

1 Corinthians chapter 14

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Different views on speaking in tongues and prophecy

In the Christian church, speaking in tongues and prophecy are spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible, especially described in detail in 1 Corinthians 14. Speaking in tongues refers to the Holy Spirit giving believers the ability to speak unfamiliar or spiritual language, often used in prayer, praise, or communication with God. In the New Testament, this is seen as one of the signs of the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). Some tongues are considered spiritual languages, not the languages spoken daily by humans (1 Corinthians 13:1). For example, on Pentecost in the book of Acts, the disciples spoke a Gentile language so that people in different regions could understand it (Acts 2:6-11). Speaking in tongues is primarily used for personal communion with God, and if used in public worship, it requires translation (the gift of interpreting tongues) to edify the congregation (1 Corinthians 14:5, 27-28). Tongues without translation may only produce tongue-speaking people and not benefit others, so Paul emphasizes order. In the modern church, speaking in tongues is more common in charismatics (e.g., Pentecostals, charismatic movements), but other denominations may have different views on its authenticity or application.

Prophecy is the revelation of the Holy Spirit to believers to convey God's word, revelation, or guidance, usually in a language that the congregation can understand, for the purpose of edifying, exhorting, and comforting the church (1 Corinthians 14:3). Convey God's specific guidance for an individual, church, or situation. Through the Holy Spirit, share God's truth, inspire believers, or lead repentance. In some cases, prophecy may contain revelation about future events, but this is not the primary function (Acts 11:28). Prophecy was more revered by Paul than speaking in tongues because it directly edified the entire congregation in clear language, even touching the unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:24-25). Prophecies need to be overseen, and the church should discern their truth (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-

21). In charismatic churches, prophecy may be real-time spiritual messages; In other churches, prophecy may be understood as preaching the Word of God, such as preaching. Paul emphasizes in 1 Corinthians 14 that speaking in tongues and prophecy are gifts of the Holy Spirit, but should be aimed at loving and edifying the church. speaking tongues without translation should be limited to public worship; Prophecy is more revered for its clarity and universal benefits. Worship should be orderly and chaotic should be avoided, and the use of gifts should be subject to God's sovereignty and the good of the church. Charismatics: Emphasizing speaking in tongues and prophecy as active manifestations of the Holy Spirit and is commonly found in worship. Traditional church: may regard speaking in tongues as a special gift in the New Testament era, less common in modern times; Prophecy is often interpreted as preaching biblical truth. The authenticity of speaking in tongues and whether prophecies still persist are the focus of discussion between different sects.

1 Corinthians 14 focuses on spiritual gifts in the church, especially the use of tongues and prophecy, and their role in worship. Paul encourages believers to pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. Although speaking in tongues is a gift from the Holy Spirit, prophecy is more edifying for the church because it makes people understand God's will, and speaking in tongues without translation is not good for others. Paul emphasizes that speaking in tongues cannot create a crowd without explanation. He used the metaphor of music and language to illustrate that communication needs to be clear and easy to understand. He encouraged the message of clear words in the church, noting that even if he spoke in tongues himself, he valued prayer and teaching with understanding. Paul teaches believers to maintain order in worship. Speaking in tongues without a translator will make outsiders think that believers are crazy and cannot attract unbelievers. Prophecy is more revealing God's truth and leading people to repentance. He emphasized that everything should be in order and avoid chaos, because God is the God of peace. Paul mentions that women should be quiet in the church and ask their husbands at home if in doubt. This passage is often discussed in historical and cultural contexts, dealing with the church order and cultural practices of the time. Paul reminded the Corinthian church that God's Word was not unique to them and that they should be humble and receive guidance. He encouraged the proper use of gifts, especially prophecy, and reiterated that everything should be done in order. This chapter emphasizes that church worship should be based on love and that gifts should be used with the goal of edifying the entire congregation, maintaining order and clarity so that God's truth can be effectively communicated.

We pray

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit, including speaking in tongues and prophesying, for the edification of the church and the glory of Your name. But Lord, we also acknowledge that these spiritual gifts, if used incorrectly, can lead to confusion, misdirection, and even stumbling.

Give us the fear of You so that we may always be careful and careful in using tongues or prophecy. Let us not speak for ostentation or personal emotion, but out of love and truth, guided

by the Holy Spirit, words that edify, comfort, and exhort. May we learn to follow the rules and follow the order in all things, obey the leadership of the church, and respect spiritual principles. Please also give us the wisdom to discern spirits, to detect the voice that comes from You, and to reject all false spirits and self-thoughts.

May every word we say, whether in tongues or prophecy, be a blessing to the church, not a source of confusion.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Amen.

1 Corinthians 14

Amplified Bible

Prophecy a Superior Gift

14 Pursue [this] love [with eagerness, make it your goal], yet earnestly desire *and* cultivate the spiritual *gifts* [to be used by believers for the benefit of the church], but especially that you may ^[a]prophecy [to foretell the future, to speak a new message from God to the people]. ² For one who speaks in an *unknown* tongue does not speak to people but to God; for no one understands him *or* catches his meaning, but by the Spirit he speaks mysteries [secret truths, hidden things]. ³ But [on the other hand] the one who prophesies speaks to people for edification [to promote their spiritual growth] and [speaks words of] encouragement [to uphold and advise them concerning the matters of God] and [speaks words of] consolation [to compassionately comfort them]. ⁴ One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church [promotes growth in spiritual wisdom, devotion, holiness, and joy]. ⁵ Now I wish that all of you spoke in *unknown* tongues, but *even* more [I wish] that you would prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater [and more useful] than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he translates *or* explains [what he says], so that the church may ^[b]be edified [instructed, improved, strengthened].

⁶ Now, believers, if I come to you speaking in *unknown* tongues, how will I benefit you unless I also speak to you [clearly] either by revelation [revealing God's mystery], or by knowledge [teaching about God], or by prophecy [foretelling the future, speaking a new message from God to the people], or by instruction [teaching precepts that develop spiritual maturity]? ⁷ Yet *even* lifeless things, whether flute or harp, when producing a sound, if they do not produce distinct [musical] tones, how will anyone [listening] know what is piped or played? ⁸ And if the [war] bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? ⁹ So it is with you, if you speak words [in an unknown tongue] that are not intelligible *and* clear, how will anyone understand what you are saying? You will be talking into the air [wasting your breath]! ¹⁰ There are, I suppose, a great many kinds of languages in the world [unknown to us], and none is lacking in meaning. ¹¹ But if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will [appear to] be a ^[c]foreigner to the one who is speaking [since he knows exactly what he is saying], and the one who is speaking will [appear to] be a foreigner to me. ¹² So it is with you, since you are so very eager to have spiritual gifts *and* manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in ways that will build up the church [spiritually].

¹³ Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may [be gifted to] translate *or* explain [what he says]. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unproductive [because it does not understand what my spirit is praying]. ¹⁵ Then what am I to do? I will pray with the ^[d]spirit [by the Holy

Spirit that is within me] and I will pray with the mind [using words I understand]; I will sing with the spirit [by the Holy Spirit that is within me] and I will sing with the mind [using words I understand].¹⁶ Otherwise if you bless [and give thanks to God] in the spirit only, how will any outsider *or* someone who is not gifted [in spiritual matters] say the “Amen” [of agreement] to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying?¹⁷ You are giving thanks well enough [in a way that God is glorified], but the other person [who does not understand you] is not edified [and spiritually strengthened since he cannot join in your thanksgiving].¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in [unknown] tongues more than all of you;¹⁹ nevertheless, in public worship I would rather say five *understandable* words in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue [which others cannot understand].

Instruction for the Church

²⁰ Brothers and sisters, do not be children [immature, childlike] in your thinking; be infants in [matters of] evil [completely innocent and inexperienced], but in your minds be mature [adults].²¹ It is written in the Law, “By men of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, and not even then will they listen to Me,” says the Lord.²² Therefore, [unknown] tongues are [meant] for a [supernatural] sign, not to believers but to unbelievers [who might be receptive]; while prophecy [foretelling the future, speaking a new message from God to the people] is not for unbelievers but for believers.²³ So then, if the whole church gathers together and all of you speak in [unknown] tongues, and outsiders *or* those who are not gifted [in spiritual matters] or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?²⁴ But if all prophesy [foretelling the future, speaking a new message from God to the people], and an unbeliever or outsider comes in, he is convicted [of his sins] by all, and he is called to account by all [because he can understand what is being said];²⁵ the secrets of his heart are laid bare. And so, falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that God is really among you.

²⁶ What then is *the right course*, believers? When you meet together, each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation (disclosure of special knowledge), a tongue, *or* an interpretation. Let everything be constructive *and* edifying *and* done for the good of all the church.²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, *it should be limited* to two or at the most three, and *each one speaking* in turn, and one must interpret [what is said].²⁸ But if there is no one to interpret, the one [who wishes to speak in a tongue] must keep silent in church; let him speak to himself and to God.²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak [as inspired by the Holy Spirit], while the rest pay attention *and* weigh carefully what is said.³⁰ But if an inspired revelation is made to another who is seated, then the first one must be silent.³¹ For [in this way] you can all prophesy one by one, so that everyone may be instructed and everyone may be encouraged;³² for the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets [the prophecy is under the speaker’s control, and he can stop speaking];³³ for God [who is the source of their prophesying] is not *a God* of confusion *and* disorder but of peace *and* order.

As [is the practice] in all the churches of the saints (God’s people),

³⁴ the ^[e]women should be silent in the churches, for they are not authorized to speak, but are to take a subordinate place, as the Law says.³⁵ If there is anything they want to learn [that is, if they have questions about anything being said or taught], they are to ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a ^[f]woman to talk in church.³⁶ Did the word of the Lord originate from you [Corinthians], or has it come to you only [so that you know best what God requires]?

³⁷ If anyone thinks *and* claims that he is a prophet [a true spokesman for God] or spiritually astute [filled with and energized by the Holy Spirit], let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the

Lord's commandment. ³⁸ If anyone does not recognize this [that it is a command of the Lord], he is not recognized [by God].

³⁹ Therefore, believers, desire earnestly to prophesy [to foretell the future, to speak a new message from God to the people], and do not forbid speaking in *unknown* tongues. ⁴⁰ But all things must be done appropriately and in an orderly manner.

Overview of 1 Corinthians 14

1 Corinthians 14 is part of a broader section (chapters 12–14) where Paul addresses the use of **spiritual gifts** within the church. In particular, chapter 14 focuses on two gifts: **speaking in tongues** and **prophecy**, with a strong emphasis on **order**, **edification**, and **understanding** in public worship.

■ Verse-by-Verse Summary

Verses 1–5: Prophecy vs. Tongues

- **Verse 1:** Paul urges believers to pursue love (from chapter 13) and **earnestly desire spiritual gifts**, especially prophecy.
- **Verses 2–4:**
 - Tongues are directed to God and are unintelligible to others unless interpreted.
 - Prophecy, however, builds up the church because it's spoken in a language people understand.
- **Verse 5:** Paul does not forbid speaking in tongues but emphasizes that **prophecy is greater** in a church setting unless tongues are interpreted.

Verses 6–19: The Importance of Understanding

- Paul uses **practical examples** (musical instruments, languages) to illustrate how meaningless tongues are without interpretation.
- He prioritizes **intelligible words** over mystical experiences.
- **Verses 18–19:** Paul, though he speaks in tongues, prefers **five understandable words** in church over **10,000 in a tongue**.

Verses 20–25: Sign for Believers and Unbelievers

- Paul warns against immature thinking.
- He explains that **tongues serve as a sign** for unbelievers, while **prophecy benefits believers**.
- However, in public worship, **uninterpreted tongues may confuse outsiders**, while prophecy can **convict and convert** them.

Verses 26–33: Orderly Worship

- Paul emphasizes that all gifts (hymns, teachings, revelations) must be used to **edify** the church.

- Only **two or three** should speak in tongues (with interpretation), and **prophets should speak one by one**.
- **God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.**

Verses 34–35: Women in the Assembly (Controversial Passage)

- Paul instructs women to be silent in churches, which has sparked theological debates.
- Interpretations vary:
 - Some see it as a **universal rule**, while others view it as **specific to Corinth's cultural context**.
 - Some scholars believe Paul was addressing **disruptive behavior** or **questioning during prophecy**.

Verses 36–40: Final Warnings and Instructions

- Paul asserts his **apostolic authority** and warns against ignoring his instructions.
- He concludes:
 - **Desire to prophesy, don't forbid tongues, but do everything in order.**

Theological Inference and Implications

1. Priority of Edification

- The main theological message is that **spiritual gifts should build up the church**.
- Worship is not about individual experiences, but **communal understanding and growth**.

2. The Nature of Prophecy

- Prophecy is shown as a gift that **speaks God's truth** in a relevant, timely way.
- It's not limited to predicting the future but includes **encouragement, instruction, and conviction**.

3. Regulation of Tongues

- While tongues are a valid spiritual gift, **they must be interpreted** to benefit others.
- Paul provides the earliest recorded **criteria for charismatic expression**: clarity, interpretation, order.

4. God's Character Reflected in Worship

- Worship should reflect God's **peace, order, and clarity**, not confusion or chaos.
- Spiritual experiences should align with **God's revealed nature and purposes**.

5. Ecclesiological Insight

- The chapter provides foundational teaching on **church governance** and the **balance between freedom and structure** in worship.
- It invites churches to evaluate how their practices **reflect biblical priorities**.

6. Inclusivity and Caution

- Paul does not suppress the gifts but **channels them with discipline**.
 - The church must **welcome diversity of gifts** but apply them with wisdom and love.
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Conclusion

1 Corinthians 14 is not a rejection of charismatic gifts but a **loving, wise guide** for their proper use. Paul calls the church to maturity—**valuing love over showmanship, clarity over confusion, and community over personal experience**. The theological takeaway is clear: **God’s gifts are for God’s glory and the church’s edification**.