

Spirit Filled Worship Week 5
Prophecy, Tongues and Unbelievers
Bible Passage: 1 Corinthians 14:1-25

In this part of his letter Paul takes two gifts from chapter 12 (12:10), and sees how they could be used in practice in accordance with the principles of chapter 13 (13:1-2).

Prophecy

Prophecy has been defined as 'proclamation of the divine word. ... Prophets are channels for God's perspective.' (IVP Dictionary of Biblical Imagery)

- What do you think of when someone talks about 'prophecy'?
- In his letters to New Testament Churches, what does Paul mean by prophecy? (14:29-32, and 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21)
- Have you any personal experiences of prophecy?

Tongues

- What do you understand by the gift of tongues? Have you any personal experience of this?
- In what ways is it helpful to both the individual believer, and to the Body of Christ as a whole?
- In Corinth there were many pagan cults and sects offering so called 'spiritual' and ecstatic experiences. Have you ever seen this gift misused?

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-25

Looking at the passage as a whole:

- What is the main thrust of what Paul is saying here? (See 14:12, and also the end of this passage.)
- Why does Paul see the need to talk about this here? How does it link in with what has gone before? (The image of the Body and the chapter on Love.)

Comparing and Contrasting these two Gifts:

- Why do you think Paul values the gift of prophecy so much? What does he see as the main purpose of the spoken word during times of gathered worship? (14:3-4, 14:6, 14:24-25)
- What, according to Paul is the place of speaking in tongues in Christian worship? (14:2-5, 14:18-19) Do you agree with him? What has been your experience of the use of this gift in the church community?
- How far would you agree that 'tongues' is a gift to build up private spirituality, and prophecy a gift to build up the whole community?

- In our culture, do we tend to value the spontaneous more than the considered? Or is it the other way around? Or is this just down to individual personality and preference? (See 14:29-31)
- What principles are there here in this passage that apply, not only to these two gifts, but to other gifts as well?

The Importance of Good Communication

- What two images does Paul use in 14:6-12 to emphasise the importance of good communication?
- What is the importance of the mind in verses 13-19?

Read chapter 14:23-25.

The people of Corinth were familiar with cults who had ecstatic experiences. Coming into a time of Christian worship where there are tongues without interpretation, might lead a visitor to conclude that Christians are no different from the pagan sects.

- How does Paul say that this can be avoided, and that people can instead come to faith in Jesus?
- In our day and age, what other barriers do you think we might put in a visitor's way?
- How does God use prophecy in the context of Spirit-filled worship to benefit both Christians, and those who are not yet Christians?

[NB verse 22 is tricky. It belongs with the Isaiah quote in verse 21 rather than with verse 23 onwards, in the way it is laid out in most of the modern translations. The prophet says that God will speak in strange tongues to people who do not yet know him, and they will not understand him. Hence they need to hear prophecy – as outlined in 14:23-25.]

Personal and Group Reflection

- Do we use these gifts at St Andrew's and All Saints at the moment? If so, in what context?
- How do you think we could grow these ministries so that all of the Church family is blessed through them?
- Spend some time worshipping God together and listening to God, asking him to speak to you through prophecy and tongues. What is he saying to you, your Life Group, and the Church?