

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.

November 17, 2022

1 Corinthians 14:20-40 – On Spiritual Gifts, pt. 4

This section of the letter concludes Paul's focus on wisdom in the employment of spiritual gifts—specifically, the gift of tongues—in the church. Practical instructions counter what must have been disorder, thus disunity, in the context of worship. There is also a command that has garnered quite a bit of discussion concerning the role of women.

Spiritual growth and maturity are demonstrated by the unified and orderly use of spiritual gifts (tongues).

Outline: 1 Corinthians 14:20-40

- An appeal for God's glory through the gifts (20-25)
- A prescription for the orderly use of gifts (26-36)
- An exhortation to honor Christ with the gifts (37-40)

November 17, 2022



An Orderly Church

Spiritual gifts benefit the Church
when unity and order characterize
the gathered community.

An appeal for God's glory through the gifts (14:20-25)

An exhortation for understanding (14:20)

Verse 20 may be understood as a part of 14:13-19. It also introduces the next unit of thought concerning order. Specifically, verse 20 highlights a possible issue in the church that could hamper their witness to unbelievers. Note the imperatives:

- **Do not be** naïve of thought
- **Be** innocent in actions
- **Be** mature (*complete, perfect*) of thought
- (see 13:11)

An appeal for God's glory through the gifts (14:20-25 cont'd.)

An explanation of the sign gifts (21-25)

Restating Isaiah 28:11-12 illustrates a reason for the tongues: ***God enables miracles to get people to recognize God's call to salvation through Jesus.***

How shall they hear?

- I. Unbelievers will hear God's call through a familiar word (22).
- II. Believers will acknowledge God's call through a confirming word (22).

How shall they (*new believers and unbelievers*) understand?

- III. Chaos of unrestrained tongues (23).
- IV. Conviction by unified proclamation (24-25) [see 14:16].

A brief word on “Sign Gifts”

- I. A matter of power and purpose, not power versus purpose.
 - Signs (e.g., in Acts) are not, of necessity, spiritual gifts (e.g., in Rom 12 and 1 Cor 12)
 - The power of sign gifts enables the purpose for which believers receive the gifts.
- II. Do they continue?
 - Yes = Continuity (non-cessationist; Pentecostals, charismatics). 1st Century gifts are present and active in 21st Century. **Normative** within Christianity.
 - No = Discontinuity (cessationist; non-Pentecostal, non-charismatics). 1st Century gifts authenticate Jesus as the Christ and are therefore **affirmative**.
- III. What difference does this make?
 - May help believers to reconcile the sufficiency of Christ's death.
 - May help believers to reconcile the sufficiency of Scripture.

For your edification:

Nathan J. Page. *Why Cessationsim Can't Be True*, Book 1, The Theological Perspective (Bloomington: Westbow Press) 2021.
Laura Schmidt Roberts (ed.) *Concern for Church Mission & Spiritual Gifts: Essays on Faith and Culture, 1958-1968* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock) 2022.

<https://bible.org/article/two-views-sign-gifts-continuity-vs-discontinuity>

A prescription for the orderly use of gifts (14:26-33)

“What should be done then?” Responding to the chaos and division that marked the worship experience, Paul replies: “Let everything be done for building up (edification).” Here is what Paul prescribes:

□ For the public expression of tongues (27-28)

- Limit the number
- Promote order
- Define the roles

□ For the number of persons prophesying (29-32)

- Limit the number
- Permit evaluation (presumably according to Scripture (for them, OT), the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), and discernment from the Spirit (12:10) to determine if the Spirit, and not another (2 Cor 11:12-15), was the Source of the message.
- Exercise discipline/self-control

A word about women in worship (14:34-36)

One of “Paul’s” more controversial instructions is the directive that “women should be silent in the churches” (v.34). What can we say about this?

1. The instruction is clear.

- The text is the text. For what purposes does this section of text exist?
- Did Paul write the text as inspired by the Holy Spirit, or did some later person assume and write under Paul’s name and authority? If the latter, for what purposes does the “later writer” seek to appropriate apostolic authority?

2. The instruction is contrary.

- Weigh this instruction against 11:5, 12:10, 14:3, 24, and 29.
- Weigh this instruction against Paul’s partnership with women: Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2), Prisca (16:3), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3), Apphia (Phlm 2).
- There are no injunctions against women speaking in public. There is encouragement of women leaders in their respective faith communities.

November 17, 2022

An exhortation for order in worship (14:37-40)

This portion of text concludes the “miniseries” that includes 12:1-14:36. The goal is to reiterate, and therefore reaffirm, the importance of order in using gifts within worship. The order for which the church should be concerned is that the Gospel is shared.

I. The Lord’s command

- To speak for God (“prophet”) is to agree with God
- To possess God’s gifts (“spiritual person”) is to accept God’s call

II. The church’s concern

- Edification with the goal of fellowship
- Use the gifts with a sense of reverence

'til we meet again: Dec. 1, 2022

- Reflect on today's lesson**
- Pray about today's lesson**
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-28**



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