



# THINKING LIKE ADULTS

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## OPENING COMMENT

Tongues and prophecy tend to force people into extreme positions due to bad experiences or ignorance on the subject all together. There is an inherent trepidation in misunderstanding complex topics and valid skepticism in the misapplication of miraculous gifting. Culturally, we are prone to materialism and so the supernatural can be treated as irrelevant and, ultimately weird. However, this is completely foreign to Paul, who would live a life expecting the supernatural to regularly occur. So, instead of silencing the Corinthians in their Spiritual giftedness, he simply aim to realign their priorities.

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## READ THE TEXT: 1 Corinthians 14:1-19

Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.  
<sup>2</sup> For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. <sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. <sup>4</sup> The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. <sup>5</sup> Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.  
<sup>6</sup> Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? <sup>7</sup> If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? <sup>8</sup> And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? <sup>9</sup> So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not



intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air.

<sup>10</sup> There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, <sup>11</sup> but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. <sup>12</sup> So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. <sup>14</sup> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. <sup>15</sup> What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. <sup>16</sup> Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? <sup>17</sup> For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. <sup>18</sup> I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. <sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

## UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. What are the main themes in the first 5 verses?
2. What is Paul's primary concern in verse 6?
3. What characteristics of the gift of tongues are revealed in Paul's analogies from verse 7 - 11?
4. Paul uses "mind" in place of prophecy in verses 13 - 19. What does this tell us about both gifts in the discussion?
5. Why is it important for Paul that others can agree with an "Amen"? (vs. 16)
6. Does Paul disparage either gift as he reframes the Corinthian churches perspective?
7. How often does Paul through this passage is Paul concerned with the health and maturity of the church?

## APPLYING THE TEXT

1. Take some time to discuss personal experiences around the two gifts in particular.
2. How have those experiences agreed with the teaching found in this passage?
3. How have those experiences conflicted with the teaching found here?
4. Paul's initial instruction to the Corinthian church is to earnestly desire the spiritual gifts (vs. 1). How, if at all, have you disciplined yourself in this area? If not, how could you?
5. Verse 16 has in view a more corporate worship experience. How might we encourage the gifting of the Spirit in our corporate gatherings?



6. Verse 16 also has in view a more public level of agreement amongst believers. How might we instil this public affirmation into our own lives, instead of the privatized, segmented, lives we typically perpetuate?

## BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Genesis 11:1-9 - Unified language confused into multiple languages. A consequence of sinful action.
2. Isaiah 28:11-13 - Paul references this passage in 1 Corinthians 14. The reference to strange tongues in this context is a result of God's judgment, but brings significant interpretation challenges to 14:21-25.
3. Acts 2:1-41 - Pentecost - the initiation of the Spirit's power.
4. Acts 10:1-48 and Acts 19:1-7 - The Spirit coming in a similar manner to Pentecost on those least expected.
5. 1 Corinthians 12 - clear outlines on who apportions the gifts and that each is providentially useful to the whole body.
6. 1 Corinthians 13:1 - questions regarding "tongues of angels". How much weight can be placed on this as a real language in light of Paul's hypothetical remarks.
7. 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 - further discuss on the practice of prophecy and tongues.
8. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 - Testing prophecy to ensure validity

## CONCLUSION

It is difficult to imagine our church ever getting to a place where the words of Paul would need to be taken more literally. Our cultural situation places us on the side of skepticism and fear instead of unabashed embrace of the Spiritual manifestations. Even though Paul is directing a church who was misusing the gifting they had received, there is a helpful reminder in the exhortation that we should not miss. It really comes down to the first line Paul writes "earnestly desire the spiritual gifts" for the upbuilding of the church. This is not a call to throwing caution to the wind, but diligently, honestly, consistently leaving space for God to use us in miraculous ways. Paul reminds us that these miraculous gifts are good and incredibly useful for helping us become more mature in Christ. We need heed Paul's words in verse 20 and avoid thinking like children and start thinking like adults.



## SHARE & PRAY

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### LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

