

1 Corinthians

14:1–25

Introduce

What issue do you most like to argue about? Why do you like to argue about that issue? Is that issue critical to the spiritual life of people or not? Tonight we are going to look at Paul's treatment of the minor theological issue of tongues being abused in the church and as a result hurting the body.

Investigate

Background

Paul has been addressing abuses in the worship services of the Corinthian church. He has given some background to the whole issue of spiritual gifts in Chapters 12 and 13. Now he addresses the issue of tongues specifically.

Explore the Passage

14:1-5

- What is Paul's big idea in this paragraph? [*prophecy is greater than tongues*]
- On a board (or each on a piece of paper) list out what we learn here about tongues and what we learn about prophecy.
- What are the tongues being expressed in this church? How would you characterize them?
- What is prophecy? [*It generally refers to any message from God and most likely refers to an unprepared spontaneous message from God given for the edification of the church.*]
- How would you summarize the superiority of prophecy?
- Based on what Paul says here, what might be his determinant on which gifts are "greater"? [*those that edify most*]

14:6-12

- What is Paul's argument in verses 6-12? [*A tongue by itself is not helpful because nobody understands what is said.*]
- What purpose for these gifts does Paul repeat in this section?

14:13-19

- In Paul's mind what is necessary to accompany the speaking of tongues? Why is interpretation so important?
- What is the point on the discussion of praying with the spirit versus with the mind?
- What is Paul's conclusion in verses 18-19?

14:20-25

- Why does Paul exhort them to be mature in their thinking in this area? In what way were they immature?
- How are tongues a sign for unbelievers? [*Sign here has a negative connotation. "...by their response of seeing the work of the Spirit as madness, they are destined for divine judgment—just as in*

the OT passage Paul has quoted.” (Fee) So, unintelligible tongues are a sign of the judgment that will come on unbelievers because it will in no way lead them to repentance but will only drive them away from the things of God.] How is prophecy a sign for believers? [Here sign has a positive connotation where it is a picture of God’s working in the midst of the church.]

- What is the outcome of prophecy for unbelievers?

Discover the Big Idea

What is Paul’s view of tongues? What is the ultimate goal in the working of any spiritual gift?

Summary: The ultimate goal of any spiritual gift is the building up of the church. Anything done in the church that does not build up the church is worthless.

Respond

- What are some areas of Christian theology or other divisive issues that we tend to focus on that are not major theological issues?
- Why do we focus on non-central issues at times? Why do we seem to look for issues to divide us?
- How can a proper view of the body of Christ and the role of the Spirit’s gifts help us to major on the majors and minor on the minors?