

WORSHIP THAT MAKES SENSE

GOD'S GRACE FOR AN IMPERFECT CHURCH: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS · 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-39 · AUGUST 11, 2024 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

"What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.

Everything must be done so that the church may be built up." (1 Corinthians 14:26)

Contrasting Spirit-Gifts: Tongues and Prophecy (14:2-25)

Tongues:

- Speaks to God (vs 2)
- Not understandable, uttering mysteries of the Spirit (vs 2)
- Edifies oneself (vs 4)
- Emphasized by Corinthian believers as greater
- A sign for unbelievers – truly miraculous (vs 22)
- Also confusing for unbelievers or inquirers (vs 23)

Prophecy:

- Speaks to people (vs 3)
- Strengthens, encourages, and comforts others (vs 3)
- Edifies others (vs 4)
- Emphasized by Paul as greater (vs 5)
- A sign for believers – brings understanding (vs 22)
- Also convicting for unbelievers or inquirers (vs 24)

Paul's Overarching Goal of Spirit-Gifts and Worship within the Gathered Community

Pursuing love and desiring Spirit-gifts (vs 1)

Edification and upbuilding of the entire church community (vss 4-5, 12, 17-19, 26)

Paul's Central Guidance on Order within the Community's Worship

Openness to a variety of Spirit-gifts used within the gathering (vss 26-30)

Appropriate order that testifies to God's presence and power (vss 31-33)

Paul's comments on women in the public gathering (vss 34-35)

A reminder about the way of love (vss 36-38)

Final words and summary (vss 39-40)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does worship in community mean to you?
2. This week we continue our preaching series, "God's Grace for an Imperfect Church" by studying 1 Corinthians 14. Whether on your own or with others, begin your study in

- prayer, asking God to speak to you through this study and then read that text aloud.
3. Remember that this section of Paul's letter follows upon his exploration of Spirit-gifts given by God (12:1-11), the church as the body of Christ (12:12-31), and the priority of love within God's community (13:1-13). In light of that, what stands out to you from Paul's words in 14:1?
4. As you read through 14:2-24, how would you compare and contrast the Spirit-gifts of tongues and prophecy?
5. Looking at this entire section, but especially verses 4-5, 12, 17-19, and 26, what would you say is the Apostle Paul's overriding priority for the Corinthians in relation to Spirit-gifts and the public gathering for worship?
6. What do you think this means for us today?
7. In verses 26-40, Paul addresses the way that the public gathering of worship should unfold. What is Paul's central guidance for the Corinthians according to what we read in verses 27, 33, and 39-40?
8. Paul gives space for all to use their Spirit-gifts, but also emphasizes the importance of order in worship. Given that the Corinthian church community was roughly 40-60 people, and some gifts were being emphasized over others, why do you think this was important for the Corinthians to hear?
9. Verses 34-35 have generated a lot of discussion. In light of 11:2-16 where women are clearly invited to speak publicly in the church, what do you think these verses might mean in the context of Paul's discussion of order in public worship?
10. What is one thing God speaking to you personally through this study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and share this with someone this week.

THIS WEEK DIG DEEPER IN ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- Memorize 1 Corinthians 14:12 or 14:26 or 14:39-40
- Explore some of the following resources:
 - Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*
 - Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*
 - Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians*
 - N. T. Wright, "Women's Service in the Church: The Biblical Basis": ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/womens-service-in-the-church-the-biblical-basis/.