

1 Corinthians 14 Commentary

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1 CORINTHIANS - PROBLEMS OF A LOCAL CHURCH

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

FROM CHART: Note 2 major divisions:

- **FIRST DIVISION** - Chapters 1-6 = Problems of Congregation - Divisions & Depravities
- **SECOND DIVISION** - Chapters 7-16 = Personal Problems, Worship Problems

1 Corinthians 14:1 **Pursue** love, yet **desire earnestly** spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

ICC - What you have to do, therefore, is persistently to strive to make this love your own, while you continue to long to have the gifts of the Spirit, and especially to be inspired to preach.

Amplified - EAGERLY PURSUE and seek to acquire [this] love [make it your aim, your great quest]; and earnestly desire and cultivate the spiritual endowments (gifts), especially that you may prophesy (interpret the divine will and purpose in inspired preaching and teaching).

- **Pursue** Pr 15:9 21:21 Isa 51:1 Ro 9:30 14:19 1Ti 5:10 6:11 Heb 12:14 1Pe 3:11-13 3Jn 1:11
- **love** 1Co 13:1-8,13 2Ti 2:22 2Pe 1:7
- **desire earnestly** 1Co 12:1,31 Eph 1:3
- **prophesy** 1Co 14:3-5,24,25,37,39 13:2,9 Nu 11:25-29 Ro 12:6 1Th 5:20 1Ti 4:14
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At the end of chapter 12 Paul exhorted the saints to "earnestly desire ([zealoo](#)) the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way." He then expounded eloquently on the more excellent way, ending chapter 13 with the statement that **the greatest of these is love**. It is now logical for him to command pursuit of the greatest which is **love**! He balances it with a command to desire earnestly spiritual gifts, which is interesting since we know it is only the Holy Spirit Who gives these gifts "distributing to each one individually just as He wills." (1 Cor 12:11) He does not say pursue the attaining of spiritual gifts but desire them. I would submit that inherent in his charge is that they become zealous to use the gifts which they had been given, for just as the body analogy had many members and they were all necessary from proper functioning, so too the Body of Christ needs all the members with their varied gifts actively engaged.

While many commentators take Chapters 12-14 as a unit because it speaks to the issue of spiritual gifts, others include chapter 11 because of the Lord's Supper and see chapters 11-14 as a literary unit dealing with the assembly of believers in their worship service, an approach which certainly has merit.

Brian Bell - Note: this chapter is set up by, "I show you a more excellent way"(1 Cor 12:31); all of chapter 13; & now 1 Cor 14:1 "Pursue love".

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts -NIV = "Follow the way of love." MIT = "Go after love." NJB = "Make love your aim." **Pursue** is [present imperative](#) in the active voice calling for a definite choice of our will (a pursuit that our fallen flesh will fight "**tooth and nail**" and thus is only possible as we [depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) The verb **pursue** means to chase after or run after and speaks of intensity, effort, diligence and focus, and was used of the hounds chasing after the fleeing fox and of authorities chasing criminals.

Desire earnestly is also a command in the [present imperative](#). In 1 Cor 12:31 Paul said "**earnestly desire** ([present imperative](#)) but some take it as present tense but not a command - see comments) **the greater gifts**," and he ends this chapter commanding the saints to "**desire earnestly** ([present imperative](#)) **to prophesy**." So Paul basically "bookends" this chapter with identical commands to desire and strive to prophesy. Focus on prophecy instead of tongues, because prophecy is profitable for edification.

Staton writes that "The Greek word for follow (**Pursue**) is a word that means to chase something diligently until you have caught it. Christians should never let love out of their sight. But just pursuing love is not enough. We need to have a channel through which that love can flow and benefit someone else's life. That channel is the gifts that God gives to His children. So Paul connects pursuing love with "eagerly desire spiritual gifts." The word gifts is not in the Greek text, but the context infers that this is Paul's topic. Paul is not opposed to people desiring spiritual gifts. In fact, as children of God, we ought to desire what God has to share with us. While the Corinthians had been desiring what they considered to be the greater gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31), Paul suggests that they desire the most profitable gift—prophecy. The person who is gifted with prophecy is the person whom God has inspired to speak His words to people in their own language. ([1 Corinthians](#))

Lenski - The transition is simple and perfect. After what has been said about the value of love only one admonition is in place: "Pursue love!"

Krell - **Pursue** is a strong word that serves to remind us that love can be an elusive thing. In other words, we do not find love by wishful thinking or by halfhearted effort. We have to **pursue** it eagerly every day if we are going to find it operating in our lives as it

should. As a church, if we make love our top pursuit we will discover that our capacity to minister to those around us grows with every passing year.

THOUGHT: Is pursuit of supernatural Spirit enabled love high on your spiritual agenda or just somewhere on the list? If it is high on your list than obedience to the command to continually be being filled with or controlled by the Spirit needs to be "high" on your list (Eph 5:18+) because [agape love](#) is a fruit He bears in the heart of a surrendered saint, not a work we achieve in our [flesh](#).

Vine - The first command **Pursue** is to be taken with the closing statement of chapter thirteen. The two commands together sum up the contents of chapters twelve and thirteen. All believers are to give earnest endeavor to exercise love. Prophesying and speaking in tongues were special gifts, the exercise of which was a matter of desire, and the former more than the latter. ([Collected Writings](#)).

A T Robertson suggests that "This verse looks back to 1 Cor 12:31, and sums up the two preceding chapters. The Corinthians are to follow with persistence (Rom. 9:30, 31, 14:19; 1 Thess. 5:15, etc.) 'the more excellent way,' and to desire with intensity (12:31, 14:39; 2 Cor. 11:2; Gal. 4:17) supernatural gifts; but (more than all the rest) that they may be inspired to preach."

Pursue (run after) ([1377](#)) ([dioko](#) from [díō](#) = pursue, prosecute, persecute) means to follow or press hard after, literally to pursue as one does a fleeing enemy. It means to chase, harass, vex and pressure and was used for chasing down criminals. **Dioko** speaks of an intensity of effort leading to a pursue with earnestness and diligence in order to obtain. To go after with the desire of obtaining or in some contexts the desire to harm. It gives us the picture of going on the track of something like the hounds on the hunt and pursuing after the fox and implying a continuing effort to overtake, reach, or attain the goal. **Vincent** says that **dioko** is "Stronger than "follow". A favorite word with Paul to denote the pursuits of moral and spiritual ends. See Rom. 9:30, 31; 12:13; 1 Cor. 14:1; Philip. 3:12." (Vincent, M. R. Word Studies in the New Testament. 4:307) Figuratively used of one who like a runner in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal and thus to pursue a specific objective. To hasten, press forward, press on (Php 3:12, Php 3:14). The other meaning is to persecute (used with this sense in 31/45 uses) and in Paul's 3 other uses in Corinthians describes persecution (1 Cor 4:12, 1 Cor 15:9, 2 Cor 4:9)

Love (charity) ([26](#)) ([agape](#)) is that quality of love which is unconditional, sacrificial. Agape is what God is like (1Jn 4:8,16+), what God shows to those undeserving (Jn 3:16+, 1Jn 4:9+) and what God enables by His Spirit in the heart of His surrendered saints (Ro 5:5+ Gal 5:22+). **Agape** does not depend on the world's criteria for love, such as attractiveness, emotions, or sentimentality. Agape is self-sacrificial and seeks the benefit of the one loved (without expecting anything in return), a love which means death to self since the essence of self is selfishness, self-will and self-gratification. Agape is a love activated by personal choice of our will (enabled by God working within us - see Php 2:13NLT+) and is not based on our feelings toward the one loved. **Agape** may involve emotion, but it **must** always involve specific **actions** as Paul goes on to describe in 1Co 13:4-8 (which in itself is an excellent definition of love as "love in action").

THOUGHT - Do not "try" to "manufacture" this love, but instead learn daily (even moment by moment) to "die" ("to self", cp Mk 8:34+, Lk 9:23+, Ro 6:11+, Ro 6:12-13+, Ro 6:14+ Ro 7:5-6+, Col 3:5+, Php 2:12+, Php 2:13+, Ezekiel 36:27+) that you might manifest this supernatural Christ-like love (cp Ep 5:1,2+) to a lost, dying world (Eph 2:1-2+, Ep 2:3+) in which even natural love is growing cold (cp "unloving" in 2Ti 3:3+, Ro 1:31+, cp Jesus' admonition regarding love in the last of the last days = Mt 24:12).

Agape in 1-2 Corinthians - 1 Co. 8:1; 1 Co. 13:1; 1 Co. 13:2; 1 Co. 13:3; 1 Co. 13:4; 1 Co. 13:8; 1 Co. 13:13; 1 Co. 14:1; 1 Co. 16:14; 1 Co. 16:24; 2 Co. 2:4; 2 Co. 2:8; 2 Co. 5:14; 2 Co. 6:6; 2 Co. 8:7; 2 Co. 8:8; 2 Co. 8:24; 2 Co. 13:11; 2 Co. 13:14

Earnestly desire (eagerly seek) ([2206](#)) **zeloo** from **zelos** = zeal in turn from **zeo** = boil; be fervent; English "**zeal**") properly, to bubble over from getting so hot (boiling) and figuratively to burn with zeal (or intensity), to be fervent, to "boil" with envy, to be jealous. It can be used commendably to refer to a striving for something or showing zeal. **Zeloo** is an onomatopoeic word imitating the sound of boiling water! The idea is to be deeply committed to something, with the implication of accompanying desire – 'to be earnest, to set one's heart on, to be completely intent upon'. **Thiselton** adds that **zeloo** "applies the notion of burning or boiling metaphorically to burning or boiling emotions, stance, or will for earnest striving, for passionate zeal, or for burning envy. Whether it is constructive zeal or destructive envy depends on the context' **Zeloo** takes the notion of burning or boiling and applies it metaphorically to burning or boiling emotions, stance, or will for earnest striving, for passionate zeal, or for burning envy. **Zeloo used 10x in NT** - Acts 7:9; Acts 17:5; 1 Co. 12:31; 1 Co. 13:4; 1 Co. 14:1; 1 Co. 14:39; 2 Co. 11:2; Gal. 4:17; Gal. 4:18; Jas. 4:2

But especially that you may prophesy - **Prophesy** ([propheteuo](#)) is a keyword in chapter 14 occurring 7 times (1 Co. 14:1, 3, 4, 5, 24, 31, 39) **You** is plural so he is speaking to the entire church. Remember that in the context of this letter prophesy speaks not of fore-telling but of forth-telling, of speaking forth God's Word. For more details on the gift of prophecy see discussion in chapter 12. **Speak** ([laleo](#)) occurs 22x in 18 verses with 8 uses in vv2-6, so clearly is another keyword in this chapter. The other keyword is **glossa** used 15x in 14 verses. In sum, clearly this chapter is about speaking prophecy or speaking in tongues.

Notice Paul does not mention tongues here. Earlier he had listed them last when he declared that "God has appointed in the church, first apostles, **second prophets**, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, **various kinds of tongues**." (1 Cor 12:28) There is clearly some intent of "stratification" of importance and he specifically "elevates" the gift of prophecy to a higher, more useful level in chapter 14, primarily because it was so useful for the building up of the Body spiritually, not making them smarter sinners, but more like the Savior (always the goal of edification - cf 2 Peter 3:18+).

Bob Utley has a helpful note on **prophesy** - The term "prophesy" is used in I Corinthians in a specialized sense. It does not refer to the prophetic activity of OT prophets (written Scripture), but to a clear communication of the gospel, whether by public preaching or private witness. Paul desires it for all believers (cf. 14:39), but it is also a spiritual gift (cf. 1 Cor 12:10, 28–29). All believers participate at some level in all of the gifts of the Spirit, but one or another is energized and empowered by the Spirit within individual believers for special effectiveness. This diversity demands a co-operative and loving spirit among believers. We are called to unity, not uniformity, for the gospel. We are only effective corporately! We desperately need other believers. The church is a community of called, gifted, full-time ministers. We are gifted for the spread of the gospel and the health and wholeness of the church. This gift is compared with tongues by the criteria of "does it edify the whole church"? It means in this context "proclaiming the gospel," which is then a blessing to believers as well as visitors. Speaking in tongues is only a blessing to the individual believer if it is interpreted. This term is not to be understood in its OT sense of inspired revelation. ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Staton - Paul shares several reasons why he prefers proclamation in a person's language over speaking in a foreign language that is not translated. Proclaiming God's Word in a native language is simply more profitable, beneficial, and useful than speaking in a foreign language. ([1 Corinthians](#))

As **Swindoll** says "Before the Scriptures were complete, God's inspired, authoritative message was communicated to the early church through the lips of recognized prophets. Authentic prophets had to have "a message from God in the form of special revelation, . . . guidance regarding its declaration so that it would be given forth accurately, and the message itself had to have the authority of God.""The question arises as to whether there are prophets in this since today? Swindoll responds that "The **prophet** was much needed in the first century because the New Testament was not yet complete. So the prophets, together with the apostles, formed the foundational ministries of the church of the first generation (Eph. 2:20). Today the authoritative, prophetic teachings of the apostles and prophets are preserved for every believer and every church through their writings contained in the Bible, making the need for living apostles and prophets unnecessary."

Prophesy ([4395](#))([propheteuo](#) from **pró** = before or forth + **phemí** = tell) means literally to tell forth and can mean to speak forth God's message, (having been taught of God). The idea is speaking with the help of divine inspiration to proclaim what God wants to make known. In other contexts to prophesy means to speak under inspiration and foretell future events. Its most prominent use is in connection with the oracles at places like Delphi. Typically, a person would ask a question of the gods and receive a cryptic answer from the female mouthpiece of the deities. This answer would then be completed and interpreted by the men who specialized in that task. **Prophēteuō** in this context meant "explain a message from the gods in response to a client's question." **Propheteuo** - 27v - Matt. 7:22; Matt. 11:13; Matt. 15:7; Matt. 26:68; Mk. 7:6; Mk. 14:65; Lk. 1:67; Lk. 22:64; Jn. 11:51; Acts 2:17; Acts 2:18; Acts 19:6; Acts 21:9; 1 Co. 11:4; 1 Co. 11:5; 1 Co. 13:9; 1 Co. 14:1; 1 Co. 14:3; 1 Co. 14:4; 1 Co. 14:5; 1 Co. 14:24; 1 Co. 14:31; 1 Co. 14:39; 1 Pet. 1:10; Jude 1:14; Rev. 10:11; Rev. 11:3

James McCullen THE TRUTH ABOUT TONGUES I Corinthians 14:1-40

1. It is not helpful to the entire body unless there is an interpretation. 1 Cor 14:5
2. Emphasizing tongues is selfish. 1 Cor 14:6-11
3. Seeking the gift of tongues is never encouraged. 1 Cor 14:12-17, 37-39
4. It is a gift given by God. 1 Cor 14:18 Never forced on one person by another.
5. Tongues are given primarily to warn the unsaved. 1 Cor 14:22-23 It is a foreign language
6. Speaking in a tongue is never promoted above the clear preaching of the truth. 1 Cor 14:1-5a - 1 Cor 14:39a,
7. Speaking in tongues is not to be forbidden. 1 Cor 14:39

1. Tongues, like every other gift, must be done to edify the church. 1 Cor 14:26
2. Only two or three, at the most, should speak in tongues. 1 Cor 14:27
3. Only one person at a time should speak in tongues. 1 Cor 14:27
4. There must be an interpreter or do not tongue speaking. 1 Cor 14:28
5. All things are to be done decently and in order. 1 Cor 14:33
6. No women are to speak in tongues. 1 Cor 14:34
7. All of the above rules are to be acknowledged. 1 Cor 14:37-38 a. Paul's writing is the Word of God. 1 Cor 14:37 b. If a person claims to be spiritual, that person will recognize Paul's rules. 1 Cor 14:8

Bob Utley SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY

I. It is not the same as OT prophecy, which has the rabbinical connotation of inspired revelations from YHWH (cf. Acts 3:18, 21; Ro 16:26). Only prophets could write Scripture.

- A. Moses was called a prophet (cf. Dt. 18:15–21).
- B. History books (Joshua–Kings [except Ruth]) were called the “former prophets” (cf. Acts 3:24).
- C. Prophets usurp the place of High Priest as the source of information from God (cf. Isaiah–Malachi [except Lamentations and Daniel]).
- D. The second division of the Hebrew canon is “the Prophets” (cf. Mt. 5:17; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:25, 27; Ro 3:21).

II. In the NT the concept is used in several different ways.

- A. referring to OT prophets and their inspired message (cf. Mt. 2:23; 5:12; 11:13; 13:14; Ro 1:2)
- B. referring to a message for an individual rather than a corporate group (OT prophets spoke primarily to Israel)
- C. referring to both John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 11:9; 14:5; 21:26; Luke 1:76) and Jesus as proclaimers of the Kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 13:57; 21:11, 46; Luke 4:24; 7:16; 13:33; 24:19). Jesus also claimed to be greater than the prophets (cf. Matt. 11:9; 12:41; Luke 7:26).
- D. other prophets in the NT
 - 1. referring to early life of Jesus as recorded in Luke's Gospel (Mary's memories)
 - a. Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:41–42)
 - b. Zacharias (cf. Luke 1:67–79)
 - c. Simeon (cf. Luke 2:25–35)
 - d. Anna (cf. Luke 2:36)
 - 2. ironic predictions (cf. Caiaphas, John 11:51)
- E. referring to one who proclaims the gospel (the lists of proclaiming gifts in 1 Cor. 12:28–29; Eph. 4:11)
- F. referring to an ongoing gift in the church (cf. Matt. 23:34; Acts 13:1; 15:32; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28–29; 13:2; Eph. 4:11). Sometimes this can refer to women (cf. Luke 2:36; Acts 2:17; 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:4–5).
- G. referring to the apocalyptic book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19)

III. NT prophets

A. **They do not give inspired revelation in the same sense as did the OT prophets**(Scripture). This statement is possible because of the use of the phrase “the faith” (a sense of a completed gospel) used in Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 3:23; 6:10; Phil. 1:27; Jude 3, 20. This concept is clear from the full phrase used in Jude 1:3+, “**the faith once and for all handed down to the saints**” The “**once for all**” faith refers to the truths, doctrines, concepts, world-view teachings of Christianity. This once-given emphasis is the biblical basis for theologically limiting inspiration to the writings of the NT and not allowing later or other writings to be considered revelatory. There are many ambiguous, uncertain, and grey areas in the NT, but believers affirm by faith that everything that is “needed” for faith and practice is included with sufficient clarity in the NT (See [Sufficiency of Scripture](#)). This concept has been delineated in what is called “the revelatory triangle”

1. God has revealed Himself in time-space history ([REVELATION](#))

2. He has chosen certain human writers to document and explain His acts ([INSPIRATION](#))

3. He has given His Spirit to open the minds and hearts of humans to understand these writings, not definitively, but adequately for salvation and an effective Christian life ([ILLUMINATION](#)) The point of this is that inspiration is limited to the writers of Scripture. There are no further authoritative writings, visions, or revelations. The [canon is closed](#). We have all the truth we need to respond appropriately to God. This truth is best seen in the agreement of biblical writers versus the disagreement of sincere, godly believers. No modern writer or speaker has the level of divine leadership that the writers of Scripture did.

B. In some ways NT prophets are similar to OT prophets.

1. prediction of future events (cf. Paul, Acts 27:22; Agabus, Acts 11:27–28; 21:10–11; other unnamed prophets, Acts 20:23)

2. proclamation of judgment (cf. Paul, Acts 13:11; 28:25–28)

3. vivid portrayal of an event through symbolic acts (cf. Agabus, Acts 21:11)

C. They do proclaim the truths of the gospel sometimes in predictive ways (cf. Acts 11:27–28; 20:23; 21:10–11), but this is not the primary focus. Prophesying in I Corinthians is basically communicating the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 14:24, 39).

D. They are the Spirit's contemporary means of revealing the contemporary and practical applications of God's truth to each new situation, culture, or time period (cf. 1 Cor. 14:3).

E. They were active in the early Pauline churches (cf. 1 Cor. 11:4–5; 12:28, 29; 13:13; 14:1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 22, 24, 29, 31, 32, 37, 39; Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; 1 Thess. 5:20) and are mentioned in the [Didache](#) (written in the late first century or in the second century, date uncertain) and in Montanism of the second and third centuries in northern Africa.

IV. Have the NT gifts ceased?

A. This question is difficult to answer. It helps to clarify the issue by defining the purpose of the gifts. Are they meant to confirm the initial preaching of the gospel or are they ongoing ways for the church to minister to itself and a lost world?

B. Does one look at the history of the church to answer the question, or to the NT itself? There is no indication that the spiritual gifts were temporary in the NT. Those who try to use 1 Cor. 13:8–13 to address this issue abuse the authorial intent of the passage, which asserts that everything but love will pass away.

C. I am tempted to say that since the NT, not church history, is the authority, believers must affirm that the gifts continue. However, I believe that culture affects interpretation. Some very clear texts are no longer applicable (the holy kiss, women wearing veils, churches meeting in homes, etc). If culture affects texts then why not church history?

D. This is simply a question that cannot be definitively answered. Some believers will advocate "[cessation](#)" and others "[non-cessation](#)." In this area, as in many interpretative issues, the heart of the believer is the key. The NT is ambiguous and cultural. The difficulty is being able to decide which texts are affected by culture/history and which are eternal (cf. Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 14–19 and 69–77). Here is where the discussions of freedom and responsibility, which are found in Rom. 14:1–15:13 and 1 Cor. 8–10, are crucial. How we answer the question is important in two ways.

1. Each believer must walk in faith in the light they have. God looks at our heart and motives.

2. Each believer must allow other believers to walk in their faith understanding. There must be tolerance within biblical bounds. God wants us to love one another as He does.

E. To sum up the issue, Christianity is a life of faith and love, not a perfect theology. A relationship with Him which impacts our relationship with others is more important than definitive information or creedal perfection.

1 Corinthians 14:2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.

ICC - For he who speaks in a Tongue is speaking, not to men, but to God, for no man can understand one who in a state of rapture is speaking mystic secrets.

Amplified - For one who speaks in an [unknown] tongue speaks not to men but to God, for no one understands or catches his meaning, because in the [Holy] Spirit he utters secret truths and hidden things [not obvious to the understanding].

- **For one who speaks in a tongue** 1Co 14:9-11,16,21,22 Ge 11:7 42:23 De 28:49 2Ki 18:26 Ac 2:4-11 10:46 Ac 19:6
- **understands** Ac 22:9
- **but in his spirit** 1Co 2:7,10 13:2 15:51 Ps 49:3,4 78:2 Mt 13:11 Mk 4:11 Ro 16:25 Eph 3:3-9 6:19 Col 1:26,27 2:2 1Ti 3:9,16 Rev 10:7
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

Acts 22:9+ "And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but **did not understand the voice** of the One who was speaking to me.

SPEAKING TO GOD NOT TO MEN

For ([gar](#)) Term of explanation. Paul explains why **prophecy** is superior to and to be desired over **tongues**.

One who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands- The fact that no one **understands** (the verb is [akouo](#) which primarily means to hear but in this context describes inner comprehension, cf similar meaning in Mk 4:33+, Gal 4:21+) underscores the fact that the one who **speaks in a tongue** is not speaking to men. They can hear him speaking but it makes no sense to them. The point in this passage is that no one **understands** the language the person is speaking. And in the same way the words he speaks are **mysteries** or unknown to the hearer because they are not interpreted (see [spiritual gift of interpreting tongues](#)). They are not "mysterious ecstatic utterances!" In sum, the fact that what he says is unintelligible to others emphasizes that tongues are inferior to prophecy which Paul will go on to further explain in the following verses.

Bell - Language is an agreement between people that certain sounds have certain meanings.

Staton - A person who speaks in a foreign language cannot communicate to others, for they do not understand him. Only God understands what this person is saying ([1 Corinthians](#))

Some think Paul is referring not to human languages but to "ecstatic utterances," but that does not fit the context for later he states that these tongues can be interpreted (1 Cor 14:27-28+). Paul also states later that the speaker himself may be able to act as an interpreter (1 Cor 14:5, 13)

Utley suggests that "Tongues at Corinth seem to be unknown, articulated sounds. At Delphi one special person (usually a woman) would utter inarticulate sounds, then another would interpret these for the ones present. This procedure seems to parallel the experience of "tongues" at Corinth.

But in his spirit he speaks mysteries - There is variation in how [pneuma](#) is rendered (either with a little "s" or a big "S") Thus the **ESV, CSB, NRSV** and **NET** versions have "he is speaking mysteries by the Spirit"

Tongue (see another similar discussion of [glossa](#)) ([1100](#)) ([glossa](#)) has several meanings:

(1) Literally as an organ of speech and taste -- Mk 7:33, 35; Lk 16:24; 1 Cor 14:9 ; Rev 16:10 Study the 4 uses in James for an important description of the tongue as used in speech - Jas. 1:26+; Jas. 3:5-6,8+;

(2) **Glossa** can refer to language Acts 2:11+; Phil 2:11; Rev 5:9. Related to this meaning is **glossa** as a technical term for [glossalalia](#) or speaking in tongues. Sub-definitions vary and include speaking in unintelligible utterance (1Co 14.2), speaking in a so-called "[heavenly language](#)" (1Cor 13.1), or speaking foreign languages not learned through natural means by the speaker (Acts 2.4);

(3) by [metonymy](#) **glossa** refers to people that speak a common language ("every tribe, every **tongue**..." = Rev 5.9+);

(4) In Acts 2:3+ **glossa** refers to the shape of fire = "there appeared to them **tongues** as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them."

Glossa - 50x in 47v always translated **tongue** in NAS (CSB translates it most often as **language**) - **NOTE: Glossa** is a **keyword in 1 Corinthians 12-14** occurring 22 times) -- Mk. 7:33; Mk. 7:35; Mk. 16:17; Lk. 1:64; Lk. 16:24; Acts 2:3; Acts 2:4; Acts 2:11; Acts 2:26; Acts 10:46; Acts 19:6; Rom. 3:13; Rom. 14:11; 1 Co. 12:10; 1 Co. 12:28; 1 Co. 12:30; 1 Co. 13:1; 1 Co. 13:8; 1 Co. 14:2; 1 Co. 14:4; 1 Co. 14:5; 1 Co. 14:6; 1 Co. 14:9; 1 Co. 14:13; 1 Co. 14:14; 1 Co. 14:18; 1 Co. 14:19; 1 Co. 14:22; 1 Co. 14:23; 1 Co. 14:26; 1 Co. 14:27; 1 Co. 14:39; Phil. 2:11; Jas. 1:26; Jas. 3:5; Jas. 3:6; Jas. 3:8; 1 Pet. 3:10; 1 Jn. 3:18; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 10:11; Rev. 11:9; Rev. 13:7; Rev. 14:6; Rev. 16:10; Rev. 17:15

See also **Dialect** (language) ([1258](#)) [dialektos](#)

Speak ([2980](#)) **laleo** is the Greek verb meaning to make a sound and then to utter words. **Laleo** originally meant just sounds like the chatter of birds or the prattling of children. As a result it has a broad range of meaning and import (e.g., "to say, to chatter [especially of animals], to babble, to sound [a musical instrument]" or "to chirp" [of locusts]) In classical Greek the meanings "to babble" (as an infant) and "to croon" (as a nurse) (cf. English lullaby) or "to whisper" were common. **Laleo** later became significant in philosophical discussions. Most authorities agree that *laleō* points to the external sound more than to the content of what is said. The Gospels and Acts are responsible for about two-thirds of the occurrences in the New Testament. The emphasis of *laleō* upon the physical nature of speech is apparent in some texts (e.g., Matthew 15:31; Luke 1:20; 7:15; Acts 2:6,11; cf. above), but the message of what was spoken is more important (e.g., Luke 24:25; Acts 3:24; 9:6). **Vincent** contrasts *laleo* with the other Greek word for speak (*lego*) explaining that *laleo* "contemplates the fact rather than the substance of speech. Hence it is used of God (Heb 1:1), the point being, not what God said, but the fact that he spoke to men. On the contrary, **lego** refers to the matter ("content") of speech. The verb **lego** originally meant to pick out, and hence to use words selected as appropriate expressions of thought, and to put such words together in orderly discourse." *Laleo* in 1-2 Corinthians - 1 Co. 2:6; 1 Co. 2:7; 1 Co. 2:13; 1 Co. 3:1; 1 Co. 9:8; 1 Co. 12:3; 1 Co. 12:30; 1 Co. 13:1; 1 Co. 13:11; 1 Co. 14:2; 1 Co. 14:3; 1 Co. 14:4; 1 Co. 14:5; 1 Co. 14:6; 1 Co. 14:9; 1 Co. 14:11; 1 Co. 14:13; 1 Co. 14:18; 1 Co. 14:19; 1 Co. 14:21; 1 Co. 14:23; 1 Co. 14:27; 1 Co. 14:28; 1 Co. 14:29; 1 Co. 14:34; 1 Co. 14:35; 1 Co. 14:39; 1 Co. 15:34; 2 Co. 2:17; 2 Co. 4:13; 2 Co. 7:14; 2 Co. 11:17; 2 Co. 11:23; 2 Co. 12:4; 2 Co. 12:19; 2 Co. 13:3;

Question: [What is glossolalia?](#)

Answer: Glossolalia (ED: SEE [WIKIPEDIA](#)), a phenomenon sometimes referred to as "ecstatic utterances," is the uttering of unintelligible, language-like sounds while in a state of ecstasy. **Glossolalia** is sometimes confused with xenoglossia, which is the biblical "gift of tongues." However, whereas glossolalia is babbling in a nonexistent language, xenoglossia (ED:SEE [WIKIPEDIA](#)) is the ability to speak fluently a language the speaker has never learned.

Additionally, whereas xenoglossia is not an innate or natural ability, studies have shown that **glossolalia** is a learned behavior. Research conducted by the Lutheran Medical Center demonstrates that glossolalia is readily learned by following simple instructions. Correspondingly, it was found that students could exhibit "**speaking in tongues**" in the absence of any indications of trance-like stupor or behaviors. Another test conducted with sixty students showed that after listening to a one-minute sample of **glossolalia**, 20 percent were able to imitate it precisely. After some training, 70 percent succeeded.

In just about every part of the world, **glossolalia** can be observed. **Pagan religions all over the world are obsessed with tongues.** These include the [Shamans](#) in the Sudan, the [Shango](#) cult of the West Coast of Africa, the Zor cult of Ethiopia, the [Voodoo](#) cult in Haiti, and the [Aborigines](#) of South America and Australia. Murmuring or speaking [gibberish](#) that is construed to be deep mystical insight by holy men is an ancient practice.

There are basically two aspects to **glossolalia**.

First is talking or murmuring in language-like sounds. Practically everyone is able to do this; even children before they ever learn to speak can mimic real language, though unintelligibly. There is nothing extraordinary about this.

The other aspect of **glossolalia** is [ecstasy](#) or the demonstration of trance-like elation. There is nothing unusual about this either, although it is more difficult to do intentionally than to merely utter language-like sounds.

There are some Christians, especially within the [Pentecostal movement](#), who believe there is a supernatural explanation for **glossolalia** similar to that described in the New Testament. They believe that the chief purpose of the gift of speaking in tongues is to manifest the Holy Spirit being poured out upon them just as on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-16+), which was prophesied by

Joel (Acts 2:17).

Among those Christian churches who do espouse the practice of **glossolalia** to one degree or another, there is no uniform agreement as to its workings. For example, some are adamant that it is indeed a gift of the Holy Spirit, while others minimize its importance, saying Paul taught that the gift of “speaking in tongues” wasn’t nearly as important as the other gifts of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 13). Also, there are those wishing to avoid dividing the church on such issues by not speaking of it at all or dismissing it as a simple psychological experience. Then there are those who regard **glossolalia** as a deception of Satan himself.

Exotic languages are heard and understood throughout the world, but existing languages are not heard or understood when spoken as “ecstatic utterances” or “tongues.” What we do hear is a profusion of hype, claims, confusion, and noise. We simply cannot declare, as at the time of the first church, that “each of us hears [understands] them in his own native language” (Acts 2:8NIV+).

Simply put, the practice of glossolalia is not the biblical gift of tongues. Paul made it clear that the chief purpose of the gift of speaking in tongues was to be a sign for those who did not believe and to spread the good news, the gospel of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:19, 22). GotQuestions.org

Related Resources:

- [What is the gift of speaking in tongues? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)
- [What is the spiritual gift of interpreting tongues? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)
- [What is praying in tongues? Is praying in tongues a prayer language between a believer and God? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)
- [Do you have to speak in tongues to be saved? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)
- [What does it mean that tongues will cease? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

1 Corinthians 14:3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.

Amplified - But [on the other hand], the one who prophesies [who interprets the divine will and purpose in inspired preaching and teaching] speaks to men for their upbuilding and constructive spiritual progress and encouragement and consolation.

- edification 1Co 14:4,12,26 8:1 10:23 Ac 9:31 Ro 14:19 15:2 Eph 4:12-16,29 1Th 5:11 1Ti 1:4 Jude 1:20
- exhortation Lu 3:18 Ac 13:15 14:22 15:32 Ro 12:8 1Th 2:3 4:1 5:11,14 2Th 3:12 1Ti 4:13 6:2 2Ti 4:2 Tit 1:9 2:6,9,15 Heb 3:13 10:25 Heb 13:22 1Pe 5:12
- comfort 1Co 14:31 2Co 1:4 2:7 Eph 6:22 Col 4:8 1Th 2:11 3:2 4:18 5:11-14
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

PROPHECY IS PROFITABLE!

This is ultimate test of the gift - does it build up or tear down?

But one who prophesies ([propheteuo](#)) speaks ([laleo](#)) to men for edification and exhortation and consolation - Note contrast with tongues speak not to men but to God whereas prophecy speaks to men. Prophecy is indeed profitable for it spiritually builds up the body of Christ, exhorts them and consoles them.

Brian Bell - Paul deals with the 2 major objectives for the church: 1. The **edifying** of the believers! 2. The **conversion** of the unsaved! (1 Cor 12:25) This is the 2-fold purpose of the church,...let no church forget it! This chapter also shows what we should find when we go to church! (1) Teaching and preaching (1 Cor 14:3); praying and singing (1 Cor 14:15). A worship service should lift up the Lord & build up the saints, not puff up the participants!... Before the Scriptures were complete, Gods message came through the prophets. “So the prophet came & ministered the Word, until the Word came to minister prophecy.”(Swindoll) **Prophecies** doesn’t have to mean foretelling the future, but it is the speaking forth of the mind & counsel of God, or the will & message of God.

Alan Redpath on **prophecies** - Do not put a narrow definition on this word. It literally means preaching, testimony, witnessing in our daily life.

William Barclay translates prophecies as “the gift of forth telling the truth!” In preaching, “you may humble a man through showing him his sin, but it is a failure unless it ends by pointing him to the grace of God that can enable him to conquer it.”

W.E. Vine says, "Though much of OT prophecy was purely predictive...prophecy is not necessarily, nor even primarily, fore-telling. It is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means (Mt.26:68 Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?) it is the forth-telling of the will of God, whether to the reference of the past, the present, or the future."

Staton - one who proclaims the Word of God in a native language is communicating to others, for they are able to understand him. That kind of communication can build people up, hold people up, and cheer people up. (Ibid)

Edification (building up) (3619)(**oikodome** from **oikos** = dwelling, house + **doma** = building or **demo** = to build) is **literally** the building of a house and then any building process. (Mt 24:1, Mk 13:1, 2 are the only literal uses of **oikodome** in the NT). (See sermon by [Alexander Maclaren entitled "Edification"](#)) Earlier Paul had written "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's **building** (oikodome)." (1 Co. 3:9) In Eph 2:21, **oikodome** refers to the **church** as the building for God's indwelling. Figuratively the idea is the process of building up spiritually or spiritual strengthening. 18v in NT - Matt. 24:1; Mk. 13:1; Mk. 13:2; Rom. 14:19; Rom. 15:2; 1 Co. 3:9; 1 Co. 14:3; 1 Co. 14:5; 1 Co. 14:12; 1 Co. 14:26; 2 Co. 5:1; 2 Co. 10:8; 2 Co. 12:19; 2 Co. 13:10; Eph. 2:21; Eph. 4:12; Eph. 4:16; Eph. 4:29

Exhortation (3874)(**paraklesis** <> **pará** = side of + **kaléo** = call) refers to calling to one's side or one's aid which can be for the purpose of providing solace, comfort, consolation, exhortation, encouragement. **Exhortation** is from **ex** = out + **hortari** = to urge or incite and means incitement by argument or advice, a strong urging, an urgent appeal, an earnest persuasion, giving strong advisement, animation by arguments to a good deed or laudable conduct or course of action. 28v in NT - Lk. 2:25; Lk. 6:24; Acts 4:36; Acts 9:31; Acts 13:15; Acts 15:31; Rom. 12:8; Rom. 15:4; Rom. 15:5; 1 Co. 14:3; 2 Co. 1:3; 2 Co. 1:4; 2 Co. 1:5; 2 Co. 1:6; 2 Co. 1:7; 2 Co. 7:4; 2 Co. 7:7; 2 Co. 7:13; 2 Co. 8:4; 2 Co. 8:17; Phil. 2:1; 1 Thess. 2:3; 2 Thess. 2:16; 1 Tim. 4:13; Phlm. 1:7; Heb. 6:18; Heb. 12:5; Heb. 13:22

Consolation (3889)(**paramuthia** from **paramutheomai** from **para** = towards, beside, pictures one coming to another's side of one to stimulate or comfort + **muthéomai** = to speak from **múthos** = a tale, myth, speech) literally describes speaking to someone coming close to his or her side and speak to them in a friendly way. The meaning can develop along two main lines -- with reference to rousing up someone's will about what ought to be done (admonish to something) or with reference to what has happened rousing up hope for a good outcome (to console about something, cheer up - as in a secular use - "consolation for Alexander when he was depressed") It was used in secular Greek especially in connection with death or other tragic events. The idea is speaking kindly or soothingly so as to comfort or pacify. This word group denotes the soothing and encouraging side of exhortation, inspiring the converts to continue the desired course of action. It means to encourage in the sense of comfort and consolation which is critical in assisting spiritual growth because of the many obstacles and failures Christians can experience. This is the only use in the NT.

1 Corinthians 14:4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.

Amplified He who speaks in a [strange] tongue edifies and improves himself, but he who prophesies [interpreting the divine will and purpose and teaching with inspiration] edifies and improves the church and promotes growth [in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness, and happiness].

- **edifies himself** 1Co 14:14
- **edifies the church** 1Co 14:3,18,19
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

TONGUES EDIFY SELF PROPHECY EDIFIES CHURCH

One who speaks ([laleo](#)) **in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies** ([propheteuo](#)) (present tense - continually) **edifies the church.**

Ryrie on edifies self - In his emotions and worship but not in his mind, since, without interpretation, he does not understand what he is saying.

Church is a key word in this chapter - 1 Cor 14:4 1 Cor 14:5 1 Cor 14:12 1 Cor 14:19 1 Cor 14:23 1 Cor 14:28 1 Cor 14:33 1 Cor 14:34 1 Cor 14:35

Morris on KJV's "unknown" **tongue** - The word "unknown" is not in the original, but was supplied by the King James translators to emphasize that the language being used was one that was not known to the rest of the congregation, and so such an inspired message would be of no value to them. The gift of languages was spectacular and obviously supernatural. However, it was useful only if someone hearing it could actually understand it and interpret ("translate") it for the others, so they also could profit. It was given by the Holy Spirit both as a sign of His presence and also to convey a profitable message to at least some in the audience. The gift of **prophecy** was not as spectacular, though more profitable. Thus one possessing the gift of tongues could more easily become puffed up and be tempted to use his ability just to draw attention to himself (or herself)--that is, to "edify" ("build up") himself. In fact, it is probable that he might even open himself to demonic inspiration, for it is unlikely that the Holy Spirit would inspire a message that would be mere gibberish to its hearers. In the definitive passage on this gift, when it was first given on the day of Pentecost, the result was that "the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold...we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:6,7,11). When one really has the Spirit's "gift of tongues" and uses it properly, then such a result as this should follow. Otherwise it is useless, even dangerous.

Morris on **edifies the church** - Paul was especially concerned about the misuse of tongues or other spiritual gifts (Greek pneumatikos) "in the church" (1 Corinthians 14:19). It should be remembered that the instructions given here apply in their details only to the church at Corinth, not necessarily to other churches with different problems. For example, the problem of eating meats, discussed in chapters 8 and 10, and that of the "collection for the saints" in chapter 16, were peculiar to Corinth, as also were some of these problems with the misuse of their gifts. The broad principles, however, do apply to all churches (charity, edification, unity, etc.).

Edifies (builds up) (3618) **oikodomeo** from **oikos** = dwelling + **doma** = building [of a house] from **demo** = to build - see word study on derivative verb **sunoikodomeo** means literally to build, construct or erect a dwelling. **Oikodomeo** is used here as a metaphor meaning to build up, establish, confirm, edify. See **Alexander Maclean's** sermon below on **Edification**.

1 Corinthians 14:5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

Amplified Now I wish that you might all speak in [unknown] tongues, but more especially [I want you] to prophesy (to be inspired to preach and interpret the divine will and purpose). He who prophesies [who is inspired to preach and teach] is greater (more useful and more important) than he who speaks in [unknown] tongues, unless he should interpret [what he says], so that the church may be edified and receive good [from it].

- **Now I wish** 1Co 12:28-30 13:4 Nu 11:28,29
- **for** 1Co 14:1,3
- **except** 1Co 14:12,13,26-28 12:10,30
- **1 Corinthians 13 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

PAUL'S PREFERENCE FOR PROPHECY OVER TONGUES

Now I wish that you all spoke (laleo) in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies (propheteuo) than one who speaks (laleo) in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying (oikodome) - To **prophesy** is the greater gift for it is speaking in the native language and needs no interpreter and thus it has the greater benefit to the church. Tongues can be allowed but only if the speaker interprets. The goal is not about edifying oneself (as tongues might do, in addition to "elevating" self) but about edifying the body of Christ, for as Paul has said earlier "to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit **for the common good.**" (1 Cor 12:7+).

Believer's Study Bible - Once again, as in 1 Cor 12:31, Paul stresses the priority and importance of the gift of prophecy (1 Cor 12:, 5) because of its edifying nature for the church body as contrasted with the gift of tongues, which at Corinth was being misused for personal edification only.

Staton - While speaking in a foreign language edifies self, proclaiming the Word of God in a native language edifies the church, and that corresponds with the real purpose for gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7, 25; 1 Cor 14:12, 26). If the foreign language speaker translates

what he says, then the church is edified. Paul is not opposed to people's speaking in tongues—foreign languages—but he wants it to be done in a way that edifies the entire body, not just one individual member of that body.

Interprets (1329) (**diermeneuo** from **diá** = an intensifier + **hermeneuo** = to interpret, translate which some say is from **Hermes** the pagan god of language - English **Hermeneutics** - study of interpretation of Scripture) means to explain clearly, exactly, thoroughly. To translate from one language into another, to **expound**.

Related Resource:

- [Spiritual gift of interpreting tongues](#)

1 Corinthians 14:6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?

Amplified Now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in [unknown] tongues, how shall I make it to your advantage unless I speak to you either in revelation (disclosure of God's will to man) in knowledge or in prophecy or in instruction?

- **what will** 1Co 10:33 12:7 13:3 1Sa 12:21 Jer 16:19 23:32 Mt 16:26 2Ti 2:14 Tit 3:8 Heb 13:9
- **revelation** 1Co 14:26-30 Mt 11:25 16:17 2Co 12:1,7 Eph 1:17 Php 3:15
- **knowledge** 1Co 12:8 13:2,8,9 Ro 15:14 2Co 11:6 Eph 3:4 2Pe 1:5 3:18
- **prophecy** 1Co 14:1 13:2
- **teaching** 1Co 14:26 Ro 16:17 2Ti 3:10,16 4:2 2Jn 1:9
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

UNINTERPRETED TONGUES USELESS

But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking (laleo**) in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak(**laleo**) to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy (**propheteia**) or of teaching (**didache**)?** - Paul is saying that tongues do not profit the church apart from other gifts (**revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching**) Paul's point is that the church needs to understand what is being said and he will go on to illustrate that with two examples.

Brethren (80) (**adelphos** from **a** = denotes unity + **delphus** = a womb) literally means brother referring to a physical brother or figuratively can refer to a brother in the spiritual sense as it does in the 4 uses in chapter 14. Uses in 1-2 Corinthians 1 Co. 1:1; 1 Co. 1:10; 1 Co. 1:11; 1 Co. 1:26; 1 Co. 2:1; 1 Co. 3:1; 1 Co. 4:6; 1 Co. 5:11; 1 Co. 6:5; 1 Co. 6:6; 1 Co. 6:8; 1 Co. 7:12; 1 Co. 7:14; 1 Co. 7:15; 1 Co. 7:24; 1 Co. 7:29; 1 Co. 8:11; 1 Co. 8:12; 1 Co. 8:13; 1 Co. 9:5; 1 Co. 10:1; 1 Co. 11:33; 1 Co. 12:1; 1 Co. 14:6; 1 Co. 14:20; 1 Co. 14:26; 1 Co. 14:39; 1 Co. 15:1; 1 Co. 15:6; 1 Co. 15:31; 1 Co. 15:50; 1 Co. 15:58; 1 Co. 16:11; 1 Co. 16:12; 1 Co. 16:15; 1 Co. 16:20; 2 Co. 1:1; 2 Co. 1:8; 2 Co. 2:13; 2 Co. 8:1; 2 Co. 8:18; 2 Co. 8:22; 2 Co. 8:23; 2 Co. 9:3; 2 Co. 9:5; 2 Co. 11:9; 2 Co. 12:18; 2 Co. 13:11

Profit (5623) (**opheleo** from **ophéllo** = heap up or from **ophelos** = increase, profit) means to provide assistance, with emphasis upon the resulting benefit. In 1 Cor 13:3 it is in the passive sense meaning to have benefit from or to be profitable.

Revelation (602) **apokalupsis** from **apó** = from + **kalúpto** = cover, conceal, English = apocalypse) literally means cover from and so the idea is to remove that which conceals something. **Apokalupsis** conveys the idea of "taking the lid off" and means to remove the cover and expose to open view that which was heretofore not visible, known or disclosed. It means to make manifest or reveal a thing previously secret or unknown. It describes removing of a veil (an unveiling) or covering thus exposing to open view what was concealed. In all its uses, **revelation** refers to something or someone, once hidden, becoming visible and now made fully known.

Knowledge (1108) **gnosis** from **ginosko** = to know especially experientially) in simple terms is the possession of information of what is known. **Gnosis** describes the comprehension or intellectual grasp of something. **Gnosis** refers to knowledge gained by experience in contrast to intuitive knowledge. Stated another way **gnosis** is experientially known, functional ("working") knowledge gleaned from first-hand/personal experience which in turn connects theory to application. E.g., [the Gnostics](#) boasted of their

"applied knowledge" gained by their personal spiritual experiences – which was (is) disastrous! Thus **Gnosis** was not simply an intellectual (head) knowledge of Christ, but referred to a more intimate, experiential, personal knowledge. **Gnosis** can also stand for the content of what is known or what one knows

Teaching (instruction) (1322) **didache** from **didasko** = to give instruction in a formal or informal setting with the highest possible development of the pupil as the goal; English = didactic = intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive) is a noun which describes the activity of teaching (instruction).

1 Corinthians 14:7 Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?

Amplified If even inanimate musical instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone [listening] know or understand what is played?

- things 1Co 13:1
- except 1Co 14:8 Nu 10:2-10 Mt 11:17 Lu 7:32
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

USELESS TONGUES COMPARED TO TONELESS MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? - If the musical instruments just make sounds but the sound is not recognized unless there is a melody. In the same way tongues must have intelligible speech to be of any use.

Staton -- Speaking content in a foreign language without translation camouflages rather than clarifies that content. To do so would be like playing an instrument without meaningful notes. The noise would be heard but not a message or communication through the tune.

1 Corinthians 14:8 For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

Amplified And if the war bugle gives an uncertain (indistinct) call, who will prepare for battle?

- Nu 10:9 Jos 6:4-20 Jud 7:16-18 Ne 4:18-21 Job 39:24,25 Isa 27:13 Am 3:6 Eph 6:11-18
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

A BUNGLED BUGLE IS A BAD BATTLE CRY

For (gar) Term of explanation. Paul is elaborating on the ineffectiveness of tongues without interpretation by asking a rhetorical question.

If the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?- Answer? No one! Everyone knows that would be the case.

Staton -- The trumpet is blown to give a clear call; but if meaningless noise is blown, then communication is lost. By the same token, a person who speaks in a language not known to others is just speaking noise into the air as far as the people who hear him are concerned. What he says simply does not communicate content with clarity. (Ibid)

Morris - This pungent question applies not only to the use of unintelligible languages in the church but to its whole ministry. If the prophets, teachers, pastors or evangelists do not proclaim God's Word in its truth and fullness, without compromising with evolutionism or current standards of worldly conduct or anything else, then the whole congregation will be unfit for service as "good soldier[s] of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3).

1 Corinthians 14:9 So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

Amplified Just so it is with you; if you in the [unknown] tongue speak words that are not intelligible, how will anyone understand what you are saying? For you will be talking into empty space!

- easy Gr. significant, 1Co 14:19
- for 1Co 9:26
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

CONTINUAL CALL FOR CLEAR SPEECH

So also you, unless you utter by the tongue ([glossa](#)) speech ([logos](#)) that is clear, how will it be known ([ginosko](#)) what is spoken ([laleo](#))? For you will be speaking ([laleo](#)) into the air - Words uttered in a foreign language will not be understood and are like words that are "[blowing in the wind](#)."

1 Corinthians 14:10 There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning.

Amplified There are, I suppose, all these many [to us unknown] tongues in the world [somewhere], and none is destitute of [its own power of] expression and meaning.

- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning- Paul affirms that speaking in a foreign tongue can have meaning. He does not dispute that fact. The point of course, is not that they don't have meaning, but that they are spoken to the wrong audience, one who cannot comprehend the foreign tongue.

1 Corinthians 14:11 If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.

Amplified But if I do not know the force and significance of the speech (language), I shall seem to be a foreigner to the one who speaks [to me], and the speaker who addresses [me] will seem a foreigner to me.

- I shall 1Co 14:21 Ac 28:2,4 Ro 1:14 Col 3:11
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

FUTILITY OF SPEAKING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks ([laleo](#)) a barbarian, and the one who speaks ([laleo](#)) will be a barbarian to me - Amplified - "I shall seem to be a foreigner to the one who speaks [to me], and the speaker who addresses [me] will seem a foreigner to me."

Staton - Without the corresponding foreign ears, foreign languages are just that—foreign! Thus, they do not serve the church.

Barbarian ([915](#)) [barbaros](#) originally referred to someone who was not Greek and with no negative connotation. The inhabitants spoke primarily [Punic](#) (Carthaginian), an extinct variety of the [Phoenician language](#), a [Canaanite language](#) of the [Semitic family](#) spoken in Northwest Africa and several Mediterranean islands. [Kitto](#) writes "it merely meant 'people who make noises like 'bar bar' instead of talking Greek.'" (Ro 1:14) So originally **barbaros** had to do with language rather than behavior, although conduct did later enter the picture (cf. the verb barbarizō). The uses in Acts (Acts 28:2, 4) clearly have no negative sense, for the natives were kind. They simply could not speak Greek. Paul alludes to the association with language writing "If then I

do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me." (1 Cor 14:11). There may be some negative overtones in Col 3:11, some suggesting here the name suggests a pattern of behavior associated with a low cultural level, however even here the primary emphasis is upon contrast to one who is Greek. **BDAG** - (1) focus on strangeness of language: pert. to using a language that is unintelligible to outsiders, foreign-speaking, of foreign tongue. (2) with focus on non-Hellenic association: pertaining to not speaking Greek or participating in Greek. culture

1 Corinthians 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual [gifts], seek to abound for the edification of the church.

Amplified So it is with yourselves; since you are so eager and ambitious to possess spiritual endowments and manifestations of the [Holy] Spirit, [concentrate on] striving to excel and to abound [in them] in ways that will build up the church.

NET 1 Corinthians 14:12 It is the same with you. Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, seek to abound in order to strengthen the church.

NLT 1 Corinthians 14:12 And the same is true for you. Since you are so eager to have the special abilities the Spirit gives, seek those that will strengthen the whole church.

ESV 1 Corinthians 14:12 So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

NIV 1 Corinthians 14:12 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

GNT 1 Corinthians 14:12 ο τω ς κα με ς, πε ζηλωτα στε πνευμ των, πρ ς τ ν ο κοδομ ν τ ς κκλη ς ο ς ζητε τε να περισσε ητε.

KJV 1 Corinthians 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

YLT 1 Corinthians 14:12 so also ye, since ye are earnestly desirous of spiritual gifts, for the building up of the assembly seek that ye may abound;

ASV 1 Corinthians 14:12 So also ye, since ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may abound unto the edifying of the church.

CSB 1 Corinthians 14:12 So also you-- since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church.

MIT 1 Corinthians 14:12 The same principle is valid in your case. Because you are eager for spiritual manifestations, seek to build up the church.

- **So also you, since** 1Co 14:1 12:7,31 Tit 2:14
- **spiritual gifts** , 1Co 14:32
- **seek** 1Co 14:3,4,26
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

BE ZEALOUS FOR EDIFICATION

So also you, since you are (present tense - continually) **zealous of spiritual gifts**, **seek** to (present tense - continually) **abound** ([perisseuo](#)) **for the edification** ([oikodome](#)) **of the church** - Paul commands them to follow through on their eagerness regarding spiritual gifts (**seek** is [present imperative](#)), but with the specific purpose of desiring to build up the body of Christ.

Staton - He wants the members in Corinth to use God's gifts for building up the church. As people appreciate music if it is played properly, and as troops respond to a trumpet call if it is played correctly (that is, to wake up, to prepare for battle, to retreat, to rest, etc.), so he wants the church to appreciate the communication that comes from other members within the church. But that can only be done if people understand the content of that communication.

Zealous (2207) ([zelotes](#) from [zeo](#) = to boil, be hot or glow) describes one zealous (fervent and enthusiastically devoted) for or eagerly desirous of something. A zelotes is one who is earnestly committed to a side or cause

and thus could be described as an enthusiast, an adherent, or a loyalist. **Zealous** (English) - marked by active interest and enthusiasm; filled with or inspired by intense enthusiasm or zeal; ardent; fervent; marked by fervent partisanship for a person, a cause, or an ideal; full of great energy, effort, and enthusiasm, especially in your political or religious ideas.

1 Corinthians 14:13 Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue **pray** that he may interpret.

Amplified Therefore, the person who speaks in an [unknown] tongue should pray [for the power] to interpret and explain what he says.

- **pray** 1Co 14:27,28 12:10,30 Mk 11:24 Joh 14:13,14 Ac 1:14 4:29-31 8:15
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Therefore - In light of the goal of all speech in the church to be for building up Paul gives the tongue speakers a command.

Let one who speaks ([laleo](#)) **in a tongue** ([glossa](#)) **pray** that he may interpret ([dierneneuo](#)) - Paul says if one desires to speak in a foreign language, he needs to ask God ([present imperative](#)) for the ability to interpret or to unfold the meaning of what is said, so that it will be useful words to the body.

Morris on interpret - The word "interpret" in this verse is the Greek *dierneneuo*, meaning "explain" or "expound" or (if from another language) "translate." It is also the word used in 1 Corinthians 12:30; 14:5; 14:27; 14:28. The only two other occurrences in the New Testament are in Acts 9:36 and Luke 24:2. However, the word translated "interpretation" in 1 Corinthians 12:10 and 14:26 is *hermeneia*, from which we get our English word "hermeneutics" (see also its only other occurrences in John 1:38,42; 9:7 and Hebrews 7:2). It seems to be used only of actual "translation" applications. In any case, Paul stresses here again that speaking in a foreign tongue was of no value if no one could understand what the speaker said. The gift of interpretation enabled its possessor to translate what someone of another nation was saying, an ability which would have particular value when trying to communicate with "barbarians" (1 Corinthians 14:11). If there was no such person present, however, then the responsibility fell to one who would presume to speak to the congregation in a foreign language and also to translate it for them. This restriction obviously put a serious curb on the wanton display of the gift of tongues to a group of people unable to comprehend its message.

Pray ([4336](#)) ([proseuchomai](#) from **pros** = toward, facing, before [emphasizing the direct approach of the one who prays in seeking God's face] + **euchomai** = originally to speak out, utter aloud, express a wish, then to pray or to vow. Greek technical term for invoking a deity) in the NT is always used of prayer addressed to God (to Him as the object of faith and the One who will answer one's prayer) and means to speak consciously (with or without vocalization) to Him, with a definite aim (See noun [proseuche](#)). **Proseuchomai** encompasses all the aspects of prayer -- submission, confession, petition, supplication (may concern one's own need), intercession (concerned with the needs of others), praise, and thanksgiving. Vine says that **proseuchomai** carries with it a notion of **worship** (but see the Greek word for worship = [proskuneo](#)) which is not present in the other words for prayer (eg, *aiteo*, *deomai*, both of which involve spoken supplication)

Question - [What is praying in tongues? Is praying in tongues a prayer language between a believer and God?](#)

Answer: As a background, please read our article on the [gift of speaking in tongues](#). There are four primary Scripture passages that are cited as evidence for praying in tongues: Romans 8:26; 1 Corinthians 14:4-17; Ephesians 6:18; and Jude verse 20. Ephesians 6:18 and Jude 20 mention "praying in the Spirit." However, tongues as a prayer language is not a likely interpretation of "praying in the Spirit."

Romans 8:26 teaches us, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." Two key points make it highly unlikely that Romans 8:26 is referring to tongues as a prayer language. First, Romans 8:26 states that it is the Spirit who "groans," not believers. Second, Romans 8:26 states that the "groans" of the Spirit "cannot be expressed." The very essence of speaking in tongues is uttering words.

That leaves us with 1 Corinthians 14:4-17 and verse 14 especially: "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful." First Corinthians 14:14 distinctly mentions "praying in tongues." What does this mean? First, studying the context is immensely valuable. First Corinthians chapter 14 is primarily a comparison/contrast of the gift of speaking in tongues and the gift of

prophecy. Verses 2-5 make it clear that Paul views prophecy as a gift superior to tongues. At the same time, Paul exclaims the value of tongues and declares that he is glad that he speaks in tongues more than anyone (verse 18).

Acts chapter 2 describes the first occurrence of the gift of tongues. On the day of Pentecost, the apostles spoke in tongues. Acts chapter 2 makes it clear that the apostles were speaking in a human language (Acts 2:6-8). The word translated “tongues” in both Acts chapter 2 and 1 Corinthians chapter 14 is *glossa* which means “language.” It is the word from which we get our modern English word “glossary.” Speaking in tongues was the ability to speak in a language the speaker does not know, in order to communicate the gospel to someone who does speak that language. In the multicultural area of Corinth, it seems that the gift of tongues was especially valuable and prominent. The Corinthian believers were able to better communicate the gospel and God’s Word as a result of the gift of tongues. However, Paul made it abundantly clear that even in this usage of tongues, it was to be interpreted or “translated” (1 Corinthians 14:13, 27). A Corinthian believer would speak in tongues, proclaiming God’s truth to someone who spoke that language, and then that believer, or another believer in the church, was to interpret what was spoken so that the entire assembly could understand what was said.

What, then, is praying in tongues, and how is it different than speaking in tongues? First Corinthians 14:13-17 indicates that praying in tongues is also to be interpreted. As a result, it seems that praying in tongues was offering a prayer to God. This prayer would minister to someone who spoke that language, but would also need to be interpreted so that the entire body could be edified.

This interpretation does not agree with those who view praying in tongues as a prayer language. This alternate understanding can be summarized as follows: praying in tongues is a personal prayer language between a believer and God (1 Corinthians 13:1) that a believer uses to edify himself (1 Corinthians 14:4). This interpretation is unbiblical for the following reasons: 1) How could praying in tongues be a private prayer language if it is to be interpreted (1 Corinthians 14:13-17)? 2) How could praying in tongues be for self-edification when Scripture says that the spiritual gifts are for the edification of the church, not the self (1 Corinthians 12:7)? 3) How can praying in tongues be a private prayer language if the gift of tongues is a “sign to unbelievers” (1 Corinthians 14:22)? 4) The Bible makes it clear that not everyone possesses the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:11, 28-30). How could tongues be a gift for self-edification if not every believer can possess it? Do we not all need to be edified?

Some understand praying in tongues to be a “secret code language” that prevents Satan and his demons from understanding our prayers and thereby gaining an advantage over us. This interpretation is unbiblical for the following reasons: 1) The New Testament consistently describes tongues as a human language, and Satan and his demons are well able to understand human languages. 2) The Bible records countless believers praying in their own language, out loud, with no concern of Satan intercepting the prayer. Even if Satan and/or his demons hear and understand the prayers we pray, they have absolutely no power to prevent God from answering the prayers according to His will. We know that God hears our prayers, and that fact makes it irrelevant whether Satan and his demons hear and understand our prayers.

What do we say, then, about the many Christians who have experienced praying in tongues and find it to be very personally edifying? First, we must base our faith and practice on Scripture, not experience. We must view our experiences in light of Scripture, not interpret Scripture in light of our experiences. Second, many of the cults and world religions also report occurrences of speaking in tongues/praying in tongues. Obviously the Holy Spirit is not gifting these unbelieving individuals. So, it seems that the demons are able to counterfeit the gift of speaking in tongues. This should cause us to compare even more carefully our experiences with Scripture. Third, studies have shown how speaking/praying in tongues can be a learned behavior. Through hearing and observing others speak in tongues, a person can learn the procedure, even subconsciously. This is the most likely explanation for the vast majority of instances of speaking/praying in tongues among Christians. Fourth, the feeling of “self-edification” is natural. The human body produces adrenaline and endorphins when it experiences something new, exciting, emotional, and/or disconnected from rational thought.

Praying in tongues is most definitely an issue on which Christians can respectfully and lovingly agree to disagree. Praying in tongues is not what determines salvation. Praying in tongues is not what separates a mature Christian from an immature Christian. Whether or not there is such a thing as praying in tongues as a personal prayer language is not a fundamental of the Christian faith. So, while we believe the biblical interpretation of praying in tongues leads away from the idea of a private prayer language for personal edification, we also recognize that many who practice such are our brothers and sisters in Christ and are worthy of our love and respect.GotQuestions.org

1 Corinthians 14:14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

Amplified For if I pray in an [unknown] tongue, my spirit [by the Holy Spirit within me] prays, but my mind is unproductive [it bears no fruit and helps nobody].

- **my spirit** 1Co 14:2,15,16,19
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

For if I pray ([proseuchomai](#)) in a tongue ([glossa](#)), my spirit prays([proseuchomai](#)) , but my mind is unfruitful - Uninterpreted tongues do not engage the mind. The mind gets no benefit from praying in a tongue even though the spirit prays or "from rhapsodical praying that may even move my spirit." (ATR). Paul is saying that to pray in an unknown tongue is unproductive and meaningless (unless he has the gift of interpretation).

Morris on mind is unfruitful - A person with the gift of languages "edifieth himself" (1 Corinthians 14:4) by praying in that language, but the edification will be only emotional since he cannot understand it. It may bring a blessing of sorts to the individual, assuming he does it when by himself, but according to Paul it should not be done in the church, unless he or another translator is there to explain what was said (1 Corinthians 14:28).

Ryrie - Since praying or singing (in church or in private) in uninterpreted tongues does not engage the mind, it is better to pray or sing in a language everyone understands so that the gift may be used fruitfully.

Mind ([3563](#))([nous](#) refers to a basic meaning direct one's inner sense to an object.**Nous** refers to human intellectual perception and moral judgment. It is the God given faculty of perceiving and understanding and is the channel through which truth reaches the heart. **Nous** describes everything in the realm of the intellect, including one's will, emotions, ability to think, reason and decide. **New Linguistic & Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament on Nous**- A comprehensive name for the thoughts existing in the conscience; understanding, the reasoning faculty, man's power of judgment; thinking, understanding; it is the constellation of thoughts and assumptions which make up the consciousness of the person and acts as the agent of rational discernment and communication; the thinking power, reason in its moral quality and activity; reasoning capacity, especially as concerns moral action; the intellect in its judging faculty

Related Resources:

- [Mind by Phillip Towner](#)
- [Mind - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Mind](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Mind \(2\)](#) [Mind](#)
- [Mind](#) - Holman

1 Corinthians 14:15 What is *the outcome* then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.

Amplified Then what am I to do? I will pray with my spirit [by the Holy Spirit that is within me], but I will also pray [intelligently] with my mind and understanding; I will sing with my spirit [by the Holy Spirit that is within me], but I will sing [intelligently] with my mind and understanding also.

- **What** 1Co 10:19 Ro 3:5 8:31 Php 1:18
- **I will pray with the spirit** 1Co 14:19 Joh 4:23,24 Ro 1:9 Eph 5:17-20 6:18 Col 3:16 Jude 1:20
- **and I will sing** Ps 47:7 Ro 12:1,2
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

PAUL SEEKS BALANCE BY ENGAGING MIND

What is *the outcome* then? I will pray ([proseuchomai](#)) with the spirit and I will pray ([proseuchomai](#)) with the mind ([nous](#)) also; I will sing ([psallo](#)) with the spirit and I will sing ([psallo](#)) with the mind ([nous](#)) also - Note the balance between spirit and mind, not focusing on the former at the expense of the latter.

THOUGHT - I fear much of modern music appeals more to the emotion than to the mind. One could almost get a degree in theology by studying the great old hymns, which engage the mind with deep Biblical truths about God. Sadly, such is not always the case with modern catchy choruses. I recall reading a testimony of many people coming to faith in Christ at the playing of a hymn [Arise My Soul Arise](#). Ira Sankey records in his book, My Life and the Story of the Gospel Hymns, the following account of the amazing power of the gospel as

articulated in this song: "I have a record," said a Wesleyan missionary laboring in the West Indies, "of two hundred persons, young and old, who received the most direct evidence of the forgiveness of their sins while singing 'Arise, my soul.' The conversion of the greater number of these persons took place while I was a missionary abroad." I tried to get a worship leader of a large church to consider using this hymn but sadly he declined, even when I sent him the original story from Ira Sankey's book (see below)! So much for engaging the mind!!!

Ira Sankey records the following account of the amazing power of the Gospel as articulated in Wesley's words in [Arise My Soul, Arise](#): (O, for hymns so richly laden with Gospel truth in the modern church, so rich that men and women are saved even by singing the words!)

First published in 1742 under the title, "Behold the Man," this became one of the most useful of Charles Wesley's numerous hymns. In universal use in English countries, and translated into many languages, **it has been the direct instrumentality in the conversion of thousands of souls.** It has found expression in the exultant cry on the lips of many a dying saint.

"I have a record," said a Wesleyan missionary laboring in the West Indies, "of two hundred persons, young and old, who received the most direct evidence of the forgiveness of their sins while singing 'Arise, my soul.' The conversion of the greater number of these persons took place while I was a missionary abroad."
(from [Story of Gospel Hymns by Ira Sankey, 1907](#))

Believer's Study Bible - Paul reaffirms his own intention both to sing and to pray with his full understanding, as well as with the Spirit. The Corinthians were reveling in ecstatic experiences. Paul maintains that it is far better to proceed in prayer and song with understanding and points out that the accompanying leadership of the Holy Spirit is present.

1 Corinthians 14:16 Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?

- **bless** 1Co 14:2,14
- **ungifted** 1Co 14:23,24 Isa 29:11,12 Joh 7:15 Ac 4:13
- **Amen** 1Co 11:24 16:24 Nu 5:22 De 27:15-26 1Ki 1:36 1Ch 16:36 Ps 41:13 Ps 72:19 89:52 106:48 Jer 28:6 Mt 6:13 28:20 Mk 16:20 Joh 21:25 Rev 5:14 22:20
- **at** 1Co 1:4-8
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

INABILITY TO SAY "AMEN"

Otherwise if you bless ([eulogeo](#)) **in the spirit** ([pneuma](#)) **only** - He is saying blessing in tongues.

How will the one who fills ([anapleroo](#)) **the place of the ungifted say the "Amen"** ([amen](#)) **at your giving of thanks** ([eucharistia](#)), **since he does not know** ([eido](#)) **what you are saying?** - ESV on fills the place of the ungifted = "how can anyone in the position of an outsider." This is straightforward. How could say "Amen" to something you could not understand? Ungifted (*idiotes*) means literally "in private life" and in context refers to one who is a nonmember of the church, and thus is instructed and inquiring. This is "Seeker Unfriendly" to the max!

Robertson on ungifted (*idiotes*) - common from Herodotus for private person (Acts 4:13), unskilled (2 Cor. 11:6), uninitiated (unlearned) in the gift of tongues as here and 1 Cor. 14:23-24. In the synagogues the Jews used responsive amens at the close of prayers (Neh. 5:13; Neh. 8:6; 1 Chron. 16:36; Psalm 106:48).

Ungifted (2399) (*idiotes*) BDAG says is "a person who is relatively unskilled or inexperienced in some activity or field of knowledge," "strictly, one in private life layman or nonspecialist, with the specific sense taken from contrast in the context; (1) uneducated, unlearned (AC 4.13); (2) nonmember of a community, uninstructed person, inquirer (1C 14.16, 23, 24); (3) unskilled, untrained (2C 11.6)" (Friberg)

Gilbrant - In its early occurrences *idiōtēs* designated the private citizen in contrast to the public official. *Idiōtēs* refers to the laity as over against the professional clergy in religious contexts. Jewish rabbis employed *idiōtēs* as a loanword in the form of *hedyot*. It became a term of disparagement applied to those common,

uneducated people who did not know or study the Law. But in respect to God, everyone was hedyot! It occurs only in Proverbs 6:8 in the **Septuagint**, but this verse has no Hebrew equivalent and is untranslated by modern versions. **Idiōtēs** occurs six times in the New Testament. In Acts 4:13 the rulers and legal experts label the disciples as **idiōtēs**; the other five instances are Pauline. Paul said of himself that he was unskilled in speech (2 Corinthians 11:6). This probably means that he had not devoted himself to the same philosophical training in rhetoric as his opponents—perhaps itinerant philosophers— had done (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Otherwise Paul employed idiōtēs in another sense in 1 Corinthians 14. In verse 16 he referred to idiōtēs as those who were unable to interpret the speaking in tongues, and who were therefore unable to say “amen” to a prayer in tongues. In verses 23 and 24 the idiōtēs means a person somewhere between an unbeliever (apistos [566]) and a believer, probably an outsider who happens to be present in the assembly; perhaps an individual inquiring into the Faith. (Bauer offers “inquirer” as an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:23; this seems very plausible.) ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

Idiotes 5v ungifted(1), ungifted man(1), ungifted men(1), unskilled(1), untrained(1). - Acts 4:13; 1 Co. 14:16; 1 Co. 14:23; 1 Co. 14:24; 2 Co. 11:6

1 Corinthians 14:17 For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.

- but 1Co 14:4,6
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

GRATITUDE THAT FAILS TO EDIFY

For you are (present tense - continually) **giving thanks well enough** ([kalos](#)), **but the other person is not edified** ([oikodomeo](#)) - **NET** = "you are certainly giving thanks well, but the other person is not strengthened." Tongue's gratitude fails to edify because they do not know what is being said. **Edification** of the Body is Paul's ultimate goal (repeated in 1 Cor 14:3 1 Cor 14:4 1 Cor 14:5 1 Cor 14:12 1 Cor 14:17 1 Cor 14:26) Edification should be the goal of ever sermon, every song (hymn), every prayer, and all for the glory of God. How is your church doing in this crucial area of edification?

Giving thanks (2168) [eucharisteo](#) from **eucháristos** = thankful, grateful, well-pleasing - Indicates the obligation of being thankful to someone for a favor done <> in turn from **eú** = well + **charízomai** = to grant, give.; English - Eucharist) means to show that one is under obligation by being thankful. To show oneself as grateful (most often to God in the NT). **Eucharisteo** is a word that at its very core (**eu** = good + **charis** = grace) means to acknowledge how **good grace** is!

1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all;

- 1Co 1:4-6 4:7
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

I thank ([eucharisteo](#)) **God, I speak** ([laleo](#)) **in tongues** ([glossa](#)) **more than you all** - Apparently Paul makes this claim to emphasize that his instructions about tongues come from one who likely could out talk them all.

Robertson - Astonishing claim by Paul that doubtless had a fine effect.

Morris - The Apostle Paul was well educated and could undoubtedly speak in Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and possibly other languages as well. If, in addition, he had the supernatural gift of tongues, as this verse may imply, there is no record of his ever using it. He stressed that he would far rather speak in the church words that all could understand (1 Corinthians 14:19).

1 Corinthians 14:19 however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

- in the 1Co 14:4,21,22

- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

STRIKING CONTRAST 5 TO 10,000 WORDS

however, in the church I desire to speak ([laleo](#)) five words with my mind ([nous](#)) so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue ([glossa](#)) - Paul exaggerates to emphasize how he would rather speak intelligent speech rather than unintelligible speech. Nothing could be any clearer about Paul's practice of tongues than this verse. The point is that he used tongues in private worship but not in the assembly.

Pulpit Commentary - No disparagement of the prominence given to glossolaly could be more emphatic. "Rather half of ten of the edifying sort than a thousand times ten of the other" (Besser). ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Robertson - Private ecstasy is one thing (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-9) but not in church worship.

Believer's Study Bible - Again, the basic unacceptability of the use (or better "misuse") of tongues when the church is assembled together is the theme of Paul's statement. Just five words, clearly understood, are preferable.

Instruct ([2727](#)) [katecheo](#) from **katá** = down or intensive + **echo** = sound, our English "echo") (see related word [sounded forth = execheo](#)) means to literally to sound down on or into the ears. From this the derived meaning is "to inform" or "to instruct orally." The idea is to re-sound, to re-echo, to teach by by insistent repetition into the ears as the Arabs do when learning the Koran (learning aloud). This formal instruction is the basis of the critical discrimination or discernment. In summary, **teaching** involves the oral passing on of information about the things of God. It is catechizing, informing by word of mouth. 7v - nstruct(1), instructed(2), taught(2), teaches(1), told(2). Lk. 1:4; Acts 18:25; Acts 21:21; Acts 21:24; Rom. 2:18; 1 Co. 14:19; Gal. 6:6

1 Corinthians 14:20 Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature

- not 1Co 3:1,2 13:11 Ps 119:99 Isa 11:3 Ro 16:19 Eph 4:14,15 Php 1:9 Heb 5:12,13 6:1-3 2Pe 3:18
- malice Ps 131:1,2 Mt 11:25 18:3 19:4 Mk 10:15 1Pe 2:2
- but Ps 119:99
- mature 1Co 2:6 Php 3:15
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Brethren ([adelphos](#)), **do not be children in your thinking** - Paul gives them a command in the [present imperative with a negative](#) to stop being like small children in their understanding (regarding tongues). Paul's point is some were acting (thinking) like small children in placing such high value on their spectacular experiences of speaking in tongues! Like little children, they did not understand the purpose of the spiritual gifts. It's like giving an Iphone to a 1 year old. It might amaze him but he has no clue as to its purpose and function.

Yet in evil be infants, - Here Paul uses a rare verb *nepiazō* (only here) commands them [\(present imperative\)](#) to continually be like very young children in regard to things that are wicked. Paul is saying that the believer should always be childlike when it comes to evil things. Kids are sinners and can be very naughty but are generally not into overtly evil things. (Mt 11:25 = "revealed them to infants" = root noun [nepios](#)), but never childish ([nepios](#) is used in 1 Cor 13:11; and in Eph 4:14).

but in your thinking be mature ([teleios](#) - adult) - The word means reaching a goal, and the goal for Paul was not just "grown up" age wise but grown up in Christ-likeness. So here is his third command ([present imperative](#)) for the saints to continually be becoming grown ups in thinking. This is a good command for all of us to apply. I am reminded of Peter's parting command in 2 Peter 3:18+ to **"grow** ([present imperative](#)) in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

1 Corinthians 14:21 In the Law it is written, "BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME," says the Lord.

- **The law** - Jn 10:34 Ro 3:19
- **With** De 28:49 Isa 28:11-12 Jer 5:15

- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 28:49 "The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand,

Isaiah 28:11-12 Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, 12He who said to them, "Here is rest, give rest to the weary," And, "Here is repose," but they would not listen.

Jeremiah 5:15 Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," declares the LORD. "It is an enduring nation, It is an ancient nation, A nation whose language you do not know, Nor can you understand what they say.

In the Law it is written, "BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK([laleo](#)) TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME," says the Lord - Paul's quote from the Law indicates that although someone speaks in another language, it does not guarantee that the hearers will listen to God.

What the Bible Teaches - here it includes the prophets, specifically Isa 28:11-12 (see also Deut 28:49; Jer 5:15). He wants to teach them a lesson from the event referred to in the passage. It refers to a time in the history of Israel, when they had turned away from God, no longer listened to His prophets, and were marked by sin and disobedience. God then told them of His judgment in the form of invasion by the Assyrians. All around them they would hear a language they did not understand. It was a sign of judgment; yet they would remain in their sin and refuse to listen. Note carefully the use of the word "tongues". It clearly refers to the language of the Assyrians. In the following verse (v. 22) Paul draws his conclusion from the incident in the OT, as "wherefore" indicates. He refers to the gift of tongues, by the same word "tongues" as in this verse, thus establishing that a known language is in view. (What the Bible teaches – 1 and 2 Corinthians)

Morris - This passage is quoted from Isaiah 28:11, with a possible reference also to Deuteronomy 28:49. The Lord was warning in both that he would teach unbelieving Israel obedience by punishing them through a nation of different language. This further proves that the "tongues" of this chapter are not ecstatic utterances but intelligible foreign languages. As the invading language of an alien people would speak forcibly to the rebellious Israelites, so the miraculous manifestation of a sermon given in a language unknown to the speaker, but known to the hearers, would be a convincing "sign" to unbelievers that God was, indeed, speaking to them (1 Corinthians 14:22). This had been exactly the effect of the tongues on the day of Pentecost, and so it should be whenever they are used (if ever) today. These "tongues" were (and are today) being badly misused, and Paul was trying diligently to circumscribe their use to situations comparable to that at Pentecost.

Believer's Study Bible - Tongues or ecstatic utterance was a common religious practice in pagan religion for centuries prior to this. A portion of the confusion about "tongues" may result from two different cases being discussed in the N.T. In effect, Corinthian ecstatic utterance was a poor imitation of the gift of tongues given by the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 at Pentecost. Verse 21 quotes Isa. 28:11, 12, which clearly has reference to the speaking of a diversity of known human languages. There follows an apparent contradiction between vv. 22 and 23. In v. 22, tongues are a sign "to unbelievers." But in v. 23, "the uninformed" or unbelievers are likely to conclude that insanity exists in one who thus speaks in tongues. But there is no contradiction. Verse 22 has reference to the actual gift of tongues as in Acts 2. There, the unbelievers heard the gospel in their own dialects and were both amazed and convinced by the sign. However, v. 23 warns that the exercise of the Corinthian imitation, which was only the frenzied concoction of sounds, would have an effect of repugnance on unbelievers (cf. 12:10, note). On the other hand, vv. 24, 25 extol the virtues of the gift of prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14:22 So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.

- for a Mk 16:17 Ac 2:6-12,32-36
- not to 1Ti 1:9
- but for 1Co 14:3
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**TONGUES ARE SIGN
FOR UNBELIEVERS**

So then - Therefore.

Tongues ([glossa](#)) **are for a sign** ([semeion](#)), **not to those who believe** ([pisteuo](#)) **but to unbelievers** ([apistos](#)); From the quotation in v21 from the Law, Paul concludes that tongues were a sign not to believers but to unbelievers. A sign of what? A sign points to something. Supposedly the sign of the tongues would point to something supernatural transpiring.

but prophecy ([propheteia](#)) *is for a sign*, **not to unbelievers** ([apistos](#)) **but to those who believe** ([pisteuo](#)) - In contrast not tongues but prophecy for believers, because prophecy edifies believers (see the three effects edification, exhortation, and consolation in 1 Cor 14:3+).

Morris - Before the New Testament was codified, the gift of prophecy and the comparable gift of teaching (which would supplement and eventually supersede that of prophecy) were intended primarily to build up believers, and thus were far more beneficial in the church than the gift of tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:23 Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?

- **the whole** 1Co 11:18
- **will** Ho 9:7 Joh 10:20 Ac 2:13 26:24
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

A ROOM FULL OF DISORDER AND CONFUSION

Therefore if the whole church ([ekklesia](#)) **assembles together** ([sunerchomai](#)) **and all** (present tense - continually) **speak** ([laleo](#)) **in tongues** ([glossa](#)), **and ungifted** ([idiotes](#)) **men or unbelievers** ([apistos](#)) **enter, will they not say that you are** (present tense - continually) **mad** ([mainomai](#))? - "They've lost their mind!"

A T Robertson - These unbelievers unacquainted (*idiōtai*) with Christianity will say that the Christians are raving mad (see notes on §Acts 12:15; §Acts 26:24). They will seem like a congregation of lunatics.

Morris - The section from verse 23 through the end of the chapter specifically lays down principles for order in church meetings. The specific details are not binding for all churches, of course, only the principles. It should always be remembered that true New Testament churches cannot exist today (despite claims to that effect by various sects) for the simple reason that the churches described in the New Testament did not yet have the New Testament to guide them. Therefore they needed those who had the gift of apostleship, the gift of prophecy and other supernatural gifts to guide them. Our present-day churches do have God's Word in its entirety, and this ought to be sufficient. Some exceptions may exist, especially when missionaries seek to reach those tribes who still do not have God's Word in a language they can understand. As a general rule, however, the complete Old and New Testaments (with all passages taken in proper context) should be our sole and sufficient guide in faith and practice.

Morris on are mad. Our word "maniac" is derived from the Greek word translated "mad" in this verse. This natural reaction of anyone encountering a person who seems to be speaking in gibberish, would be greatly augmented if he came into a building where many people were doing this simultaneously. Rather than being a sign which would bring unbelievers to Christ, this would drive them away.

Mad (out of your mind) ([3105](#)) [mainomai](#) gives us our English "maniac") to rage, rave, be mad. This verb pictures a person speaking and acting in such a way that they appear to others that they are "out of their mind" or "lost their senses." In fact each occurrence of **mainomai** in the New Testament uses the term as **hyperbole**: "You must be stark raving mad!" Many of the Jews said about Jesus He has "a demon and is **insane**." (Jn 10:20) When Paul confronted Festus with Truth, he responded with a loud voice saying, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you **mad**." (Acts 26:24) Paul denied the charge saying "I am not **out of my mind**, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth." Have you ever been accused of being "out of your mind" because of your "fanatical" belief in Jesus as the only way to eternal life? If so, you are in good company! If not, then perhaps you need to be a bit more bold in your witness (with boldness enabled by the Spirit)! The last NT use relates to speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14:23). - 5v - Jn. 10:20; Acts 12:15; Acts 26:24; Acts 26:25; 1 Co. 14:23

1 Corinthians 14:24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all;

- **convicted** 1Co 2:15 Joh 1:47-49 4:29 Ac 2:37 Heb 4:12-13
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Hebrews 4:12-13+ For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and **able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart**. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (to give an account).

But - Striking contrast.

If all prophesy ([propheteuo](#)) , **and an unbeliever** ([apistos](#)) **or an ungifted** ([idiotes](#)) **man enters, he is** (present tense passive voice = "by the word spoken" - continually) **convicted by all** (the prophecies), **he is called to account by all**- NLT = "they will be convicted of sin and judged by what you say"

Utley - Prophesying in 1 Corinthians is basically communicating the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 14:39).

Morris - Even though the gift of prophecy is intended primarily for the edification of believers, an orderly exposition of the Word of God, whether coming directly from God through prophets or indirectly through God-called teachers expounding the Scriptures, will often bring an unbeliever to accept Christ.

Convicted (reproved) ([1651](#)) [elegcho](#) is a primary verb but is related to **elegchos** = bringing to light) means to **bring to the light** (to reveal hidden things) with the implication that there is adequate proof of wrongdoing. To expose, to convict, to reprove, to shame or disgrace and thus to **rebuke** another in such a way that they are compelled to see and to admit the error of their ways. To show someone that they have done something wrong and summon them to repent. 17v - Matt. 18:15; Lk. 3:19; Jn. 3:20; Jn. 8:46; Jn. 16:8; 1 Co. 14:24; Eph. 5:11; Eph. 5:13; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:15; Heb. 12:5; Jas. 2:9; Jude 1:15; Rev. 3:19

Called to account (appraised) ([350](#)) [anakrino](#) from **aná** = again + **kríno** = sift, judge, distinguish, separate out so as to investigate) means to sift up and down, to examine accurately or carefully (re-examine), to make careful and exact research as in legal processes. **Anakrino** can mean to interrogate, to cross-examine or to put through a course of questioning as when one is questioned and examined by a judge in a court of law. It was often used in secular Greek of the interrogation of a prisoner. It was also used of a judicial examination before the final verdict was rendered. 14v - Lk. 23:14; Acts 4:9; Acts 12:19; Acts 17:11; Acts 24:8; Acts 28:18; 1 Co. 2:14; 1 Co. 2:15; 1 Co. 4:3; 1 Co. 4:4; 1 Co. 9:3; 1 Co. 10:25; 1 Co. 10:27; 1 Co. 14:24

1 Corinthians 14:25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

- **fall** Ge 44:14 De 9:18 Ps 72:11 Isa 60:14 Lu 5:8 8:28 Rev 5:8 19:4 LUKE 17:16
- **God** Isa 45:14 Zec 8:23
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages

Romans 2:16+ on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the **secrets** of men through Christ Jesus.

the secrets of his heart ([kardia](#)) **are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God**, (present tense - continually) **declaring that God is certainly among you** -- The sinner looks in the mirror of God's word (here spoken prophetically) and saw the blackness of the sin in his heart and his lost condition outside of Christ. He will believe the Gospel, fall down continually proclaiming God was present! What a service that would be like to attend!!! This unbeliever is converted and immediately gives testimony!

Secrets (hidden) (2927) **kruptos** from **krupto** = keep secret; English ~ cryptic, etc) means concealed, secret, hidden either to protect it or for self-serving purposes. **Krupto** describes something that is unknown because it is being kept secret or hidden. **Liddell-Scott** give an example of a secular use of **kruptos** -- "a trench covered and concealed by planks and earth". **Kruptos** describes the "secrets" of men's hearts (Ro 2:16, 1Co 14:25). 15v - Matt. 6:4; Matt. 6:6; Matt. 10:26; Mk. 4:22; Lk. 8:17; Lk. 12:2; Jn. 7:4; Jn. 7:10; Jn. 18:20; Rom. 2:16; Rom. 2:29; 1 Co. 4:5; 1 Co. 14:25; 2 Co. 4:2; 1 Pet. 3:4

Disclosed (evident) (5318) **(phanerós)** from **phaino** = make shine, cause to become visible - **phos** = light; cf **phaneroo**) means made visible as an external manifestation to senses. Phaneros stresses what is visible to sight. Conspicuous, apparent, (openly) manifest, obvious, visible, evident, plain, clear, easily seen, open to sight. 16v - Matt. 12:16; Mk. 3:12; Mk. 4:22; Mk. 6:14; Lk. 8:17; Acts 4:16; Acts 7:13; Rom. 1:19; Rom. 2:28; 1 Co. 3:13; 1 Co. 11:19; 1 Co. 14:25; Gal. 5:19; Phil. 1:13; 1 Tim. 4:15; 1 Jn. 3:10

Worship (bow down) (4352) **proskuneo** from **pros** = before + **kuneo** = kiss or adore) means to prostrate oneself in homage before another in the full sense of worship, not mere reverence or courtesy. When Jesus Christ was born into this world, He was attended and worshipped by angels. (Lu 2:13f). **Proskuneo** represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence and also carries the idea of profound awe and respect. Some believe that the root word **kuneo** may be related to **kuon** which is the Greek word for dog and which then could be picturing a dog licking his master's hand. The word **proskuneo** literally means to kiss toward someone, to throw a kiss in token of respect or homage, to prostrate oneself in homage, to do reverence to, to adore and so to worship and show respect. In the ancient Oriental (especially Persia) the mode of salutation between persons of equal rank was to kiss each other on the lips. When the difference of rank was slight, they kissed each other on the cheek. When one was much inferior, he fell upon his knees touched his forehead to the ground or prostrated himself, and as he was bowing down he would be throwing kisses toward the superior. It is this latter mode of salutation that is intended by the Greek writers in the use of the verb **proskuneo**.

Declaring (tell, announcing, proclaiming) (518) **apaggello** from **apó** = from + **aggéllō** = tell, declare from **aggelos** = messenger, one who speaks in place of one who has sent him) means to bring a message from any person or place. To bring tidings from a person or thing. To relate, inform, tell what has occurred. In the present context the idea is to announce openly. **Apaggello** is the carrying of tidings or messages from the authentic source. To make something known publicly.

1 Corinthians 14:26 What is [the outcome] then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. **Let all things be done** for edification.

- every 1Co 14:6 12:8-10
- Let 1Co 14:4,5,12,40 12:7 Ro 14:19 2Co 12:19 13:10 Eph 4:12,16,29 1Th 5:11
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ORDER IN THE CHURCH!

Krell - Like a good parent, Paul communicates his "house rules." He insists that there must be order in the church. If chaos and confusion reign supreme, worship will not build up the body of Christ. While worship can be creative and free, it still needs to be orderly. In 1 Cor 14:26-40, Paul cries out, "Order in the Church." The first expression in this verse, "What is the outcome then?" is one of Paul's typical methods of summing up a discussion before moving on to the next section.⁴ Before he concludes this topic of spiritual gifts, he wants to give a general perspective on their use in the worship setting. His counsel is for all of God's people to come prepared to participate. When the house churches in Corinth met for worship, it was normal for everyone to come ready to contribute. Some would bring a song they had written, some a teaching, some a revelation ("God impressed on my heart this week that we should do such-and-such . . ."), and some a tongue or an interpretation. These five gifts are not exhaustive; Paul is merely saying that he longs for God's people to come to church ready to build up the body. God says, "Order in the Church!"

What is the outcome then, brethren (adelphos)? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue (glossa), has an interpretation - These are all proper ways to proclaim the Word the Spirit gave to each person.

Believer's Study Bible - Paul does not forbid ecstatic utterance. But because of the immense dangers surrounding such practice, numerous limitations are placed upon the exercise of glossolalia. Note the following rules: (1) let all things be done for edification (v.

26); (2) no more than three may speak during a service (v. 27); (3) this must be in turn, that is, one at a time (v. 27); (4) there must be an interpreter (vv. 27, 28); (5) women are never to speak in tongues (v. 34); (6) everything is to be done decently and in order (v. 40).

Ryrie - Free participation in the service is indicated by this verse, but not to the point of disorder.

Krell - Historically, the church has usually grown the fastest in small, informal fellowships. These may be fledgling "church plants" or small groups within larger more established congregations. The church grows in health and size when people recognize their spiritual gifts and get involved. Do you know your gift? How are you presently using your gift in the body?

Let all things be done for edification ([oikodome](#)) - Paul gives a command ([present imperative](#)) that whatever gifts were used in the worship service were to be directed to the building up of the body. Paul does not say it but the implication is clear that the worship time is not for self-edification, self-adulation (showing off) or entertainment.

THOUGHT - Edification not entertainment. How many churches have inverted this order and the result is saints who are shallow in their doctrine and growth in Christ-likeness. Entertainment may draw a crowd but it does not grow a soul. I know one young pastor who was chided for letting his sermons go longer than 30 minutes (and this was in a "Bible church" -- what a misnomer!) Only the Word will build up. I am reminded of Paul's parting words to the elders at Ephesus declaring "And now I commend you to God and to **the word of His grace**, (PURPOSE) which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.." (Acts 20:32+). What is able to build them up (and he is speaking to the ELDERS here!). Peter says the same thing exhorting believers to be "like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that (PURPOSE) by it you may grow in respect to salvation." (1 Peter 2:2+) Here's the bottom line -- if you are not preaching and teaching the Word, the sheep are absolutely not being edified and experiencing progressive sanctification! Period!

1 Corinthians 14:27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret;

- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

TONGUES ONE AT A TIME

Paul moves from a general call for order to specific issues that obviously were problems in Corinth, specifically tongues and prophecy.

If anyone speaks ([laleo](#)) **in a tongue** ([glossa](#)), **it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret** ([diermeneuo](#)) - In effect if 2 or 3 speak in tongues the others should be "[tongue-tied](#)." Only two or three should speak in tongues (in a worship service) and they should never speak at the same time. There must also be an interpreter present and in next verse Paul adds if not, then do not speak in tongues.

Question: [What is the spiritual gift of interpreting tongues?](#)

Answer: Along with the gift of speaking in tongues is another spiritual gift mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:10—the gift of interpreting tongues. The gift of interpreting tongues is the ability to translate a foreign language into the language of the hearers. The gift of interpreting tongues is a separate gift, but it seems to have been used in conjunction with the gift of speaking in tongues.

The gift of tongues was the supernatural ability to speak a foreign language that the tongues-speaker had never learned. We see this gift in use in Acts 2:4–12, as the Jews in Jerusalem heard the gospel preached in a wide variety of languages. A person with the gift of interpreting tongues, then, could understand what a tongues-speaker was saying even though he did not know the language being spoken. This lack of prior knowledge of a language is what distinguishes the spiritual gift from the natural gift of being able to understand and speak a variety of languages. The tongues-interpreter would hear the tongues-speaker and then communicate the message to anyone present who could not understand the language. The goal was that all could understand and benefit from the truth being spoken. According to the apostle Paul, and in agreement with the tongues described in Acts, the gift of tongues was meant to communicate God's message directly to another person in his or her native language. Of course, if those present could not understand the language being spoken, the tongues were useless—and that's what made the tongues-interpreter, or tongues-translator, necessary. The goal was the edification of the church (1 Corinthians 14:5, 12).

One of the problems in the church of Corinth was that tongues-speakers were speaking out in the service, exercising their gift of tongues *with no interpreter and with no one present who spoke that language*. The result was that the tongues-speaker was commanding attention, but his words were meaningless, since no one could understand him. Paul strongly advised that all use of tongues in the church must be interpreted: "In the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Corinthians 14:19). There was no benefit to other church members in hearing something they could not understand. Exercising the gift of tongues in church, simply for the sake of showing everyone that you had the gift, was conceited and unprofitable. Paul told the Corinthians that, if two or three tongues-speakers wanted to speak in a meeting, then a spiritually gifted tongues-interpreter must also be present. In fact, "if there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God" (1 Corinthians 14:28).

The temporal nature of the gift of tongues implies that the gift of interpretation of tongues was also of a temporal nature. If the gift of speaking in tongues were active in the church today, it would be performed in agreement with Scripture. It would be a real and intelligible language (1 Corinthians 14:10). It would be for the purpose of communicating God's Word to a person of another language (Acts 2:6–12), and it would be done "in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40), "for God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people" (1 Corinthians 14:33). GotQuestions.org

1 Corinthians 14:28 but if there is no interpreter, he **must keep silent** in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

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NO INTERPRETER NO TONGUES

but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak ([laleo](#)) to himself and to God - Tongues were not to be spoken if there was no interpreter. Paul issues a command **he must keep silent** ([present imperative](#)) which calls for continual obedience. This command would mean that the one who planned to speak in a tongue need to be sure there was someone in attendance who could interpret. Paul adds the person does not have to "stuff it" as we say today but can silently speak to **himself and to God**.

Morris - keep silence in the church. In verse 27, Paul insists that only one man speak in a foreign language at a time, with never more than three doing this at one meeting, and then only if there is someone present who can translate each message. Since one could only plan to use his gift of tongues if he knew in advance that an interpreter would be there who could explain his message, this restriction would have the practical effect of essentially eliminating this practice in the church. Nevertheless, Paul would not forbid the use of this gift, and neither should we (1 Corinthians 14:39) in case some circumstance should develop comparable to that at Pentecost.

1 Corinthians 14:29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

- the prophets 1Co 14:39 12:10 1Th 5:19-21 1Jn 4:1-3
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

RULES FOR PROPHETS

Let two or three prophets speak ([laleo](#)) , and let the others pass judgment - These numbers are the same as those speaking in tongues. This apparently applies to a single service, which would make sense, for if there were large numbers of prophets speaking, at best it would difficult for the body of Christ to truly be edified and at worst it might even lead to disorder and confusion in the service. The call to **pass judgment** means that the fact that they exercised this gift did not make them immune to accountability. The **others** presumably refers to other prophets who would pass judgment on the one speaking.

1 Corinthians 14:30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent.

- **revelation** 1Co 14:6,26
- **the first one** Job 32:11,15-20 33:31-33 1Th 5:19,20
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Thessalonians 5:19-20+ **Do not quench** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) the Spirit; **do not despise** ([present imperative with a negative](#)) prophetic utterances.

DEFERENCE TO ANOTHER PROPHET

[Deference](#) describes courteous respect for another's opinion, in this case another prophet's revelation.

But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent- NET = "if someone sitting down receives a revelation, the person who is speaking should conclude." NIV= "If a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop." The point is that the one speaking must stop and defer to the one who is seated who had received a revelation.

1 Corinthians 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

- **all may learn** 1Co 14:3,19,35 Pr 1:5 9:9 Eph 4:11-12
- **all may be exhorted** Ro 1:12 2Co 1:4 2 Cor 7:6,7 Eph 6:22 1Th 4:18 1 Th 5:11,14
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Ephesians 4:11-12+ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

1 Thessalonians 5:11; 14+ Therefore **encourage** one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. 14) We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, **encourage** the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

PROPHET TO SPEAK ONE AT A TIME

For you can all prophesy ([propheteuo](#)) **one by one, so that all may** (present tense - continually) **learn and all may be** (present tense - continually) **exhorted** - Note the word **all prophesy** means that all the prophets in a church were allowed to speak for all true prophets had a message that was significant, but only up to 3 could speak in one service and only one at a time (**one by one**). Only one prophet should speak in order that (1) there be order and (2) edification and exhortation would be facilitated. However as noted if another prophet received revelation, the speak was to allow them to speak.

May learn (3129) **manthano** related noun **mathetes** = disciple, literally a learner! The shut mind is the end of discipleship!) has the basic meaning of directing one's mind to something and producing an external effect. **Manthano** refers to teaching, learning, instructing, and discipling. **Manthano** to genuinely understand and accept a teaching, to accept it as true and to apply it in one's life. It was sometimes used of acquiring a life-long habit. **Zuck** writes that according to **manthano** "learning is a matter of a pupil acquiring knowledge of content through a teacher to the extent that such knowledge is experienced in the life." (Bibliotheca Sacra). **Manthano** - 24v - Mt. 9:13; Mt. 11:29; Mt. 24:32; Mk. 13:28; Jn. 6:45; Jn. 7:15; Acts 23:27; Ro 16:17; 1 Co. 4:6; 1 Co. 14:31; 1 Co. 14:35 = If they desire to **learn** anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; Gal. 3:2; Eph 4:20; Phil. 4:9; Phil 4:11; Col 1:7; 1 Ti 2:11; 1 Ti 5:4; 1 Ti 5:13; 2 Ti 3:7; 2 Ti 3:14; Titus 3:14; Heb. 5:8; Rev. 14:3

Exhorted (encouraged) (3870) (**parakaleo** from **para** = side of, alongside, beside + **kaleo** = call) means literally to call one alongside, especially with the idea of helping them. **Parakaleo** includes the idea of giving help or aid but the primary sense in the NT is to urge someone to take some action, especially some ethical

course of action, and always at the root there is the idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and with gallantry. Our English word "**encourage**" means literally "with heart." To encourage in a sense is to give them new heart. **Parakaleo** in 1-2 Corinthians - ; 1 Co. 1:10; 1 Co. 4:13; 1 Co. 4:16; 1 Co. 14:31; 1 Co. 16:12; 1 Co. 16:15; 2 Co. 1:4; 2 Co. 1:6; 2 Co. 2:7; 2 Co. 2:8; 2 Co. 5:20; 2 Co. 6:1; 2 Co. 7:6; 2 Co. 7:7; 2 Co. 7:13; 2 Co. 8:6; 2 Co. 9:5; 2 Co. 10:1; 2 Co. 12:8; 2 Co. 12:18; 2 Co. 13:11;

Kent Hughes illustrates the root idea of **parakaleo** "to come alongside and encourage" with the following example - I see this exemplified every time my church has a roller skating party, and the parents put their little ones on skates for the first time. Mom and Dad skate with their child, holding on to his or her hands, sometimes with the child's feet on the ground and sometimes in the air. But all the time the parents are alongside **encouraging**....[exhortation] is a wonderful gift, and we are to place it at Christ's feet and be willing to be worn out in its use.

1 Corinthians 14:32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

- 1Co 14:29,30 1Sa 10:10-13 19:19-24 2Ki 2:3,5 Job 32:8-11 Jer 20:9 Ac 4:19,20 1Jn 4:1
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

PROPHETS WERE TO BE UNDER CONTROL

And the spirits of prophets are (present tense - continually) **subject to prophets** - **NLT** paraphrases it "Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can take turns." What does this mean? The meaning seems to be that the speaker was to be in control of himself and should not allow an uncontrollable, emotional [ecstasy](#).

William MacDonald - That means that he is not carried away without his consent, or against his will. He cannot evade the instructions of this chapter on the pretense that he just couldn't help it. He himself can determine when or how long he should speak.

Ryrie comments that "No true prophet can claim a hearing on the ground that he is under a power over which he has no control."

ESV Study Bible says "The Holy Spirit will not force people to prophesy against their will."

What the Bible Teaches - It is enlightening to note that the prophets were in complete control of themselves. This stands in vivid contrast to 1 Cor 12:2+ where it is stated that in earlier days they were carried away, enslaved by the evil spirit. Here, although under the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit, the prophet was marked by complete control, and subject to His guidance, and thus able to take part intelligently, and give way to another as the occasion arose. (1 and 2 Corinthians)

Henry Morris - The gift of prophecy was not to be exercised in a trance-like state, with the prophet being used like a robot. Each true "prophet" was in full control of his faculties, so the prophets could speak one at a time, each in proper order, and all were fully capable of stopping and deferring to each other if it was clear that he also had a message from God. Although this gift is no longer needed, and although it has probably ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8), the same principle might still be applicable in a church where there is more than one pastor or teacher with the Spirit's gift of teaching. They would not have direct revelations from God, but they all might have fresh insights to be shared from God's now-complete revelation, the Holy Scriptures. (Defender's Study Bible)

Pulpit Commentary has an interesting note - Mantic inspirations, the violent possession which threw sibyls and priestesses into contortions — the foaming lip and streaming hair and glazed or glaring eye — have no place in the self-controlling dignity of Christian inspiration. Even Jewish prophets, in the paroxysm of emotion, might lie naked on the ground and rave (1 Samuel 19:24); but the genuine inspiration in Christian ages never obliterates the self consciousness or overpowers the reason; It abhors the hysteria and simulation and frenzy which have sometimes disgraced revivalism and filled lunatic asylums. ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Are subject (5293) **hupotasso** (from **hupó** = under + **tasso** = arrange in orderly manner) means literally to place under in an orderly fashion. The idea is to submit or to yield to governance or authority. It is important to note that many of the NT uses are in the **passive voice with a middle sense** which signifies the **voluntary subjection** of oneself to the will of another. Husbands and wives both need to understand the **voluntary** nature of the submission called for in the marital relationship lest it be misapplied. **Hupotásso** was a military term meaning to draw up in order of battle, to form, array, marshal, both troops or ships. **Hupotásso** meant that troop divisions were to be arranged in a military fashion under the command of the leader. In this state of subordination they were now subject to the orders of their commander.

Hupotasso - Lk. 2:51; Lk. 10:17; Lk. 10:20; Rom. 8:7; Rom. 8:20; Rom. 10:3; Rom. 13:1; Rom. 13:5; 1 Co. 14:32; 1 Co. 14:34; 1 Co. 15:27; 1 Co. 15:28; 1 Co. 16:16; Eph. 1:22; Eph. 5:21; Eph. 5:24; Phil. 3:21; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; Tit. 2:9; Tit. 3:1; Heb. 2:5; Heb. 2:8; Heb. 12:9; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:18; 1 Pet. 3:1; 1 Pet. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:22; 1 Pet. 5:5

1 Corinthians 14:33 for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

- but 1Co 7:15 Lu 2:14 Ro 15:33 Ga 5:22 2Th 3:16 Heb 13:20 Jas 3:17,18
- in 1Co 4:17 7:17 11:16
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Romans 15:33 Now the **God of peace** be with you all. Amen.

Romans 16:20 The **God of peace** will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Phil 4:9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the **God of peace** will be with you.

1 Th 5:23 Now may the **God of peace** Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heb 13:20 Now the **God of peace**, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,

A GOD OF PEACE NOT OF CONFUSION

For ([gar](#)) Term of explanation. Paul is elaborating on what he had just said about the prophets, that they were to be under control, not out of control. Ultimately they were to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Now he explains why or what will be the result.

God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints- When the prophets (and tongues speakers) conducted themselves in an orderly manner as outlined by Paul, the assembled believers observed and benefited from that order which ultimately was from God Himself (the Spirit Himself directing the prophets), for He Alone is the Supreme Sovereign, the "Supreme Controller," so to speak. The word [peace](#) is appropriate for it is the antithesis of disorder and chaos. It is only when the service is conducted in order and harmony, that God is glorified and honored as the God of peace! The converse is true if disorder reigns for this misrepresents and even worse dishonors God's holy attribute of ORDER. In short, a holy service should have holy order (or "[wholly](#)" order)! And Paul is quite clear this dictate was not just for the rebels at Corinth but **for all the churches of the saints** (for all times)!

THOUGHT - If you are in a church that allows disorder and confusion in the worship service, then you need to understand that this is directly counter to the character and will of God Who is NOT a God of confusion. And I would add, you may need to consider finding another fellowship if the disorder is not rectified.

Morris - The "confusion" mentioned here applies in context specifically to churches with uncontrolled and disorderly manifestations of tongues and supposed prophecies. The principle, however, applies in general to the entire creation. Its beautiful and intricate order and complexity offer a compelling testimony to their Creator (Romans 1:20), rendering inexcusable anyone who would try to attribute it all to primeval chaos and chance development.

Believer's Study Bible - Evaluation of the merits of the exercise of any of the spiritual gifts as to legitimacy and fruitfulness can be made with relative ease based upon this clear verse. When some religious activity engenders strife and confusion, it is probably not of God. God is the author of peace in all the churches of the saints.

Gregg Allen - The women are to remain silent; and because of the context, we can take this to be in the context of a divine message authoritatively given to the church through tongues. This should not be taken as a command for women to be silent in the church in all situations; since they were permitted to prophecy under certain conditions (see 11:5). (Note that 1 Timothy 2:11-12 uses a different word; one which means to be in tranquil submission and attention. Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 14:34 means silence.) ([Sermon](#))

Robertson - Orderly reverence is a mark of the churches. This is a proper conclusion of his argument as in 1 Cor. 11:16.

NIV Study Bible on all the churches of the saints - A unique expression in the NT that stresses the universality and commonality of the whole visible church of God on earth. All congregations are to seek peace and not be disorderly.

Confusion (disorder, tumult)(181)(**akatastasia** from **akatastatos** = unstable from **a** = negative + **kathistemi** = set in order) means literally without order or stability and thus has a basic meaning of instability = to an unsettled state of affairs, an upheaval, a state of violent group disturbance, a tumult, or unrest, especially in a political or social setting (riots, revolutions). In 2 Cor. 12:20 and James 3:16 the context suggests that **akatastasia** is used of the disruption of the Christian community by worldly disputes among the brethren and in both of these passages jealousy and selfish ambition (**eritheia**) are listed prior to **akatastasia** as factors which predispose to social instability. **MacArthur** adds "Akatastasia (disorder) has the basic meaning of instability, and hence came to be used of a state of confusion, disturbance, disarray, or tumult, sometimes even of rebellion or anarchy. **Akatastasia** - 5v - Lk. 21:9; 1 Co. 14:33; 2 Co. 6:5; 2 Co. 12:20; Jas. 3:16

Peace (1515)(**eirene** from verb **eiro** = to join or bind together that which has been separated) literally pictures the binding or joining together again of that which had been separated or divided and thus setting at one again, a meaning conveyed by the common expression of one "having it all together". It follows that **peace** is the opposite of division or dissension (cf 1 Cor 1:10+). **Peace** as a state of concord and harmony is the opposite of war. **Peace** was used as a greeting or farewell corresponding to the Hebrew word shalom - "peace to you". **Eirene** in 1-2 Corinthians - 1 Co. 1:3; 1 Co. 7:15; 1 Co. 14:33; 1 Co. 16:11; 2 Co. 1:2; 2 Co. 13:11;

Norman Geisler - When Cultists Ask -

1 CORINTHIANS 14:33—Does the fact that God is not a God of disorder or confusion prove that the doctrine of the Trinity is not true?

MISINTERPRETATION: The Jehovah's Witnesses think that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot possibly be true because God is not a God of confusion, and the doctrine of the Trinity is definitely confusing (Should You Believe in the Trinity? 1989, 4).

CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION: Such an interpretation takes this verse out of its context. It is not speaking about confusing doctrine but disorderly church practices. This verse is in an extended section of Scripture in which Paul deals with the proper exercise of the spiritual gifts. In 1 Corinthians 14:33 Paul's point is that because God is not a God of confusion, the Corinthians should make every effort to end the confusion in their church services resulting from too many people speaking in tongues and giving prophecies at the same time (see vv. 27–30). God does not move his people to handle themselves in a disorderly and tumultuous manner. Rather, God is a God of peace (harmony and order), and hence his people should be harmonious and ordered in their services.

Further, the doctrine of the Trinity is not confusing; it is a mystery. The doctrine of the Trinity is clear: There is one God manifest in three persons. This is just as clear as affirming there is one triangle with three sides (an analogy which cannot be pressed too far in describing the Trinity). Or, that love is one, and yet to have love there must be a lover, a loved one, and a spirit of love between them. We can apprehend the truth of the Trinity, even if we cannot completely comprehend it. The Trinity is not contrary to reason; it simply goes beyond our reason.

Just because a doctrine is difficult to comprehend does not mean it must be a false doctrine. Even a strict monotheistic concept of God, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses hold, cannot be completely comprehended. For us to fully understand God's nature, we would have to have the mind of God. But Scripture indicates that we cannot understand everything about God. Romans 11:33 (NASB) affirms, "How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" In Isaiah 55:8–9 (NASB) God says, " 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.' " Just as an infant cannot possibly understand everything his father does or says, so we as God's finite children cannot understand everything about our infinite heavenly Father

1 Corinthians 14:34 The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

- **women** 1Co 11:5 1Ti 2:11,12
- **they are** 1Co 14:35 11:3,7-10 Eph 5:22-24,33 Col 3:18 Titus 2:5 1Pe 3:1-6
- **as** 1Co 14:21 Ge 3:16 Nu 30:3-13 Es 1:17-20

- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

1 Corinthians 11:5+ (But every woman who has her head uncovered while **praying or prophesying** disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.

Acts 2:17+ 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL **PROPHESY**, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;

Acts 21:9+ Now this man had four virgin daughters who were **prophetesses**.

WOMEN ARE TO KEEP SILENT

To label this verse "**controversial**" is a gross understatement!

The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak([laleo](#)) - **Keep silent** is a command in the [present imperative](#) calling for continuing obedience.

Some commentaries like **Hermeneia 1 Corinthians** see this as an "[interpolation](#)" or addition to the text, a view with which I strongly disagree.

Others say the woman is not to speak at all. Period. This is excluded by 1 Cor 11:5.

Let's look at the chapter as a whole. Clearly there are two major gifts addressed, tongues and prophecy. So either Paul is saying the women were to be silent in both or one of the two. I favor that Paul is referring to silence in regard to tongues (see next paragraph). Some like MacArthur say the silence includes prophecy and tongues but that is difficult to rationalize with 1 Cor 11:5. Others like Constable say the woman is to be silent in regard to asking questions or addressing one who prophesies (as in 1 Cor 14:29-30). That is a possibility for it does not say they are absolutely not to prophesy.

The command is that the women **are not permitted to speak**. And yet we know women were permitted to prophesy (1 Cor 11:5). Clearly this refers to speech in the assembly. Note that the word **speak** occurs 22 times in 18 verses in this chapter and by far the majority refer to **tongues**, prior to this use in verse 33. One other point is that the same verb **keep silent** is used in verse 28 and that refers to **tongues** that are not interpreted. Therefore if one focuses on the contextual uses, it would not be unreasonable to consider that here in verse 33 Paul is not referring to speaking in general (1 Cor 11:5 rules that out), but is referring to the issue of **speaking in tongues** as that which is prohibited.

POSB agrees that "women are to keep silent in the church—they are not to exercise the gift of tongues in the church" Note two points. An interpretation of these verses must keep in mind the context of 1 Cor. 14. To lift these verses out of context does violence to Scripture and to the high esteem with which Christ and the New Testament hold women. Paul mentions this matter because women were probably the ones most abusing the **gift of tongues** and the predictive element of **prophecy**. Paul's charge is for the women to calm down and keep quiet, to bring things into order. The passage is directed both to the local problem of the Corinthians and to any other church where women are abusing the gifts of tongues and the predictive element of prophecy. ([Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible](#))

Henry Morris - This command is quite controversial today. Nevertheless, as Paul insists (1 Corinthians 14:37), it is a command of God and can only be disobeyed in peril of divine judgment. **In context, however, Paul is specifically prohibiting women only from speaking in tongues "in the churches."** This gift, for reasons related to the divinely ordained roles for men and women, had been restricted to men, at least in church meetings. However, women were permitted to pray (1 Corinthians 11:5) or even to prophesy in church, as long as the other rules were observed.

William Orr - In 1 Cor 11:5 Paul indicated that women could **pray or prophesy** in the church; so unless Paul is contradicting himself (or, as some have suggested, there is a non-Pauline interpolation) he here enjoins silence in matters **other than praying and prophesying**. Since good order is a major emphasis of the context (cf. vss. 26, 33, 40), **he may be referring especially to speaking in tongues** or even to any sort of clamorous discussion of controversial issues which have arisen in the assembly. (Anchor Bible Commentary) (Bolding added)

MacArthur on **women are to keep silent in the churches** - Though it embraces **tongues**, the context here refers to prophecy. Women are not to exercise any such ministries. (**Comment:** Surprisingly MacArthur does not address how this would relate to Paul's statement in 1 Cor 11:5).

Thomas Constable - The word translated **silent** (Gr. *sige*) means just that, namely to keep silent or to hold one's peace. However in 1Cor 11:5 Paul spoke as though women prophesying in the church was a common and acceptable practice. I think the best explanation of this apparent contradiction comes out of the context, as is usually true. Paul had just permitted others in the congregation to evaluate the comments that a prophet made (1Cor 11:29). **Now he qualified this by saying the women should not to do so vocally in the church meetings as the men could.** The teaching of the Law on this subject appears to be a reference to woman's subordination to the authoritative man in her family (Ge 3:16). The Law then would refer to the Old Testament, as in 1 Cor 14:21.

William Barclay's explanation appeals cultural differences to explain Paul's command to be silent (but this really does not resolve the issue either in my opinion) - We have already said that in the ancient world the place of women was low. In the Greek world Sophocles had said, "Silence confers grace upon a woman." Women, unless they were very poor or very loose in their morals, led a very secluded life in Greece. The Jews had an even lower idea of women. Amongst the Rabbinic sayings there are many which belittle their place. "As to teaching the law to a woman one might as well teach her impiety." To teach the law to a woman was "to cast pearls before swine." The Talmud lists among the plagues of the world "the talkative and the inquisitive widow and the virgin who wastes her time in prayers." It was even forbidden to speak to a woman on the street. "One must not ask a service from a woman, or salute her." It was in a society like that that Paul wrote this passage. In all likelihood what was uppermost in his mind was the lax moral state of Corinth and the feeling that absolutely nothing, must be done which would bring upon the infant Church the faintest suspicion of immodesty. It would certainly be very wrong to take these words out of their context and make them a universal rule for the Church.

But are to subject ([hupotasso](#)) **themselves, just as the Law also says** - **Subject** is also a command in the [present imperative](#).

Keep silent (4601) **sigao** from **sige** = silence) mean to be silent, to "hold one's peace", to keep in silence or keep secret. The idea is to say nothing, keep still, keep silent (eg, Lk 9:36) or to stop speaking (eg, Lk 18:39). In the passive voice sigao means to be kept in silence. Finally, sigao can convey idea of keeping something from becoming known, to be concealed or to be kept secret (the only NT use with this meaning being here in Ro 16:25) Sigao - 10v - **NOTE 3 USES IN THIS ONE CHAPTER 1 Corinthians 14, the first referring to tongues, the second to prophecy and the third which is the most controversial.** Lk. 9:36; Lk. 18:39; Lk. 20:26; Acts 12:17; Acts 15:12; Acts 15:13; Rom. 16:25; 1 Co. 14:28; 1 Co. 14:30; 1 Co. 14:34

Question: [Do women have to remain silent in church? \(See also 6:25 minute video by Gotquestions.org\)](#)

Answer: First Corinthians 14:33–35 states, "As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church" (ESV). In 1 Timothy 2:11–12, we have similar instruction: "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. . . . She must be quiet."

At first glance, these passages seem to issue a blanket command that women never be allowed to speak in the church, for any reason. In both cases, a closer examination of context is necessary.

The whole of 1 Timothy 2:11–14, quoted only partially above, is this: "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner." Note that Paul specifies the subjects of teaching and assuming authority. A woman is to "be quiet" in that she does not teach men in the church, and she shows her submission to authority by learning. In other words, this is not an absolute command for women to remain silent at all times in all services.

There are also some contextual considerations in the 1 Corinthians 14 passage. Earlier in the same epistle, Paul mentions situations where women seem to be allowed to pray and prophesy in public: "But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved" (1 Corinthians 11:5).

Commentators suggest various ways of reconciling 1 Corinthians 11 (women pray and prophesy) with 1 Corinthians 14 (women are silent):

- Chapter 11 gives the rule for a smaller group of believers; chapter 14 gives the rule for the entire assembly.
- Chapter 11 focuses on dress (head coverings) as a symbol of submission without regard to the propriety of a woman praying or prophesying—the subject of prophesying being addressed later, in chapter 14.
- Chapter 11 acknowledges that, in the Corinthian church, women prayed and prophesied, but Paul reserves his condemnation of women prophesying for chapter 14.

In each of the above interpretations, the conclusion is the same: 1 Corinthians 14 teaches that women are to be silent in the general assembly of the church.

Taking a closer look at 1 Corinthians 14, we see the overall concern is orderly assemblies. The church of Corinth was noted for the disorder rampant in that assembly (verse 33). It seems that everyone in the church service was participating whenever and however they desired. Those with the gift of tongues were speaking simultaneously, and no one was concerned with interpreting what was being said. Those with a supposed revelation from God were shouting out randomly, even if what was said could not be heard above the din, and apparently no one was evaluating what was being offered as prophecy. The meetings in Corinth were characterized by chaos, and no one was being edified or instructed (see verses 5, 12, and 19). To remedy this, Paul instructs a number of groups to “be quiet” at certain times and under certain conditions:

- Verses 27–28a, Those who would speak in a tongue must “keep silent” if someone else is speaking or if there is no one to interpret what is said.
- Verses 29–31a, A prophet must “be silent” if someone else has the floor.
- Verses 34–35, The women should “keep silent” to show proper submission.

The command for women to remain silent in the church service is, as commentator Albert Barnes puts it, “positive, explicit, and universal. There is no ambiguity” (*Notes on the Bible*). The two specific matters discussed in chapter 14 are speaking in tongues and prophesying, and it is these two things that must be included in the prohibition against women speaking in church. Both tongues-speaking and prophesying involve *teaching* and require some measure of spiritual authority. Scripture consistently teaches that spiritual authority in the church resides with men, based on God’s order of creation (1 Timothy 2:13); therefore, women are not allowed to speak in tongues or prophecy in the general assembly of the church. To do so would be to take a position of spiritual authority over the men in that assembly.

First Corinthians 11, 1 Corinthians 14, and 1 Timothy 2 all teach male spiritual leadership in the home and church as a universal principle. Pastors and elders are men, and women come under that authority with the rest of the church. Women should be careful to maintain the order God has designed for the church and show her submission to authority in culturally appropriate ways (in Corinth, a head covering). There are [many roles a woman can fill in the church](#), and Scripture does not forbid her from singing or praying or otherwise participating in the service. But bringing the Word of God to the entire congregation is not one of her roles. That task is reserved for men. [GotQuestions.org](#)

Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about women pastors? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Are men and women equal in God’s eyes? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible have to say about women missionaries? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What can we learn from what the Bible says about Jesus and women? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Since women preachers can be just as good as men, doesn’t that mean they are called to preach? | GotQuestions.org](#)
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1 Corinthians 14:35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

- let Eph 5:25-27 1Pe 3:7
- a shame 1Co 14:34 11:6,14 Eph 5:12
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

If (first class conditional - assumed to be the case that) **they desire (thelo) to learn (manthano) anything, let them ask (eperotao) their own husbands at home; for it is improper** (disgraceful, shameful) **for a woman to speak (laleo) in church** - For Paul to make this statement suggests that some women were asking question in the assembly of believers and this was disruptive. Clearly

he is not saying they should not desire to learn anything at church because he has repeatedly advocated that the saints be edified in the services which necessitates learning God's Word of truth.

Gilbrant - Paul advised the proper procedure. If the woman's motive was a true desire to learn, she should not interrupt the service by asking her husband. Rather than cause a disturbance she should wait and ask her husband at home. This was the rule to be followed. To do otherwise would be disruptive, against custom, and would not be edifying. (Complete Biblical Library)

Constable offers a well-reasoned commentary on this somewhat enigmatic passage - Rather than calling out a question in the middle of some male or female prophet's message (**ED: WOMEN COULD PROPHECY** - 1 Cor 11:5), a woman was to wait and ask her husband about it at home after the service. Presumably unmarried women would ask their fathers or some other man in the church after the service. Men could raise questions or make comments, but too much of this could ruin the order of the service and the edifying value of the message. Consequently Paul asked the women, evidently because of their natural position of subordination, to refrain. It is improper for a woman to speak in church meetings in the situation Paul addressed in the context. That situation is the questioning and perhaps challenging of what a prophet said who was sharing something he or she believed God had given him or her to pass on to the church. (Constable adds this note - "This is the view of Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, pp. 136-37; Morris, pp. 201-2; Robertson and Plummer, p. 325; James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman In Biblical Perspective*, pp. 188, 190; and others including myself.") ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Robertson and Plummer - The women might urge that they did not always understand the prophesying: might they not ask for an explanation. Asking to be taught was not self-assertion but submissiveness. But the Apostle will not allow this: questions may be objections to what is preached, or even contradictions of it ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Robertson and Plummer on improper - A strong word, used of women being clipped or shorn (1 Cor 11:6) - comp. Eph. 5:12; Titus 1:11—the only other instances in the N.T. It is really a scandalous thing for a woman to address the congregation or disturb it by speaking. ([Ibid](#))

Improper (150) [aischros](#) from **aischos** = baseness, disgrace) refers that which is indecent, dishonorable, "ugly", socially or morally unacceptable, shameful or base. (See related combined word [aischrokerdos](#)) **Aischros** was a term especially significant in an honor-shame oriented society and was used generally in reference to that which fails to meet expected moral and cultural standards. Plutarch wrote that not only the arm but the voice of a modest woman ought to be kept from the public, and she should feel shame at being heard, as at being stripped **NIDNTT** - The root **aisch-** refers originally to that which is ugly and disgraceful. *aischuno* (the verb form) (Homer onwards) thus meant originally to disfigure, make ugly. The verb is found in Greek literature almost exclusively in the middle or passive with the meaning to feel shame, be ashamed, or to be confounded, be disconcerted. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

NET Note has a lengthy technical note - Some scholars have argued that vv. 34–35 should be excised from the text (principally G. D. Fee, *First Corinthians* [NICNT], 697–710; P. B. Payne, "Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus, and 1 Cor 14.34–5," *NTS* 41 [1995]: 240–262). This is because the Western witnesses (D F G ar b vgms Ambst) have these verses after v. 40, while the rest of the tradition retains them here. There are no MSS that omit the verses. Why, then, would some scholars wish to excise the verses? Because they believe that this best explains how they could end up in two different locations, that is to say, that the verses got into the text by way of a very early gloss added in the margin. Most scribes put the gloss after v. 33; others, not knowing where they should go, put them at the end of the chapter. Fee points out that "Those who wish to maintain the authenticity of these verses must at least offer an adequate answer as to how this arrangement came into existence if Paul wrote them originally as our vv. 34–35" (*First Corinthians* [NICNT], 700). In a footnote he adds, "The point is that if it were already in the text after v. 33, there is no reason for a copyist to make such a radical transposition." Although it is not our intention to interact with proponents of the shorter text in any detail here, a couple of points ought to be made. (1) Since these verses occur in all witnesses to 1 Corinthians, to argue that they are not original means that they must have crept into the text at the earliest stage of transmission. How early? Earlier than when the pericope adulterae (John 7:53–8:11) made its way into the text (late 2nd, early 3rd century?), earlier than the longer ending of Mark (16:9–20) was produced (early 2nd century?), and earlier than even "in Ephesus" was added to Eph 1:1 (upon reception of the letter by the first church to which it came, the church at Ephesus)—because in these other, similar places, the earliest witnesses do not add the words. This text thus stands as remarkable, unique. Indeed, since all the witnesses have the words, the evidence points to them as having been inserted into the original document. Who would have done such a thing? And, further, why would scribes have regarded it as original since it was obviously added in the margin? This leads to our second point. (2) Following a suggestion made by E. E. Ellis ("The Silenced Wives of Corinth (1 Cor. 14:34–5)," *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis*, 213–20 [the suggestion comes at the end of the article, almost as an afterthought]), it is likely that Paul himself added the words in the margin. Since it was so much material to add, Paul could have squelched any suspicions by indicating that the words were his (e.g., by adding his name or some other means [cf. 2 Thess 3:17]). This way no scribe would think that the material

was inauthentic. (Incidentally, this is unlike the textual problem at Rom 5:1, for there only one letter was at stake; hence, scribes would easily have thought that the “text” reading was original. And Paul would hardly be expected to add his signature for one letter.) (3) What then is to account for the uniform Western tradition of having the verses at the end of the chapter? Our conjecture (and that is all it is) is that the scribe of the Western Vorlage could no longer read where the verses were to be added (any marginal arrows or other directional device could have been smudged), but, recognizing that this was part of the original text, felt compelled to put it somewhere. The least offensive place would have been at the end of the material on church conduct (end of chapter 14), before the instructions about the resurrection began. Although there were no chapter divisions in the earliest period of copying, scribes could still detect thought breaks (note the usage in the earliest papyri). (4) The very location of the verses in the Western tradition argues strongly that Paul both authored vv. 34–35 and that they were originally part of the margin of the text. Otherwise, one has a difficulty explaining why no scribe seemed to have hinted that these verses might be inauthentic (the scribal sigla of codex B, as noticed by Payne, can be interpreted otherwise than as an indication of inauthenticity [cf. J. E. Miller, “Some Observations on the Text-Critical Function of the Umlauts in Vaticanus, with Special Attention to 1 Corinthians 14.34-,” JSNT 26 [2003]: 217–36.]). There are apparently no MSS that have an asterisk or obelisk in the margin. Yet in other places in the NT where scribes doubted the authenticity of the clauses before them, they often noted their protest with an asterisk or obelisk. We are thus compelled to regard the words as original, and as belonging where they are in the text above.

1 Corinthians 14:36 Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

- **came** Isa 2:3 Mic 4:1,2 Zec 14:8 Ac 13:1-3 15:35,36 16:9,10 Acts 17:1,10,11,15 18:1-17 2Co 10:13-16 1Th 1:8
- **or** 1Co 4:7
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

PAUL'S RHETORICAL REMINDER OF HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?- Two pointed (somewhat [sarcastic](#)) rhetorical questions to those Corinthians who were puffed up (1 Cor 4:18-19+, 1 Cor 5:2+, 1 Cor 8:1+, 1 Cor 13:4+) and fleshly (1 Cor 3:1-3+) Both questions call for a resounding "No!" Were they the "inventors" of the Christian message? Of course not. Paul's teachings came from the Spirit (cf 2 Pe 1:21+).

Robertson and Plummer - The meaning is, 'Were you the starting-point of the Gospel? or were you its only destination? Do you mean to contend that you have the right to maintain these irregularities? women discarding veils in public worship, people getting drunk at the Supper, people speaking in Tongues and no one interpreting, prophets refusing to give place to one another, women claiming to prophesy and ask questions in public worship? If you defend such scandals as these, one can only suppose that you claim to be the A and Ω of the Gospel, the fount and reservoir of all Church teaching, the starting-point and the goal of all Church discipline ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Pulpit Commentary - An indignant exclamation. **Came the word of God out from you?** Are you the authors of the Christian system, that you are to lay down rules about it? No rebuke was too strong for the pretensions of these Corinthians. **Or came it unto you only?** Is no one to be considered but yourselves? Have you no respect for Christian custom? end that when you were by no means the first Gentile Church in Europe (1 Thessalonians 1:8)? ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Jack Hunter & Albert McShane - This long section (12:1-14:40) is brought to a conclusion with the reminder of apostolic authority. The apostle is aware of the opposition his counsel will engender in those who will want to discount all that he has set before them. So he will now challenge them in relation to the word of God. When he mentioned "the law" in v. 34, he was drawing attention to it as the word of God, and to God Himself as the ultimate source of that authority which demands obedience from His people. There are always those people and those churches who are prepared to make His word mean what they think it should mean, and thus show themselves to be wiser than God. The first question refers to the *source*: did the word of God originate with them? If the giver of it, they could determine its meaning. Were they the fount of revelation? Being the first of the churches to depart from the word of God, especially in relation to women taking part (the immediate context), they were setting themselves up as a superior authority, so the apostle censures them. The second question refers to the singular reception of the word of God. Were they the sole recipients and repositories of such a revelation that they could introduce such practices? Could they act on their own and ignore other churches? This was arrogance indeed. Independent authority was not invested in them. Yet, today, we have the same attitude, and the same claim to be progressive and liberated. But it is progressing away from the word of God; liberation from obedience to it. ([What the Bible teaches – 1 and 2 Corinthians](#))

1 Corinthians 14:37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

- **anyone** 1Co 8:2 13:1-3 Nu 24:3,4,16 Ro 12:3 2Co 10:7,12 11:4,12-15 Ga 6:8
- **Let him recognize** 1Co 7:25,40 Lu 10:16 1Th 4:1-8 2Pe 3:1-2 1Jn 4:6 Jude 1:17
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

2 Peter 3:1-2 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

AFFIRMATION OF PAUL'S DIVINE APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

If **anyone** (present tense - continually) **thinks** (considers, claims - [dokeo](#)) **he is a prophet** ([prophetes](#)) or **spiritual** ([pneumatikos](#)), **let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment**([entole](#))- **Let him recognize** ([epiginosko](#) = fullness of knowing) is a command in the [present imperative](#) (see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) calling for them to continually "take knowledge" of what he was writing which from from the Lord. Paul is in essence claiming His words are God's words (see [verbal plenary inspiration](#)) **Spiritual** could refer either to filled with/controlled by the Spirit or spiritually gifted and this is an interesting statement in view of the fact that he has already stated he could "not speak to you as to **spiritual** ([pneumatikos](#)),men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ..." (1 Cor 3:1-3+) The proof of their authenticity (as prophet or spiritual) would be shown in whether they would submit to the apostolic authority of Paul and God's Word.

Robertson and Plummer on if anyone thinks - It is what the man is in his own eyes that is the point here....'Let him prove his own inspiration by fully recognizing my absolute authority.'...He is conscious that what he says does not come from himself; he is the mouthpiece of Christ: 1 Cor 2:10-16, 1 Cor 7:40; 2 Cor. 13:3; cp. 1 John 4:6+. **Things which I write** "covers all that he has been saying about disorders in public worship (1 Cor 11-14.). His indignation in 1 Cor 14:36 is provoked by all these irregularities. It is a mistake to limit either to the question of women speaking in Church." ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Pulpit Commentary - Test your pretensions by the capacity to recognize that I have been speaking to you what Christ approves and requires ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

1 John 4:6+ We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us.
By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

HCSB - Those who were truly prophets would discern that Paul's principles for the orderly exercise of prophetic gifts were consistent with the **Lord's commandment**.
(HCSB Study Bible)

Morris - "Spiritual" here is the same word ([pneumaticos](#)) as "spiritual gifts" (1 Corinthians 14:1). Thus Paul is claiming that any man who truly possessed one of the spiritual gifts (especially, perhaps, that of discernment) would have to recognize the divine inspiration of his own writings. This is a very clear and emphatic affirmation by Paul himself of the inerrant verbal inspiration of his epistles.

1 Corinthians 14:38 But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

- Ho 4:17 Mt 7:6 15:14 1Ti 6:3-5 2Ti 4:3,4 Rev 22:11,12
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE IGNORANT WILL BE IGNORED

But (term of contrast) **if anyone** (present tense - continually) **does not recognize** ([agnoeo](#) - used 1 Cor 12:1+) **this, he is not recognized** ([agnoeo](#) - not be recognized = will be ignored!) - "If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored." (1Co 14:38NIV) This is a stern warning to those who would ignore Paul's instructions. Their failure to recognize Paul's words as God's commandments

brings into question (and doubt) their legitimacy as ministers of God.

Robertson and Plummer - 'But if any one is ignorant (that Christ is the Source of my rulings in these matters), let him be ignorant.' His ignorance does not alter facts, and he must be left in his unedifying condition. ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

One writer says "This may be compared with the prophetic commission of Isaiah 6:9-10+. Rejection of truth leads to spiritual ignorance, and that can be tragic."

Jack Hunter & Albert McShane - *Wilful* ignorance is *permanent* ignorance; *persistent* ignorance is *culpable* ignorance. Having stated the position according to the mind of God, Paul was not prepared to waste time disputing with such people. ([What the Bible teaches – 1 and 2 Corinthians](#))

Glen Spencer - If anyone will not accept follow these principles let him continue in his ignorance. Some folks simply will not accept the truth. They insist on their own way. It is nearly impossible help such people. We are to let him be ignorant. ([Expository Pulpit Series – 1 Corinthians: Divine Help for a Divided Church](#) - well done)

Pulpit Commentary - The formula seems to fall under the idiom which refuses to say anything more about a subject ("If I perish, I perish;" "What I have written, I have written;" "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still," etc.). The readings vary considerably ("He is ignored;" "He has been ignored;" "He shall be ignored;" "Let him be ignored"). These other readings would be a statement of retribution in kind — of God "sprinkling penal blindnesses on forbidden lusts." But the reading of our translation is on the whole the best supported, and means that to invincible bigotry and ignorant obstinacy St. Paul will have no more to say (Matthew 15:14; 1 Timothy 6:3-5). ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Morris - ignorant. The intent here is to tell the Corinthian church (and, by extension, any other true church) that if any of its leaders refused to recognize the inerrant authority of the Pauline epistles (or, presumably, of any other Scriptures--note what Paul affirmed in 2 Timothy 3:16,17, and Galatians 1:8-12), then he should be regarded as "ignorant" of God's will, and no longer regarded as a leader.

1 Corinthians 14:39 Therefore, my brethren, **desire earnestly** to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.

- **desire earnestly** 1Co 14:1,3,5,24,25 1Th 5:20
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

PROPHECY AND TONGUES ENCOURAGED

If one is a [cessationist](#) these two commands in the present tense are interpreted as apropos to the time in which Paul wrote when these gifts were still in effect, but would not be applicable now. For a [continuationist](#) these commands are interpreted as affirmation that these gifts are to be practiced. (And as they say "[ne'er the twain shall meet](#)" at least not in this lifetime!"

Therefore - Term of conclusion. In this case Paul's final concluding thoughts on the question of spiritual gifts in the church at Corinth.

My brethren ([adelphos](#)) - Paul's summation begins with this affectionate manner of addressing the Corinthians who he has just sternly censured, in a manner of speaking.

Paul's commands remind us of his somewhat similar commands to the church at Thessalonica -

1 Thessalonians 5:19; 20+ **Do not quench** ([sbennumi](#) in [present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) the Spirit; **do not despise** ([exoutheneo](#) in [present imperative with a negative](#)) prophetic utterances ([propheteia](#))

Desire earnestly to prophesy ([propheteuo](#)) - First the positive command. **Desire earnestly** is third command in [present imperative](#) using this verb ([zeloo](#)) in the section on spiritual gifts.

Utley - Prophesying in 1 Corinthians is basically communicating the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 14:24).

And do not forbid to speak ([laleo](#)) **in tongues** - - Then the negative command. **Do not forbid** is [present imperative with a negative](#) which means some were forbidding others to speak in tongues.

Robertson and Plummer - A vast difference; the one gift to be greatly longed for, the other only not forbidden ([1 Corinthians 14](#)

[Commentary](#))

Pulpit Commentary - The power to preach is to be desired; all that can be said of glossolaly is that it is not to be absolutely forbidden so long as the conditions which St. Paul has laid down for its regulation are observed. But glossolaly is hardly possible under conditions of order, decorum, and self suppression, and we are not surprised that we hear no more of it in the Church, but only in the wild excitement of fanatical sects. The suppression, however, of the startling manifestation by no means necessarily involves any enfeeblement of the inspiring conviction from which it sprang. The brawling torrent which "foams its madness off" is lost in the calm and majestic flow of the deep river. ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Do not forbid (2967) ([koluo](#) from **kólos** = docked, lopped, clipped, **kolazo** = curtail) means to cut off, to cut short, to weaken and generally to hinder, to prevent, to check, to restrain or to forbid by word or act. The idea is to cause something not to happen. 23v Matt. 19:14; Mk. 9:38; Mk. 9:39; Mk. 10:14; Lk. 6:29; Lk. 9:49; Lk. 9:50; Lk. 11:52; Lk. 18:16; Lk. 23:2; Acts 8:36; Acts 10:47; Acts 11:17; Acts 16:6; Acts 24:23; Acts 27:43; Rom. 1:13; 1 Co. 14:39; 1 Thess. 2:16; 1 Tim. 4:3; Heb. 7:23; 2 Pet. 2:16; 3 Jn. 1:10

1 Corinthians 14:40 But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

- 1Co 14:26-33 11:34 Ro 13:13 *marg: Col 2:5 Titus 1:5
- [1 Corinthians 13 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WORSHIP PROPERLY AND ORDERLY

Propriety means conformity to established standards of good or proper behavior or manners.

PROPRIETY:

1. Be done in its proper time.
2. Be kept to its proper use.
3. Be put in its proper place.

But all things must be done properly (decently, fittingly, with [propriety](#), with seemliness) **and in an orderly manner** (fashion, way) - Paul ends with another command, **must be done**, in the [present imperative](#) (calling for their [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)). An orderly is a military word so Paul is probably using this as a military metaphor which is not a bad thought in view that the Body of Christ locally is continually engaged in a titanic struggle against the forces of darkness. Ordered "troops" are much more likely to assure victory in our incessant battles against our crafty adversary! Disorderly "troops" places the church in a precarious position!

THOUGHT - From a personal perspective "disorderly discipline" also makes the individual believer vulnerable to attacks by the terrible [triumvirate](#) the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#). See the **profit** and **dual promises** of a disciplined Christian walk - don't miss your once in a lifetime opportunity to obtain promises not only for this life but the life to come! Tomorrow is too late to begin, redeem today, for you may not have tomorrow. I just received an email from a former missionary whose missionary friend to Nicaragua died suddenly 4 days ago and had been in perfect health. Pray Psalm 90:12+ frequently!

But **have nothing to do with** (more actively reject - [present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourself for the purpose of godliness; 8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but **godliness is profitable for all things**, since it holds promise for the **present life** and also **for the life to come** (READ THAT AGAIN! DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE IT? cf Jesus' words - Mt 6:19-21, 24+). 9 It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. 10 For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, Who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. (1 Timothy 4:7-10+)

Robertson adds that "The exact phrase (**in an orderly manner**) occurs nowhere else in either N.T. or LXX, but is used of the Greeks' manner of fighting at Salamis as opposed to the disorderly efforts of the barbarians (Hdt. 8:86)." (Word Pictures)

Robertson and Plummer - Ecclesiastical decorum is meant; beauty and harmony prevail in God's universe, where each part discharges its proper function without slackness or encroachment; and beauty and harmony ought to prevail in the worship of

God....In these three chapters (12–14.) the Apostle has been contending with the danger of spiritual anarchy, which would be the result if every Christian who believed that he had a charisma were allowed to exercise it without consideration for others. He passes on to the danger of one form of philosophic scepticism,—doubt as to the possibility of resurrection. ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Pulpit Commentary - Decently; that is, "with decorum." Thus Milton uses the term --"... and held Before his decent steps a silver wand."In Romans 13:13 and 1 Thessalonians 4:12 it is translated "honestly," *i.e.* honourably. In order. Time, proportion, regulation, self suppression, are as necessary in worship as in "the music of men's lives." ([1 Corinthians 14 Commentary](#))

Dean Stanley offers a good word - "Decently" — *i.e.*, so as not to interrupt the gravity and dignity of assemblies. "In order" — *i.e.*, not by hazard or impulse, but by design and arrangement. The idea is not so much of any beauty or succession of parts in the worship, as of that calm and simple majesty which in the ancient world, whether Pagan or Jewish, seems to have characterised all solemn assemblies, whether civil or ecclesiastical, as distinct from the frantic or enthusiastic ceremonies which accompanied illicit or extravagant communities. The Roman senate, the Athenian areopagus, were examples of the former, as the wild Bacchanalian or Phrygian orgies were of the latter. Hence the apostle has condemned the discontinuance of the veil (1 Corinthians 9:1-16), the speaking of women (ver. 34), the indiscriminate banqueting (1 Corinthians 11:16-34), the interruption of the prophets by each other (vers. 30-32). "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," is a principle of universal application, and condemns every impulse of religious zeal or feeling which is not strictly under the control of those who display it. A world of fanaticism is exploded by this simple axiom; and to those who have witnessed the religious frenzy which attaches itself to the various forms of Eastern worship, this advice of the apostle, himself of Eastern origin, will appear the more remarkable. The wild gambols yearly celebrated at Easter by the adherents of the Greek Church round the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem show what Eastern Christianity may become; they are the living proofs of the need of the wisdom of the apostolic precept. (Related note [Decency and Order in Divine Worship](#))

Jack Hunter & Albert McShane ([What the Bible teaches – 1 and 2 Corinthians](#)) have an excellent summary of this chapter -

1. The supremacy of love to enrich every gift and enable all to serve acceptably.
2. The importance of edification, for the exercise of gift is in vain unless all are built up in their faith.
3. The vital importance of intelligibility so that all may understand and be profited.
4. The obvious need of godly order so that visitors might be attracted and not repelled, and their spiritual need fully met.
5. The willingness to accept the principle of controlled liberty, as to the number taking part (v. 29), willing submission to the judgment of others (v. 29), and a readiness to give place to another (v. 30).
6. The importance of the authority of the word of God, binding upon both women (vv. 34-35) and men (v. 37).
7. The danger of an assembly acting contrary to the word of God and to the practices of other assemblies based upon that Word.
8. The total acceptance of and submission to the supremacy of the teaching of the apostles, as being the commandment of the Lord. .

Properly (2156) **euschemonos** from **eu** = good + **schema** = appearance) is an adjective which means pertaining to being proper in behavior. Becomingly, respectably, in a becoming manner, decently, with propriety. The idea is that which is proper with the implication of that which is pleasing. Synonymous ideas include decorously (marked by propriety and good taste), honestly and orderly, in a seemly manner. 3x in the NT (No uses in Lxx) - Ro 13:13+ = " Let us behave **properly** as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy." 1Co 14:40 1Th 4:12+ = "so that you will behave **properly** toward outsiders and not be in any need."

Orderly manner (Good discipline) (5010) **taxis** from **tasso** = to set or arrange in order) described the orderly array of soldiers with the line being unbroken and intact. In context, the idea may be that a few stragglers had been swayed by the persuasive arguments, but there was no panic, no breach in the line. Here it speaks of a state of good order, order, proper procedure; regular arrangement, proper setting and thus order. 8v - Lk. 1:8; 1 Co. 14:40; Col. 2:5; Heb. 5:6; Heb. 5:10; Heb. 6:20; Heb. 7:11; Heb. 7:17