

1 Corinthians

# Wisdom & Unity

Meeting the demands of  
Christian life and living



Rev. Larrin Robertson  
Pastor, WORD For Life Church Ministries



Starting where  
you are:

Any questions?



# 1 Corinthians 12:1 – 14:40—On Spiritual Gifts

“Now concerning” (12:1) suggests a transition to another issue brought to Paul’s attention—spiritual gifts. Paul’s response, in chapters 12-14, offers believers lenses through which to view spiritual gifts. Paul’s main concern is that believers receive with gratitude and employ with grace the Spirit’s endowment for their benefit.

This portion of the letter highlights the significance of the love that should undergird the understanding and use of spiritual gifts. The graces of the Spirit are vital for the continued well-being of individuals and the community.

## **Outline: 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40**

- 1 Cor 12:1-13 □ Unity through the Spirit
- 1 Cor 12:14-31 □ Diversity in the Spirit
- 1 Cor 13:1-13 □ Maturity because of the Spirit
- 1 Cor 14:1-40 □ Wisdom in demonstration of the Spirit

*This outline adapted from Warren Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary.*

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# 1 Corinthians 14:1-19 – On Spiritual Gifts, pt. 3

Here, Paul offers wisdom on how to view and use the spiritual gift of tongues within a community of faith. As the conversation turns to the use of this Spirit-gift, Paul reminds the believers in Corinth of the importance of unity as they worship God and fellowship with one another. His main concern is that the church be “built up” as believers edify one another.

**Spiritual growth and maturity are demonstrated by the mutually edifying use of spiritual gifts (tongues).**

## Outline: 1 Corinthians 14:1-19

- Building the body vs. building oneself (1-5)
- A case against the primacy of tongues (6-12)
- Instructions for using the gift of tongues (13-19)

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# An Edifying Church

Spiritual gifts grow the Church by helping to establish and build up the whole over the one.

## Let's be clear:

- **Tongues:** language; speech trait distinguishing nation from nation.
- **Prophecy:** gift of communicating and enforcing revealed truth; divinely empowered forthtelling or foretelling.
- **Edify: oikodomei/ (oikodomei)**
  - *Lit.*, to build a house; a physical structure (see Acts 7:47, 49)
  - *Fig.*, to build someone up, helping them to stand (be strong, “sturdy”)
    - Matt 16:18
    - Acts 20:32
    - 1 Cor 8:1
  - Also seen in a negative connotation (see 1 Cor 8:10)

# Building the body vs. building oneself (14:1-5)

One's gifts are encouraged provided that the gifted one's focus is for the welfare of the body. This is love in action and it conveys reasons why the emphasis must be the whole instead of the one.

## Remember the reason for spiritual gifts

- To understand or be understood
- To edify, encourage, and console
- To strengthen others



## Remember the value of spiritual gifts

- Empower and enable members of the body to share the Gospel (*tongues*)
- Encourage and strengthen members of the body to care for each other (*prophecies*)

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# A case against the primacy of tongues (14:6-12)

A leading question brings into focus the error of viewing tongues as the primary gift within the church. The illustration that follows provides clarity about the futility of a gift (i.e., tongues) that has no context for its usefulness.

## Three arguments against the primacy of tongues among spiritual gifts

- Causes confusion in the place of clarity (7)
- Promotes uncertainty in the place of understanding (8)
- Creates “foreigners” in the place of family (9-11)

*Paul is not against the gift of tongues. Instead, Paul insists that tongues not be elevated among believers, and certainly not at the expense of other gifts intended to “build up” the believer.*

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# Instructions for using the gift of tongues (14:13-19)

Since the tongues exist, how are they to be used in a community context? This underlying question is addressed in Paul's following instructions:

- **Pray for the gift to interpret (13-14)**

- Interpretation invokes the mind

- **Do not forsake the “natural” offering of prayer and praise (15-17)**

- The human audience may comprehend, and the aim of the gift may be fulfilled.
- Worship is intended for God, but it is also meant to be edifying for other people.

- **Let your aim be the building up of people (18-19)**

- Personal satisfaction can be found in interpersonal connection and effect.

**'til we meet again:**

- Reflect on today's lesson**
- Pray about today's lesson**
- Read 1 Corinthians 14:20-40**



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