

the Gifts of the Spirit for the work of the Kingdom



Life Group Study: “The Gift of Tongues” – 1 Cor 14

This study delves into tongues (glossolalia), a debated and misunderstood gift, as part of the inheritance God has prepared for us.

1. Warm Up

- Satan's strategy often involves holding up "crazy examples" of spiritual gifts to stop us from claiming the "inheritance of the Spirit". **How have bad examples or personal hurts regarding spiritual gifts paralyzed your pursuit of God's power?**
- Paul noted that this particular gift can create "extreme negatives," including **Elitism** and **Anti-intellectualism**. **Why might the gift of tongues, specifically, be prone to creating a sense of spiritual superiority or a fear of "stinking thinking" (intellectualism)?**

2. Read the Word

Read the following passage: 1 Corinthians 14:1-25.

Ask:

- Paul used tongues more than anyone, yet he severely restricted its public use. **What tension does this create, and what does it reveal about the differing values of public versus private spiritual expression?**

3. Explore the Meaning

A. Defining the Gift and Addressing Misuse

The New Testament describes two primary expressions of tongues:

1. **Acts 2:** Real languages the speaker had not learned, used to "declare the wonders of God".
 2. **1 Corinthians:** A "spiritually empowered form of prayer in a heavenly language that no one but God understands".
- **How does the difference between the 'real language' gift in Acts 2 and the 'heavenly language' gift in 1 Corinthians affect your personal expectations of the gift?**
 - Paul was correcting a group that considered themselves "spiritually elite" because they spoke in tongues. **How do we guard against the idea that spiritual power hinges on speaking in tongues, especially since many powerfully used figures like Charles Finney and George Muller never mentioned the gift?**
 - Paul encouraged believers to stop emphasizing tongues in public and "try prophecy". **Why is prophecy considered a "greater gift" and why is intelligibility crucial for building up/edifying the community?**

B. Right Use: Private vs. Public

Tongues are part of the inheritance of God's people and should not be forbidden.

- **Private Use (Go for it!):** This is for personal edification, where the person speaks "to God," uttering "mysteries by the Spirit". **What value do you see in a prayer life that allows for deep, direct communication with the divine, bypassing conscious thought?**
- **Public Use (Don't do it! Unless...):** Paul demands that everything in the corporate assembly must be **intelligible**. Without interpretation (which is also a gift), public use leads to unfruitfulness. **Do we sometimes allow personal spiritual expression (like uninterpreted tongues) to overshadow the need for order and fruitfulness in corporate worship?**

4. Apply & Pray

Personal reflection:

- We are charged: "Do not neglect your gift". **What spiritual gifts might you be guilty of neglecting?**

Group Prayer:

- The notion of the Holy acknowledges that God is actually mysterious (*mysterium tremendum*) and evokes tremendous awe and wonder. Pray that God gives us the grace to "earnestly desire the spiritual gifts" even if they "shake our perfect worlds".

5. This Week's Challenge

Remember that God is "far more pleased with our obedience than our success".

- **Action:** This week, look for opportunities to let God operate outside of your expectations for what is "neat and tidy and dignified and understandable and above all else socially acceptable". **Where can you step out in faith this week, knowing that God is not easily offended by your errors or messes?**