

1 Cor 14:1-25 - "Speak When You're Spoken To."  
Small group notes for the facilitator

**Opening: What are people's experiences of the gift of tongues? Observed it? Own it? Freaked out by it?**

**Q. Read 1 Cor 14:1-5. What is the difference between tongues and prophecy? What is the purpose of both?**

A. Tongues is for worship between man and God - it builds up the individual. Prophecy is between God and man (and man) in order to build up the church.

**Q. Read 1 Cor 14:6-12. What are the issues with the gift of tongues that Paul is addressing? What do his two metaphors in vv7&8 mean?**

A. In order for tongues to be a blessing to the whole congregation there needs to be an interpretation otherwise it's like a musical instrument which can only make one sound or like a bugle that plays the same sound going into battle as calling for retreat - it's just noise.

**Q. Read 1 Cor 14:13-19. What is your understanding of the difference between Paul's mind and his spirit? Praying/praising in his mind/spirit is helpful to whom and when?**

A. Paul's speaking to a dualistic culture who see a separation of the body (mind) and spirit. Paul is essentially relating spirit to tongues and mind to prophecy. If one prays in a tongue one should also seek an interpretation - something which is useful to everyone else. Tongues with an interpretation is essentially prophecy.

**Q. Read 1 Cor 14:20-25. Who is going to be convicted by what and how? What is a "sign" to who?**

A. This is complicated! Paul's saying that tongues is a sign for unbelievers whereas prophecy is a sign for believers. But then he goes on to say that if all prophesy and a believer enters he will be convicted (v24). Probably what he's saying is that tongues is a sign of judgement for the unbeliever because he or she will think everyone is out of their minds (v23). In other words - the unbeliever doesn't understand and never will. However, if an unbeliever hears words he or she understands which are convicting to him or her, this person will fall on their face in repentance and worship.

The Bible has tons to say of prophecy and a lot less to say about tongues. In this passage Paul calls prophecy the greater gift. The Corinthian church though has elevated tongues above all other gifts. Paul is bringing them back down to earth with a bump - "I would rather speak 5 words with my own mind [that others will understand] than 10,000 words in a tongue" (v19).

**Q. Read Hebrews 1:1-2. Has God finished speaking to his people?**

A. God has been speaking to his people since the beginning of time (John 1:1f), spoke to his people through his Son face to face and then left the Holy Spirit to continue to speak to his people - see 2 Peter 1:21. When we see Jesus face to face he'll continue speaking to his people for eternity!

**Q. Read 1 John 4:1 and 1 Thes 5:20-21. Why is it important to test prophecy?**

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A. Sometimes people get things wrong. Sometimes accidentally and sometimes on purpose. There are 3 voices - Holy Spirit, the enemy and our own. The enemy comes to steel, kill and destroy and we have a tendency to hear what we want to hear. It's important to make sure that the prophetic we hear is from God before we pass it on and it's also important to test what the prophetic that others give to us. God will never speak against his own Word (a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand) so Scripture is always a great tool to divine God's will.

**Close: Are you willing to be a vessel of God's prophetic word to his church? Paul says to eagerly desire the higher gifts (1 Cor 12:31) which in 1 Cor 14 is clearly prophecy.**