

God Wants Us to Use the Spiritual Gifts He Gives Us Properly
Message 4 of 4 in the series: "Christmas in July: Unwrapping Spiritual Gifts"

A. Paul instructed the early Christians in Corinth about spiritual gifts and how to use them.

"Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand (be ignorant about) this." 1 Corinthians 12:1 (NLT)

Note: Spiritual gifts are more than natural skills/abilities; they are supernatural (to a much greater extent than would be possible in our own strength).

- "There are **different kinds of spiritual gifts**, but the same Spirit is the source of them all."
- "There are **different kinds of service**, but we serve the same Lord."
- "God works in **different ways**, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us."
- "A spiritual gift is given to each of us **so we can help each other**."
- "It is **the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts**. He alone decides which gift each person should have."
- "All of you together are Christ's body, **and each of you is a part of it**."
- "Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? **Of course not! So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts.**" 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11, & 29-31a (NLT)

B. Apparently, the Corinthian Christians were confused about how to use the spiritual gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues in their worship services.

- **Prophecy** = the special ability to clearly communicate and persuasively declare God's will regarding a situation, issue, person, group, or the future.
- **Tongues** = the special ability to speak in languages not previously known/studied.
- **Interpretation of Tongues** = the special ability to interpret what a person speaking in tongues is saying.

"Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to prophesy. 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. But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church. **I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy.** For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened. Dear brothers and sisters, if I should come to you speaking in an unknown language, how would that help you? But if I bring you a revelation or some special knowledge or prophecy or teaching, that will be helpful. Even lifeless instruments like the flute or the harp must play the notes clearly, or no one will recognize the melody. And if the bugler doesn't sound a clear call, how will the soldiers know they are being called to battle? It's the same for you. If you speak to people in words they don't understand, how will they know what you are saying? You might as well be talking into empty space. There are many different languages in the world, and every language has meaning. But if I don't understand a language, I will be a foreigner to someone who speaks it, and the one who speaks it will be a foreigner to me. And the same is true for you. **Since you are so eager to have the special abilities the Spirit gives, seek those that will strengthen the whole church.** So anyone who speaks in tongues should pray also for the ability to interpret what has been said. For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying. Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit. and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand. For if you praise God only in the spirit, how can those who don't understand you praise God along with you? How can they join you in giving thanks when they don't understand what you are saying? You will be giving thanks very well, but it won't strengthen the people who hear you. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you. **But in a church meeting I would rather speak five understandable words to help others than ten thousand words in an unknown language.**" 1 Corinthians 14:1-19 (NLT)

- Paul wished all of us could speak in tongues because people with this gift are built up spiritually.
- Paul wished even more that all of us could prophesy because the gift of prophecy builds up the whole church.

C. Paul reminded the Corinthians that giftedness is not the same thing as maturity.

“Dear brothers and sisters, **don’t be childish in your understanding of these things**. Be innocent as babies when it comes to evil, but be mature in understanding matters of this kind... **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**. But if all of you are prophesying, and unbelievers or people who don’t understand these things come into your meeting, they will be convicted of sin and judged by what you say. As they listen, their secret thoughts will be exposed, and they will fall to their knees and worship God, declaring, ‘God is truly here among you.’” 1 Corinthians 14:20 & 23-25 (NLT)

Life Application: God wants us to be good stewards of our spiritual gifts just like He wants us to be good stewards of everything else He gives us. “Well done, my good and faithful servant. **You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more** responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!” Matthew 25:21b (NLT)

Life Application: We want to do everything we can to equip ordinary people to serve their communities, share the Good News of Christ, and gather for worship wherever God leads. “And so my judgment is that **we should not make it difficult** for the Gentiles who are turning to God.” Acts 15:19 (NLT) “And **let us consider how** we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds...” Hebrews 10:24 (NIV)

D. Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were reflecting the nature of God to their community when they conducted their meetings properly and in order.

“Well, my brothers and sisters, let’s summarize. When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you. No more than two or three should speak in tongues. They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say. But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately. Let two or three people prophesy, and **let the others evaluate what is said**. But if someone is prophesying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is speaking must stop. In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged. Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can take turns. **For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God’s holy people...** So, my dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don’t forbid speaking in tongues. But **be sure that everything is done properly and in order.**” 1 Corinthians 14:26-33 & 39-40 (NLT)

Life Application: We use the Bible to evaluate everything that is said in our meetings because the Bible is truth. “I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; **teach them your word, which is truth.**” John 17:15-17 (NLT)

Life Application: Church is not about me! “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility **value others above yourselves**, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)

J O H N S C H M I D T • 07-28-24 • john@centeringlives.com

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. When did you first hear about the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues? Do you know a believer who speaks in tongues? (Acts 2:1-13 & 10:44-46)
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:29-31. Why didn’t God give all of us the same spiritual gift or give all of us all of the spiritual gifts?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-19. Why does Paul discourage speaking in tongues in worship services unless someone is there who can interpret what is being said? Why does He encourage using the gift of prophecy in worship services?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 14:5 & 18. How does it make you feel that the Apostle Paul spoke in tongues a lot? How does it make you feel to learn that Paul wished everyone could speak in tongues?

5. Discuss the following statements:

- God wants us to be good stewards of our spiritual gifts just like He wants us to be good stewards of everything else He gives us. (Matthew 25:21)
- At Centerpoint Fellowship Church, we want to do everything we can to equip ordinary people to serve their communities, share the Good News of Christ, and gather for worship wherever God leads. (Acts 15:19, Hebrews 10:24)
- We use the Bible to evaluate everything that is said in our meetings because the Bible is truth. (John 17:15-17)
- Church is not about me! (Philippians 2:3-4)

6. Where/how are you using the spiritual gift(s) God has given you?

7. Quotations worth considering:

“Your spiritual gifts were not given for your own benefit but for the benefit of others, just as other people were given gifts for your benefit.” Rick Warren

“As God's children, we are not to be observers; we're to participate actively in the Lord's work. Spectators sit and watch, but we are called to use our spiritual gifts and serve continually.” Charles Stanley

“Stretch me, Lord. I will not limit your gifts by my perceptions of what I can handle.” Linda Schubert