



Within - Week 6

Speaker: Pastor Rob King

Introduction

[Reader: group leader]

In week six of our study of the Holy Spirit, we will tackle the often-sticky wicket of the proper use of spiritual gifts.

While the focus is on speaking in tongues – because it seems to cause more division amongst people – the lessons from Paul and Peter’s writings apply to all the gifts the Holy Spirit gives.

[Reader: youngest person]

Think about a time when something in your life that was meant to be a good thing, like a date night, turned into something else completely, like fight night. How did it feel? Share your feelings with each other.

When the very thing that should help ends up hurting, the results can leave us unhinged, divided, confused, and angry.

Spiritual gifts have this very ability within the Church Body. They often tear people apart when they are meant to enhance relationships. The purpose of

gifts is to bring believers closer together and make the family of Christ work well for God's glory.

[Reader: the one wearing the most body art]

1 Corinthians 12:25-26 (NIV)

²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

- Have you ever been in a church with such division? Without going into detail about the circumstances, share what it was like for you and others involved?

When Paul wrote the "love chapter," it is doubtful that he envisioned it be used at weddings for a couple of millennia!

If you notice, he placed it smack in the middle of a discussion and teaching about the spiritual gifts. In this context, the familiar passage takes on additional layers of meaning.

[Reader: a person wearing blue]

Open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 13. Paul was led to write to the church in Corinth because they were behaving exactly the opposite of what we see here.

The gifts were being used to abuse each other or to compete or for self-promotion.

When you look at the list of characteristics of love, what you are seeing is a description of how Paul expected the church to behave – to the best of their ability. He says in chapter 12:30 "And yet I will show you the most excellent way."

[Reader: person who most recently visited a beach]

Read 1 Peter 4:8-11(NLT)

⁸ Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.

¹⁰ God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. ¹¹ Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you.

Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

Pastor Rob says, “All have a gift, and you are not to be unemployed.”

- While abusing the gifts causes division, what happens to the body when we do not use our gifts at all?
- What difference does our attitude make when we serve and use our gifts?
- Are you more likely to grumble or be cheerful?

WATCH VIDEO



[Reader: the first birthday in the year]

Now, about tongues. We are focusing on this gift, as Paul did, because they seem to cause the most contention.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-4 (NLT)

Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to prophesy.

² For if you have the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious.

³ But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. ⁴ A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church.

[Reader: Group Leader]

Prophecy in the New Testament is not what many people think it is. It is not a "foretelling," as it often was in the Old Testament. It is a "for telling."

That is, prophecy is for telling others the messages of God, mostly His promises. Tongues is helpful for each of us when our hearts and souls have no words for feelings and needs. We can still have deep communication with our Father. Prophecy is meant to be shared.

Now, when tongues is overheard in a group setting, Paul instructs that it should be followed by edifying words for the entire body present.

In chapter 14, Paul goes on to discuss orderly worship in general, even suggesting a possible format.

Without judgements, let's talk about our experiences with the outwardly expressed gifts.

- Has anyone experienced a chaotic worship service with little or no order? How did it benefit you? What would have been a better way?
- If have a more traditional background, how do you feel about these visible gifts? What would be an orderly way to experience them that would be comfortable for you?

[Reader: person who hasn't read tonight]

This next passage should be a comfort to us. It explains tongues in a way that reveals God's desire for intimacy with His children.

Read Romans 8: 26-27 (NLT)

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Some have called tongues a personal prayer language. It is meant for our good and God only gives good gifts. (Matthew 7:11)

You can trust Him that if you wish for the gift of tongues; it will be good for you.

[Reader: person with the longest hair]

What happens in some churches and the gifts of the Spirit is that they become enamored with a gift. These are often the more publicly displayed gifts.

There becomes this unspoken hierarchy of the 'more important' gifts and if you do not have that gift or gifts, you are of less value in some way. There becomes a peer pressure of sorts!

In one church, it may be teaching that is elevated to the highest ranking. In others, it may be giving. For some, tongues is prominent in their minds.

Read 1 Corinthians 14: 18-19 (NIV)

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.

- What do you think Paul is saying here?
- Does God have a hierarchy of gifts? Why or why not?

Paul was exhorting people that instead of a particular gift, people should be enamored with the One who gives the gift.

[Reader: person with the biggest feet]

Read 1 Corinthians 14:23

²³ Even so, if unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your church meeting and hear everyone speaking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy.

People talking to themselves always gets our attention. Image a whole room doing it! Paul talks next about worshiping in an orderly and decent way.

We will not go into his specific suggestions. They were given to a specific church in a specific culture. His point is that order does not dampen the Holy Spirit.

Paul expected also that a prayer in tongues that is heard by all should be balanced by someone giving a prophecy. In a large church, expressions of these gifts are best suited for small groups where people know one another – a judgement free zone.

- In our group, do you feel free to share your gifts as a whole?
- How would you feel if tongues were spoken in your small group?

[Reader: Group Leader]

There are two things to keep in mind about the gifts of the Spirit. First, we are to test the spirits. We do not check our brains at the door!

Read 1 John 4:1 (ESV)

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

How a word of prophecy is presented to you can be one test. If it is not given in humility, it is probably not from God. You should still test it in other ways, but be guarded.

Read Philippians 2:6 (NIV)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.

The second thing we need to remember is that the Holy Spirit does not overtake us. Each believer is still a part of the equation. Ultimately, we decide how we use the gifts. If not, Paul would not have suggested we could be orderly!

Read 1 Corinthians 14:32-33 (NLT)

² Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can take turns. ³³ For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people.

Read Matthew 8:28 (NIV)

When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.

- What does this suggest?
- In testing of the spirits, what should be our response when someone cannot seem to control themselves?

Application:

Read 1 Corinthians 14:39-40

³⁹ So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But all things should be done decently and in order.

- What are Paul's final words saying to us?
- Have your view of speaking in tongues changed at all by this study?
- Have your view of prophesying changed at all by this study?
- What can we do as a group to encourage one another to seek God's spiritual gifts?
- What gift can we pray for you to use and improve upon?
- Not sure what your gifts are? [Take the assessment](#) using the code: 1411-613