

# Mount Olive Baptist

Spiritual Gifts and Worship • Spiritual Gifts and Worship • 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 •  
11/3/19

## MAIN POINT

Our spiritual gifts and public worship must glorify God and help others grow toward Christlikeness.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**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?**

**Do you think most people see their talents as primarily being for themselves or as a chance to help and serve others?**

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 strengthen all who are present.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**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. For Paul, the bottom line is the use of spiritual gifts must be joined with love and the purpose of building the church for the glory of God.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-12.

**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 the church?**

**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?**

**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. Rather 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. Paul commended the Corinthians for seeking these manifestations of the Spirit, but reminded them that public worship is not about them and their preferences. Living for the greater cause means focusing on helping others grow.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:13-25.

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?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:26-40.

**Have you ever attended an event that was completely disordered? What effect did that have on you as a guest?**

**Paul's directions that only a few people speak in a worship service may seem limiting to us, but why would he seek to restrict the number of people exercising their gifts in a single service?**

**How should we understand Paul's comments about women? How does chapter 11 help us understand this section?**

Paul opens this section with the words, "What then shall we say?" Or in other words: "Here are some practical takeaways." Spiritual gifts should exalt God and help others grow. Worship that is not ordered, where everyone does what seems good to them, does not honor God and does not help anyone. Our worship reflects the One we worship and God is not a God of disorder or confusion, but of peace.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Think about your own spiritual gifts. Do you use them in a way that honors God? How could you use your own gifts to better help others grow?**

**In what ways can you encourage your spouse, your children, or other brothers and sisters in Christ to use their own gifts?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for gifting His church to do the work of ministry. Ask that He would 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.

## COMMENTARY

| 1 Corinthians 14

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.

14:11. 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.

14:21-25. 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.

14:27-28. Again Paul emphasizes the importance of self-restraint for the greater good.

14:29-32. That Paul instructed people with the gift of prophecy to speak in turn and then await evaluation by others in attendance indicates that the kind of "prophecy" in view here is not predictive or a foretelling of future events.

14:33. God is not the author of disorder in a worship service.

14:34-35. During assemblies of the church at Corinth, women were not permitted to speak in the process of evaluating prophetic utterances (vv. 29-30,37). For the sake of propriety and order, they were to ask their own husbands in private at home about what was spoken. These verses should not be taken as a prohibition against women speaking in church. To say otherwise contradicts Paul elsewhere (see 1 Cor. 11:5).

14:36. With rhetorical flair Paul reminded the believers at Corinth of his apostolic authority. He appealed to their own recollection about his role as an apostle who brought them God's authoritative word.

14:37-38. Those who were truly prophets would discern that Paul's principles for the orderly exercise of prophetic gifts were consistent with the Lord's command. It is unclear exactly what is meant by will be ignored. Possibly it means those wishing to conduct services correctly will disregard those clamoring to do otherwise.