

Learning and Living the Bible Together

Lessons from 1 Corinthians

1 Cor. 13:8 - 14:40

In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul reviews spiritual gifts and the proper use of those gifts within the church. In chapter 12, we looked at basic truths regarding spiritual gifts. In 13:1-7, we looked at the importance and definition of love. We now continue to examine the importance of love, our goals as a Christian, and how we need to conduct ourselves as a church body.

1. We must pursue and exhibit love within the church. (13:1-8, 13:13, 14:1; John 13:34-35, 15:12-13; Eph. 5:1-2; Col. 3:14)

- love lasts
- when we use our gifts, our work must be clothed in love
- love focuses on what is important (salvation of others, growth for all in Christ, what is best for the Kingdom of God)
- we must not be divisive over gifts and interpretation regarding gifts. One of the key messages in this text. Love is described in 1 Cor. 13:1-8, right in the middle of the discussion on spiritual gifts!

2. We should pursue maturity in our Christian life. (13:11-12, 14:20)

- do not stay as a child
- lay aside sin
- focus on what is important and do not get sidetracked by temporal things of today's world

NOW let's talk bout the issue.... tongues and this issue that creates controversy. Read 1 Cor. 13:8-10.....

What about the gifts that will cease? What is the "perfect" referred to in 1 Cor. 13? Does this mean the gift of tongues is no longer a gift?

There are three gifts(prophecy, tongues, and knowledge) specifically identified. Some believe they ceased. Some believe they cease at different times. Perfect could mean NT completion, Christ's return, or our arrival in heaven. Some believe the gifts mentioned have ceased now. God did give the gifts at one time. God could use it today if He wants. Tongues, in particular, is not given visibility in the New Testament.

What is the gift of tongues? Is this gift in existence today?

Tongues was a gift in the first century. Paul had the gift. Many think (I am one) that tongues were used to advance the Gospel and was a way for languages to be used and understood by others (like in Acts 2). Could it be a gift today? Yes, if it is used by God to advance Kingdom work. Some keys:

Tongues must build up.

Tongues must be interpreted.

Tongues are not referenced in New Testament as a normal part of church.

Tongues are seemingly to be within a small group (2-3 people) with an interpreter.

Tongues are not to be disruptive.

Tongues seems to be a language that is revealed so the Gospel can be advanced or explained. (like Acts 2).

3. We must not lose focus. (14:1-40)

Note their problem — pursuing tongues but losing focus on their purpose.

- we are to build up one another within the church (14:3-5,12,19, 26). As a body of believers, we need to pursue truth and hear the revealing of those truths. We need to come together as believers and study the Word together.
- our gathering of believers should attract unbelievers to the Truth (14:22-25). We must be careful to do nothing to distract the lost from hearing the Gospel.
- our worship and exercising of gifts should be done with order and purpose (14:33-35, 40)
- pitfalls we should guard against:
 - pursuing gifts to please ourself
 - equating gifts with spirituality
 - operating against God's design and order
 - focusing on gifts instead of Kingdom work

—> **Work together in the Body of Christ**

—> **Focus on His work**

—> **Do not get sidetracked with arguing and debating on gifts and controversial gifts.**

—> **Trust God to give gifts as He deems appropriate. Use your gift for His glory.**