 2 where tongues are a real language.

## 10. Paul argues that unless the person speaking or praying in tongues can communicate his own understanding of what he is saying, he is not helping the church by speaking in a tongues (14:13-17)

1 Cor 14:13-14 Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is **unfruitful**.\*

\* **unfruitful**-----The person who prays in a foreign language is having an inner spiritual experience and he understands it---“my spirit prays”. But because his ability to relate this in the listeners’ language eludes him, his understanding is **unfruitful** to those who hear him (**does not profit**)

15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding.

(That is, I’ll pray in a language that they can understand.)

I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. 16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? 17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

## 11. Paul would rather say five words that helped people (resulted in edification) than to speak 10,000 words in tongues.

1 Cor 14:18-19 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; 19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

The main purpose of the gift of tongues was to convict Jewish unbelievers of their sin and unbelief:

1 Cor 14:20-25 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature. 21 In the law it is written: “*With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear*

Me," says the Lord. **22 Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.** 23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those who are* uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. 25 And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

**12. Everyone should not try to do everything in one church service. Both tongues and prophecy should be limited to two or three.**

1 Cor 14:26-31 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. **27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.** 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. 30 But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

**13. Paul insists that there be consistency in the expression of prophecies. If a prophet was about to give a prophecy that was contradictory to one just given by another prophet, he was to stop and consider the fact that what he is about to say may not be of the Spirit. (14:32-33)**

1 Cor 14:32-33 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

**the spirits of the prophets** = the prophet utterances of a prophet

**14. Believing women were not to seek to prophesy (in our day, to teach) in the context of the services of the local church (14:34-35)**

1 Cor 14:34-35 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. 35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

**15. The things Paul is saying in this letter are God's commands. Prophecy is preferable to tongues in the church and everything is to be orderly (14:36-37)**

1 Cor 14:36-40 Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? 37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. 38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. **39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. 40 Let all things be done decently and in order.**