**BEING THE CHURCH**

**“Eagerly Desire Gifts” - 1st Corinthians 14**

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**Last Week:** **1st Corinthians 13**

LOVE:  
**1st Cor. 13:1-8** “If I speak in the tonguesof men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. **2**If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. **3**If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

(Fifteen examples of what love IS or ISN’T)

**4**Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

**5**It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

**6**Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

**7**It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8a Love never fails.”

Ending:

**1st Cor. 13:13 “**And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the *greatest of these is love*.”

In 1st Corinthians 14 Paul encourages the Corinthian church to use the gifts if the Spirit, but use them carefully and considerately. He is primarily talking about two things;

* Tongues & Prophecy

So it’s important to remember what we learned about these two things back in chapter 12;

1. Tongues, - Speaking to God in an unknown language. *(“to God” 1st Cor. 14:2)*
2. Prophecy - Speaking forth a message from God. (Sometimes, but not usually foretelling the future and always consistent with God’s Word).

**1st Cor. 14:1-40 “**Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. ***2****For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God.* Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit.

**3**But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. **4**Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. **5**I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.

**6**Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? **7**Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? **8**Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? **9**So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. **10**Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. **11**If then I do *not* grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me. **12**So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.

This is the reason for spiritual gifts, “building up the church” (that’s what this chapter is about), gifts are not for personal expression, not for self-seeking purposes, and certainly not platforms for pride or arrogance. They are to build up the church.

**13**For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say. **14**For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. **15**So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. **16**Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? **17**You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified.

**18**I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. **19**But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

**20**Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. **21**In the Law it is written:

“With other tongues and through the lips of foreigners  
I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me,  
says the Lord.”

**22**Tongues, then, are a *sign*, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. **23**So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? **24**But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, **25**as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

Tongues can be a sign for unbelievers, however *intelligible words* are more than just a sign, they are messages from God for both believers AND unbelievers.

**26**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. **27**If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. **28**If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.

<pause>

**29**Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. **30**And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. **31**For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. **32**The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. **33**For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.

<pause>

**34**Womenshould remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. **35**If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

**36**Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? **37**If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. **38**But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored.

**39**Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. **40**But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”

***Note: All the spiritual lessons of this chapter apply to every church in every age, however some of the more cultural directives apply specifically to the culture to whom they are written.***

[ Explain Nazareth Village Synagogue;

* Rectangle shape with benches on every wall.
* Every Shabbat families would gather,
* Heads of household (Fathers/Husbands) would represent families would speak.
* They would read the Torah and Haff-Torah portions of scripture and discuss it.
* Elders and Rabbis would take turns teaching the important truths of God.
* Women and children would either not be present or remain silent. ]

***Early Church Format:***

Remember, “Church” means “called out ones” (ecclesia). The early church meetings were modeled after the synagogue format. In fact most of them began in the synagogues.

Whether we admit it or not, it was not very similar to what we have in the modern age (Stage, auditorium seating, lights, microphones, worship band, announcements, one person delivers the message) most people come, sit say nothing and then go home.

It was more of an inter-active experience with several people speaking and lots of open discussion. Much like the way small groups function in our time. So some of the practical advice given to the Corinthian church may or may not apply to our gatherings today. We order and plan our services in the way that they have proven to be most effective for church in our times, but are always open to the Lord to direct us in any other ways that would be more fruitful.

***Gentile Believers:***

In the churches in Greece and Asia Minor (including Corinth), there were a lot of non-Jews (Gentiles) who were believers, and did not know the Hebrew scriptures like the Jewish believers did. This presented a problem because the whole faith required an understanding of the Hebrew scriptures which covered the history of the Jewish people over the previous 3000 years. They knew none of that and needed teaching about everything that was contained in the Tanakh and how Jesus fulfilled the “Law and the Prophets”. They did not know what a Messiah was, so that had to be explained before they could fully understand the importance of Jesus as Messiah.

***Women:***

In the first century, and actually all the way through the dark ages, women were not educated. Even as late as last century, only Jewish boys studied Torah, not the girls. In fact in my mother’s family only her brothers went to Hebrew School, the girls did not.

It wasn’t that they were not intelligent, or that they were being discriminated against (although that is likely true), it is because tradition dictated that they had a role which required a 24/7 commitment, helping with the household and children, having babies, raising children, preparing food and keeping house. The job of a woman in those days demanded such an extreme amount of time, energy and devotion, that they were not offered any training, schooling or responsibilities outside the household.

In many societies, including early American societies, the role of women was limited to domestic responsibilities and their education was not encouraged. (some countries still follow that tradition),

But now, for the first time in history, women are generally more educated than men. Approximately 36% of Millennial women have a bachelor’s degree compared to 28% of men.

In the first century, particularly here in Corinth, it’s likely that the women were engaging in conversations and chatter during the meetings. Paul directed them to not bring up their questions and conversations at the gatherings, but to raise the issues and questions at home. Culturally, they were not part of the synagogue public dialog.

Some sectarian factions within Christianity even today interpret these and other writings of Paul to mean that women should never speak, pray, sing or talk about anything in church, in fact they should always wear head coverings and act in complete quietness and submission. Obviously this is an example of creating general rules of legalism out of cultural distinctives put forth in scripture in ways that were never intended.

We at C&MA encourage all women to use their gifts and pursue the callings that God has for them. We do not have women as Lead Pastors or Elders, but we have many women who fully use their spiritual giftings as God leads them to minister to the Lord, the Body and to reach the lost.

***Prophecy:***

Until the Holy Spirit was given, the only way to learn about God was to study the Tanakh, primarily the Torah scrolls which were kept closely guarded at the synagogues. This was particularly disadvantageous for non-Jews because they had very little exposure to the Tanakh and did not really know what was in it.

They didn’t have personal Bibles, they did not have pocket-sized *Torot*, they didn’t have YouVersion on their phones. They had no way of knowing what was in the Hebrew Scriptures except what was read in dribs and drabs during the Shabbat gatherings at Jewish synagogues.

*(If you were a Gentile in those days you would have had very little understanding of the Bible, how would that make you feel?)*

In fact over the last 1900 yrs. since the Bible was compiled (66 books of the Canon)

MOST people did not have a Bible, and never even saw a Bible.

**BIBLE HISTORY:**

* + 120AD - The Canon 66 Book (39 Old Testament / 27 New Testament)

Circulated in fragments and primitive copies for 300 years

* + 400 AD - Latin Vulgate (St. Jerome) To be read only by clergy;
    - * All other translations forbidden!
  + 476 – 1000AD THE DARK AGES - Very little learning, mostly illiterate, Bible kept from
    - people (other than monasteries and Catholic medieval churches – read in **Latin**)
  + 1380 – John Wycliffe translated the Vulgate New Testament into English illegally.
    - His translation was contraband and after he died his bones were dug up and burned in the square.
  + 1450 – The Guttenberg press was invented.
  + 1536 – William Tyndale bravely translated more of the Bible into English for mass
    - production, but he was captured and burned at the stake.
  + 16th-19th Century Bibles were only available to churches and the very rich, and illiteracy was still prevalent. In the US, in the 1800’s *less than half* the population could read.

I love the Bible. God has been using the availability and readability of the Bible in the modern world to bring the truth to billions of people. However, the idea of common Christians relying on their own personal version of the Bible to experience God’s word, is a very modern convenience comparatively. So they had to rely solely on the Holy Spirit, perhaps through miraculaous revelation of scripture, and through prophecy.

But Jesus promised us that we could *learn through the Holy Spirit*;

**John 14:26“**But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

*That’s what happened* when the Holy Spirit was poured out during Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, it was truly amazing;

**Acts 2:16-18 “16**This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

**17**“‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.**18**Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”

Corinth was experiencing this. The Holy Spirit was being poured out on all people, men and women, and they were bringing forth messages from God (prophecy).

In some ways it was beautiful and exciting. Unbelievers would come in and see what was happening and would “fall down and worship God, exclaiming, *“God is really among you****!” (V. 25)***

In other ways it was chaotic, confusing and disorderly, to which Paul wrote;

**V.33“**For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace.”

Paul gives both spiritual and practical direction on the order by which prophecy is to take place, and also the way it is spiritually evaluated.

“The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.” (V. 32)

In other words, no one should ever receive a prophecy without weighing it carefully among other proven believers, and other bona-fide prophets, and that always includes those who’ve brought messages from God in the scriptures. A prophecy will never go against scripture, in fact it will always be congruent with it and also underscore truth that is already given in scripture. Beware of so-called Prophets whose message is not steeped in, or consistent with scripture.

The main message regarding gifts, speaking, order of worship and gathering together is summed up in this verse;

**1st Cor. 14:26**“*Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.”*

What is your gift? It can’t be “nothing”. God has gifted each of one of us in to contribute toward building up the church. Maybe you recognize your gift and are operating in it already, maybe you’re still waiting for an opportunity to use your gift. Or maybe you have not discovered what your spiritual giftings are and need God to show you.

**1st Cor. 14:1** “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit,”

Don’t give up, seek the Lord eagerly and specifically to reveal your spiritual gifts to you, and when He does, *use them*. You are very important to the body and your gifts are greatly needed. Never give up eagerly desiring and pursing the gifts God has for you.

**They are important to you, to the church, to the world and to God.**