

Prophecy or Tongues: Which Spiritual Gift is Best

NOVEMBER 5, 2023

WORSHIP

Beautiful Saviour
Mighty to Save
Prepare the Way of the
Lord

WELCOME

In your opinion which
spiritual gift is better, the
gift of prophecy or
tongues? What does these
two gifts mean to us in the
modern day?

WORD

1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-5, 12
(READ THE ENTIRE CHAPTER
FOR CONTEXT)

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 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. ³ But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. ⁴ One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. 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. ¹² So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

Prophecy or tongues – which spiritual gift is best? Last Sunday, Pastor Keith took us through 1 Corinthians 14, answered this question through the eyes of the 1st century believers Paul first addressed, and shared what it meant for us Christians today.

Unlike present day Christians who have access to the written Bible, 1st century believers did not have this privilege and relied more on God's spoken Word. Because of this, Paul's topic of "prophecy or tongues" was of utmost importance to them.

So, what is prophecy and what is tongues? Prophecy is the special ability to receive revelation from God, and communicate this in an immediate message to His people by speaking His words without error. Tongues on the other hand is the God given ability to speak divine revelation in a foreign language by the speaker, to unbelieving Jews in their language, as a sign that a gifted interpreter can translate to edify the church. Of the two, Paul is clear that prophecy is superior. "For one who speaks in tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands... But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church" (v2-4).

Prophecy is superior because of its purpose of speaking to men and edifying the church. It is also superior because it can result in the conversion of unbelievers. While tongues play a unique role of authenticating God's work to those who do not yet believe, it is not enough. While it serves as a sign of God's presence unbelievers, it cannot be understood without an interpreter, and therefore cannot lead to changed lives. "...Unless you utter by the tongue a speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air" (v9). Prophecy on the other hand is comprehensible, and can therefore lead to the conviction and repentance of unbelievers.

Paul not only shared his perspective on "prophecy or tongues", he also taught the Corinthian church how to maintain order in their services in this context. His instructions:

- Speakers best edify the church by taking turns. Everything said in service should edify the church.

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WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- God's help and comfort, salvation for Israel, wisdom for their leaders in government, military and their soldiers as they defend themselves against terrorists' attacks.
- Rescue of the Israelites taken as hostages.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; conflict in African, East Asian and Middle East countries to stop.

III. Church

- CCFers would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, deacons, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.

MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 14:1

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

WORD

If anyone speaks in tongues, they should take turns and have an interpreter, "but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God" (v28). If anyone prophesies, they should also take turns and be evaluated by other prophets. If a woman desires to speak in tongues or prophecy, let her remain silent. This is in obedience to God, who in His wisdom guides us on what He believes women do better than men, and vice versa.

- Discipline those who disobey Christ's speaking limitations. "...Let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized" (v37-38).
- Emphasize prophecy without totally excluding tongues, "desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner" (V39-40).

So, what does this all mean for us Christians today? In the 21st century when God speaks to us through His Word, the Bible, the emphasis is less on "prophecy or tongues" but more on the importance of God's Word. As we reflect on this message, let's ask ourselves. How rooted are we in God's Word? Do we put it on the backburner, or do we dwell on it as our source of life and guide for our Christian walk? Do we prioritize it in our quiet times, our home groups, our d-groups? Is it an indispensable part of our daily lives?

Discussion Questions

1. Do we as a church do everything decently and in order? How can we as a church improve?
2. How should we as a church respond if someone wants to speak in tongues in our church service?
3. How should one respond if a friend says that we should learn how to speak in tongues?
4. How should we as a church help church members to locate their spiritual gift(s)?