CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

1 Corinthians Chapter 14 — Order in the Gifts of the Spirit

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 14 brings Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts to its practical conclusion.

In Chapter 12, Paul taught that the Spirit gives many gifts to one body.

In Chapter 13, he showed that every gift must be used in love.

Now, in Chapter 14, he shows what love looks like when the church gathers for worship.

The problem in Corinth was not a lack of gifts.

It was confusion.

Many people were speaking in tongues at the same time.

No one was interpreting.

Visitors could not understand anything.

Some were interrupting others.

The worship services had become noisy, disorderly, and self-centered.

Paul does not forbid tongues.

He says he speaks in tongues more than all of them.

But he gives a clear principle for public worship:

Everything must build up the church.

That is why prophecy is greater than tongues in the gathered church.

Prophecy speaks in words everyone can understand.

It strengthens, encourages, and comforts.

Tongues without interpretation may bless the speaker, but they leave everyone else in the dark.

Paul uses examples from music, from the battlefield, and from foreign languages to make his point.

Then he gives practical rules for orderly worship.

Speak one at a time.

Let others weigh what is said.

Let there be interpretation.

Because God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.

Paul ends with a simple summary that every church still needs:

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

The chapter moves through seven movements:

- Prophecy Above Tongues (verses 1–5).
- Clarity in the Church (verses 6–12).
- Praying and Singing with Understanding (verses 13–19).
- The Purpose of Tongues and Prophecy (verses 20–25).
- Orderly Worship (verses 26–33).
- Order Regarding Women in the Assembly (verses 34–35).
- Final Instructions on Gifts (verses 36–40).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 14 is:

In public worship, love seeks to build up the whole church, so spiritual gifts must be used with clarity, understanding, and order, because God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

I. PURSUE LOVE

1 Corinthians 14:1 — Especially That You May Prophesy

“Pursue love, and earnestly desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”

Paul connects Chapter 13 to Chapter 14.

“Pursue love.”

The word means to chase after, to run hard toward something.

Love is not something we stumble into.

We pursue it.

“And earnestly desire spiritual gifts.”

Paul is not against gifts.

He wants the church to desire them.

But love must come first and guide everything.

“But especially that you may prophesy.”

Paul names the gift he wants them to desire most.

Why prophecy?

Because, as he will explain, it builds up the whole church.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 12:31

> So eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

Romans 12:6

> We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.

1 Thessalonians 5:20

> Do not treat prophecies with contempt.

Spiritual Principle

Love comes first, and the best gifts are the ones that help others most.

Application

Pursue love as hard as you pursue anything else in life.

II. SPEAKING TO GOD

1 Corinthians 14:2 — Speaking Mysteries in the Spirit

“For the one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the Spirit he speaks mysteries.”

Paul explains the gift of tongues.

“The one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God.”

Tongues is directed to God.

It is a form of prayer and praise.

“For no one understands him.”

Without interpretation, the people around do not understand.

“However, in the Spirit he speaks mysteries.”

The words are spoken by the Spirit's help.

But they remain hidden from others.

Paul is not putting tongues down.

He is explaining its limits when the church gathers.

Cross References

Acts 2:4

> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability.

1 Corinthians 13:1

> If I speak in the languages of people and of angels, but do not have love, I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

1 Corinthians 12:10

> to another the power to work miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to tell the difference between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of languages, and to another the interpretation of languages.

Spiritual Principle

Words others cannot understand may bless God, but they cannot build up others.

III. STRENGTHENING, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND COMFORT

1 Corinthians 14:3 — Speaking to People

“But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.”

Now Paul describes prophecy.

Tongues speaks to God.

“The one who prophesies speaks to people.”

And prophecy has three purposes.

Strengthening—building people up in their faith.

Encouragement—urging them forward, calling them to action.

Comfort—consoling them in their sorrow and trouble.

This is the heart of true prophecy.

It is not mainly about predicting the future.

It is about speaking God's message in a way that helps people.

Cross References

Romans 14:19

> So let us work hard at doing what brings peace and what helps one another grow.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

> So encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

Acts 15:32

> Judas and Silas, who were prophets themselves, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers.

Spiritual Principle

Words from God strengthen, encourage, and comfort His people.

Application

Do your words build up, urge forward, and comfort those around you?

IV. BUILDING UP SELF OR THE CHURCH

1 Corinthians 14:4 — Edifying Others

“The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.”

Paul makes a simple comparison.

“The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself.”

Tongues can strengthen the person who speaks.

That is not bad.

“But the one who prophesies builds up the church.”

Prophecy strengthens everyone.

In Chapter 13, Paul said love does not seek its own way.

So in the gathered church, love chooses the gift that helps others most.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 8:1

> Now about food offered to idols: We know that “we all have knowledge.” But knowledge makes people proud, while love builds people up.

Ephesians 4:12

> Their job is to equip God's people for the work of serving, so that the body of Christ will be built up.

Jude 1:20

> But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

In the gathered church, love chooses what builds up others over what builds up self.

Key Truth

The church gathers not just to be blessed, but to bless one another.

V. GREATER IS THE ONE WHO PROPHESIES

1 Corinthians 14:5 — Unless He Interprets

“I wish that you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied. For greater is the one who prophesies than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be built up.”

Paul shows that he values tongues.

“I wish that you all spoke with tongues.”

But he values prophecy even more.

“But even more that you prophesied.”

Why?

“Greater is the one who prophesies than the one who speaks in tongues.”

Then Paul adds an important exception:

“Unless he interprets.”

When tongues are interpreted, the church can understand and be built up.

Interpreted tongues become like prophecy.

The key test is always the same:

“So that the church may be built up.”

Cross References

Numbers 11:29

> But Moses replied, “Are you jealous for my sake? I wish all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit on them!”

1 Corinthians 12:10

> to another the power to work miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to tell the difference between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of languages, and to another the interpretation of languages.

1 Corinthians 14:39

> So, my brothers and sisters, eagerly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in other languages.

Spiritual Principle

The value of a gift in worship is measured by how much it builds up the church.

VI. WHAT GOOD WILL I BE?

1 Corinthians 14:6 — Revelation, Knowledge, Prophecy, Teaching

“Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what good will I be to you unless I bring some revelation, or knowledge, or prophecy, or teaching?”

Paul uses himself as an example.

Imagine Paul came to Corinth and spoke only in tongues.

“What good will I be to you?”

None.

They would not understand a word.

Paul would only help them if he brought something they could understand:

- Revelation.
- Knowledge.
- Prophecy.
- Teaching.

The church needs words that can be understood and applied.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 13:1

> If I speak in the languages of people and of angels, but do not have love, I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 Timothy 3:16

> All Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for teaching, for correcting, for setting things right, and for training in how to live rightly.

Colossians 3:16

> Let the message of Christ live among you richly. Teach and warn one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankful hearts to God.

Spiritual Principle

God's people need clear words of truth they can understand and live by.

VII. THE PIPE AND THE HARP

1 Corinthians 14:7 — Distinct Sounds

“Even lifeless things, such as the pipe or the harp, if they make no distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is being played?”

Paul uses an example from music.

A pipe or a harp makes sounds.

But if the notes are all jumbled together, no one can tell what song is being played.

Music needs distinct notes.

It needs order and clarity.

Otherwise it is just noise.

The same is true in worship.

Cross References

Psalm 33:2

> Praise the LORD with the harp. Make music to Him on the ten-stringed lyre.

Psalm 150:3

> Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet. Praise Him with the harp and lyre.

1 Chronicles 15:16

> David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their relatives as singers to play joyful music on musical instruments—harps, lyres, and cymbals.

Spiritual Principle

Worship, like music, needs clarity and order to have meaning.

VIII. AN UNCERTAIN TRUMPET

1 Corinthians 14:8 — Who Will Prepare for Battle?

“For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?”

Paul uses another example.

In ancient armies, the trumpet gave signals.

One call meant **attack.**

Another meant **retreat.**

If the trumpeter played a confusing sound, the soldiers would not know what to do.

The battle could be lost.

The church is in a spiritual battle.

It needs clear messages.

An unclear message leaves God's people unprepared.

Cross References

Numbers 10:9

> When you go to war in your own land against an enemy who is attacking you, sound an alarm with the trumpets. Then the LORD your God will remember you and rescue you from your enemies.

Joel 2:1

> Blow the trumpet in Zion! Sound the alarm on My holy mountain! Let everyone who lives in the land tremble, because the day of the LORD is coming. It is near.

Jeremiah 4:19

> My heart, my heart! I am in agony! My heart is pounding, and I cannot keep silent, because I hear the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war.

Spiritual Principle

God's people need a clear message to be ready for spiritual battle.

Application

Is the message you share with others clear?

IX. SPEAKING INTO THE AIR

1 Corinthians 14:9 — Intelligible Words

“So likewise you, unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will it be understood? You will just be speaking into the air.”

Paul applies his examples.

“Unless you speak intelligible words.”

Words must be understood.

“You will just be speaking into the air.”

Words that no one understands are wasted.

They go out into the air and disappear.

They do not reach anyone's heart or mind.

Cross References

Colossians 4:6

> Let your conversation always be full of grace and seasoned with salt, so that you will know how to answer everyone.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

> Do not be quick to speak, and do not be hasty in your heart to say anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

Matthew 6:7

> When you pray, do not keep babbling on like the pagans, who think they will be heard because of their many words.

Spiritual Principle

Words that are not understood cannot help anyone.

X. MANY KINDS OF VOICES

1 Corinthians 14:10 — None Without Meaning

“There are, no doubt, many kinds of voices in the world, and none is without meaning.”

Paul now uses the example of languages.

There are many languages in the world.

Each one has meaning to those who speak it.

No language is meaningless.

But a language only communicates if both people understand it.

Cross References

Genesis 11:7

> Come, let Us go down and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another.

Acts 2:6

> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in confusion, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

Revelation 7:9

> After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

Spiritual Principle

Language is meant to communicate, and communication requires understanding.

Key Truth

At Babel, God confused languages.

At Pentecost, He made the gospel understood in many languages.

One day, every language will praise Him together.

XI. A FOREIGNER

1 Corinthians 14:11 — Not Understanding the Meaning

“Therefore, if I do not understand the meaning of the voice, I will be a foreigner to the one who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me.”

Paul describes the result of not understanding.

If someone speaks to me in a language I do not know, we are like strangers to each other.

We cannot connect.

We cannot share.

The church is supposed to be a family.

But tongues without interpretation made believers feel like foreigners in their own church.

Cross References

Acts 2:8

> So how is it that each of us hears them speaking in our own native language?

Deuteronomy 28:49

> The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, swooping down like an eagle—a nation whose language you will not understand,

Isaiah 33:19

> You will no longer see those fierce people, those people with strange speech you could not understand, with a language you could not follow.

Spiritual Principle

Worship that others cannot understand turns family into strangers.

XII. EXCEL IN BUILDING UP

1 Corinthians 14:12 — Zealous for Spiritual Gifts

“So you also, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in building up the church.”

Paul redirects the Corinthians' enthusiasm.

“Since you are zealous for spiritual gifts.”

They were eager for spiritual things.

That is good.

But Paul gives that eagerness a new direction:

“Strive to excel in building up the church.”

Do not seek to excel in being impressive.

Seek to excel in helping others.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:12

> Their job is to equip God's people for the work of serving, so that the body of Christ will be built up.

1 Peter 4:10

> Each of you has received a gift. Use it to serve one another, as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.

1 Corinthians 12:7

> To each one the Spirit is shown in some way for the good of all.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual zeal should be aimed at building up others.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The goal is not to be the most spiritual person in the room, but to help everyone in the room grow.

XIII. PRAY THAT HE MAY INTERPRET

1 Corinthians 14:13 — The Need for Interpretation

“Therefore let the one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.”

Paul gives a practical instruction.

If someone has the gift of tongues, he should pray for the ability to interpret.

Then his gift can help others too.

This shows that the goal is never just personal experience.

It is always the good of the church.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 12:10

> to another the power to work miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to tell the difference between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of languages, and to another the interpretation of languages.

1 Corinthians 14:27

> If anyone speaks in another language, two or at most three should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret.

1 Corinthians 12:30

> Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in other languages? Do all interpret?

Spiritual Principle

We should pray for ways to make our gifts useful to others.

XIV. MY UNDERSTANDING IS UNFRUITFUL

1 Corinthians 14:14 — Spirit and Mind

“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

Paul describes what happens when someone prays in a tongue.

“My spirit prays.”

There is real communication with God at a deep level.

“But my understanding is unfruitful.”

The mind is not engaged.

The person does not understand what he is saying.

And no one else benefits either.

Paul values both the spirit and the mind.

God made both.

Worship should involve both.

Cross References

Romans 8:26

> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself prays for us with groans too deep for words.

1 Corinthians 2:14

> The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from God's Spirit. They seem foolish to him, and he cannot understand them, because they can only be understood with the Spirit's help.

Nehemiah 8:8

> They read from the Book of the Law of God, explaining it clearly and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

Spiritual Principle

God wants worship that engages both the spirit and the mind.

XV. WITH THE SPIRIT AND WITH UNDERSTANDING

1 Corinthians 14:15 — Praying and Singing

“What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”

Paul gives his conclusion.

Not one or the other.

Both.

“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.”

“I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”

True worship is not mindless emotion.

And it is not cold, heartless thinking.

It is heart and mind together.

The spirit gives fire.

The understanding gives light.

Cross References

Ephesians 5:19

> speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music to the Lord from your heart,

Colossians 3:16

> Let the message of Christ live among you richly. Teach and warn one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankful hearts to God.

Psalm 47:7

> For God is the King of all the earth. Sing praises to Him with understanding.

Spiritual Principle

True worship engages both the heart and the mind.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Worship needs both fire and light.

XVI. HOW CAN HE SAY “AMEN”?

1 Corinthians 14:16 — The One Who Is Unlearned

“Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how can the one who is unlearned say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?”

Paul thinks about the other person in the room.

“The one who is unlearned.”

This may be a visitor or a believer who does not have the gift.

When someone prays aloud, the others say **“Amen.”**

Amen means **“Yes, this is true. Let it be so.”**

But how can anyone say **“Amen”** to something he does not understand?

Worship is meant to be shared.

Others should be able to join in.

Cross References

Nehemiah 8:6

> Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people lifted their hands and answered, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Psalm 106:48

> Praise the LORD, the God of Israel, forever and ever. Let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise the LORD!

1 Chronicles 16:36

> Praise the LORD, the God of Israel, forever and ever. Then all the people said, “Amen,” and praised the LORD.

Spiritual Principle

Public worship should invite everyone to join in.

XVII. NOT EDIFIED

1 Corinthians 14:17 — Giving Thanks Well

“You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.”

Paul is fair.

“You may be giving thanks well enough.”

The prayer in tongues may be sincere and good.

“But the other person is not edified.”

The problem is not the prayer.

The problem is that it does not help anyone else.

In public worship, love asks, **“Is this helping others?”**

Cross References

Romans 14:19

> So let us work hard at doing what brings peace and what helps one another grow.

1 Corinthians 10:23

> “Everything is allowed,” but not everything is good for us. “Everything is allowed,” but not everything builds others up.

1 Corinthians 8:1

> Now about food offered to idols: We know that “we all have knowledge.” But knowledge makes people proud, while love builds people up.

Spiritual Principle

Something can be good in itself and still not be helpful to others.

XVIII. I SPEAK IN TONGUES MORE THAN ALL OF YOU

1 Corinthians 14:18 — Paul's Own Gift

“I thank my God, I speak in tongues more than all of you.”

This is a surprising statement.

The Corinthians might have thought Paul was against tongues because he did not have the gift.

Paul says the opposite.

“I speak in tongues more than all of you.”

And he thanks God for it.

Paul was not criticizing tongues from the outside.

He was teaching about its proper use from his own experience.

Cross References

Acts 2:4

> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability.

Acts 10:46

> For they heard them speaking in other languages and praising God. Then Peter said,

Acts 19:6

> When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other languages and prophesied.

Spiritual Principle

A gift can be valued and still be used with wisdom and restraint.

XIX. FIVE WORDS WITH UNDERSTANDING

1 Corinthians 14:19 — Rather Than Ten Thousand

“Yet in the church I would rather speak five words with understanding, to teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

Here is Paul's priority.

“In the church.”

When believers are gathered together—

“I would rather speak five words with understanding.”

Just five words that people understand—

“Than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

Paul uses the largest number in the Greek language.

Five clear words are worth more than ten thousand unclear ones.

Why?

“To teach others also.”

In church, Paul's goal was to help others.

Cross References

Proverbs 15:23

> A person finds joy in giving a fitting reply. How good is a word spoken at the right time!

Nehemiah 8:8

> They read from the Book of the Law of God, explaining it clearly and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

Matthew 5:37

> Simply let your “Yes” mean yes, and your “No” mean no. Anything more than this comes from the evil one.

Spiritual Principle

A few words that help others are worth more than many that help no one.

Application

Even a few words of truth and encouragement can make a great difference.

XX. MATURE IN UNDERSTANDING

1 Corinthians 14:20 — Children in Malice

“Brothers, do not be children in understanding; in malice be children, but in understanding be mature.”

Paul gives a gentle but direct word.

“Do not be children in understanding.”

The Corinthians were acting like children.

Fascinated by the flashy.

Focused on themselves.

Paul calls them to grow up.

“In malice be children.”

In evil, be as innocent as a little child.

“But in understanding be mature.”

Think like adults.

Understand the purpose of the gifts.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:14

> Then we will no longer be like children, tossed back and forth by the waves and blown around by every new teaching, by people's tricks and clever schemes to deceive.

Hebrews 5:13

> Anyone who lives on milk is still a baby and does not yet understand the teaching about what is right.

1 Peter 2:1

> So get rid of all evil behavior, all lying, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind words.

Spiritual Principle

Be innocent toward evil, but mature in understanding.

XXI. MEN OF OTHER TONGUES

1 Corinthians 14:21 — From Isaiah

“In the law it is written: “With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; yet even then they will not hear me, says the Lord.””

Paul quotes Isaiah 28.

He calls it **“the law”**—meaning the Old Testament Scriptures.

In Isaiah's day, Israel refused to listen to God's clear words through the prophets.

So God warned that He would speak to them through foreign invaders, whose language they could not understand.

Hearing a strange language was a sign of God's judgment on their unbelief.

And even then, they would not listen.

Cross References

Isaiah 28:11

> So God will speak to this people through foreign lips and strange languages.

Isaiah 28:12

> He said to them, “This is the place of rest. Let the weary rest. This is the place of peace.” But they would not listen.

Deuteronomy 28:49

> The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, swooping down like an eagle—a nation whose language you will not understand,

Spiritual Principle

Refusing God's clear words leads to hearing what cannot be understood.

XXII. A SIGN FOR UNBELIEVERS

1 Corinthians 14:22 — Tongues and Prophecy

“Therefore tongues are a sign, not for those who believe, but for unbelievers. But prophecy is not for unbelievers, but for those who believe.”

Paul draws a conclusion from Isaiah.

“Tongues are a sign... for unbelievers.”

This verse has been understood in different ways.

Many believe Paul means that tongues without understanding are a sign of judgment on unbelief, as in Isaiah's day.

Others believe tongues can also be a sign that gets the attention of unbelievers, as at Pentecost.

“But prophecy is... for those who believe.”

Prophecy strengthens the faith of believers.

As the next verses show, prophecy can also reach unbelievers powerfully.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:22

Jews ask for miraculous signs, and Greeks look for wisdom.

Acts 2:12

Amazed and confused, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

Mark 16:17

These signs will go with those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons, and they will speak in new languages.

Spiritual Principle

Each gift has its own purpose in God's plan.

XXIII. OUT OF YOUR MIND

1 Corinthians 14:23 — What Visitors Would Think

“If the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and unbelievers or outsiders enter, will they not say you are out of your mind?”

Paul asks the Corinthians to imagine a visitor's experience.

The whole church is gathered.

Everyone is speaking in tongues at once.

An unbeliever walks in.

What will he think?

“Will they not say you are out of your mind?”

He will think the church is crazy.

Instead of being drawn to Christ, he will be pushed away.

Love thinks about how outsiders experience our worship.

Cross References

Acts 2:13

> But others laughed at them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

Acts 26:24

> While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus shouted, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you insane!”

John 10:20

> Many of them said, “He has a demon and has lost His mind. Why listen to Him?”

Spiritual Principle

Love considers how outsiders experience the church's worship.

Application

If a visitor came to your church this Sunday, would they understand what was happening?

XXIV. CONVICTED BY ALL

1 Corinthians 14:24 — When All Prophesy

“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider comes in, he is convicted by all, he is judged by all.”

Now Paul describes the opposite scene.

The church is gathered.

People are speaking God's word clearly.

An unbeliever walks in.

“He is convicted by all.”

He hears the truth, and his conscience is awakened.

“He is judged by all.”

God's word examines his life.

He sees himself as God sees him.

Clear words from God have power to reach the heart.

Cross References

John 16:8

> When He comes, He will show the world the truth about sin, about righteousness, and about judgment.

Hebrews 4:12

> For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, cutting deep enough to separate soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

2 Timothy 3:16

> All Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for teaching, for correcting, for setting things right, and for training in how to live rightly.

Spiritual Principle

God's word, clearly spoken, has power to convict the heart.

XXV. GOD IS TRULY AMONG YOU

1 Corinthians 14:25 — Falling on His Face

“The secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that God is truly among you.”

Paul describes what happens next.

“The secrets of his heart are revealed.”

God's word exposes what is hidden.

The visitor feels known.

“Falling on his face, he will worship God.”

He humbles himself before God.

“Declaring that God is truly among you.”

This is the goal of worship.

Not that people would say, **“What impressive gifts!”**

But that they would say, **“God is truly here.”**

Cross References

Isaiah 45:14

> They will bow down before you and say, “God is truly with you. There is no other; there is no other God.”

Zechariah 8:23

> This is what the LORD of Armies says: “In those days ten men from every language and nation will take hold of the robe of one Jew and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’”

Daniel 2:47

> The king said to Daniel, “Truly your God is the God of gods and Lord of kings, and He reveals mysteries, because you were able to reveal this mystery.”

Spiritual Principle

The best worship leads people to say, “God is truly among you.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The goal of worship is not to impress people with us, but to bring them face to face with God.

XXVI. LET ALL THINGS BE DONE FOR BUILDING UP

1 Corinthians 14:26 — Each One Has Something

“What is the outcome then, brothers? When you come together, each of you has a psalm, a teaching, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.”

Paul now gives practical instructions.

He describes worship in the early church.

“Each of you has.”

Many people took part.

A psalm—a song of praise.

A teaching—an explanation of God's truth.

A tongue—speaking in another language.

A revelation—something God had shown.

An interpretation—explaining a tongue.

Worship was not a performance by one person.

Many members contributed.

But one rule governed it all:

"Let all things be done for building up."

Cross References

Ephesians 5:19

> speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music to the Lord from your heart,

Colossians 3:16

> Let the message of Christ live among you richly. Teach and warn one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankful hearts to God.

1 Corinthians 12:7

> To each one the Spirit is shown in some way for the good of all.

Spiritual Principle

Everything in worship should be done to build up the church.

Key Truth

Every member has something to contribute.

XXVII. TWO OR THREE, IN TURN

1 Corinthians 14:27 — Rules for Tongues

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most three, each in turn, and let someone interpret.”

Paul gives three rules for speaking in tongues in public worship.

Limit the number.

“Two, or at the most three.”

Take turns.

“Each in turn.”

No one speaking over anyone else.

Interpret.

“Let someone interpret.”

These rules brought order to a chaotic situation.

They ensured that the gift would build up the church.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 12:10

> to another the power to work miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to tell the difference between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of languages, and to another the interpretation of languages.

1 Corinthians 14:40

> But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

2 Corinthians 13:1

> This will be my third visit to you. “Every matter must be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual gifts should be used with limits, order, and care for others.

XXVIII. LET HIM REMAIN SILENT

1 Corinthians 14:28 — If There Is No Interpreter

“But if there is no interpreter, let him remain silent in the church, and let him speak to himself and to God.”

Paul gives another rule.

“If there is no interpreter, let him remain silent in the church.”

If no one can interpret, the speaker should not speak aloud in tongues.

“And let him speak to himself and to God.”

He can still pray quietly to God.

This shows that the gift was under the person's control.

He could choose to speak or to remain silent.

The Spirit does not force anyone to speak out of turn.

Cross References

Psalm 4:4

> Tremble and do not sin. When you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.

1 Corinthians 14:34

> Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the law also says.

James 1:19

> My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual gifts are under the control of the person who has them.

XXIX. LET THE OTHERS WEIGH

1 Corinthians 14:29 — Testing Prophecy

“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.”

Paul gives rules for prophecy too.

“Let two or three prophets speak.”

Again, there are limits.

“And let the others weigh what is said.”

Prophecy was not to be accepted without question.

The church was to test it.

Was it true?

Did it agree with God's word?

Did it honor Christ?

Every message must be weighed by the word of God.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 5:19

> Do not put out the Spirit's fire.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

> But test everything. Hold on to what is good.

1 John 4:1

> Dear friends, do not believe every spirit. Instead, test the spirits to see whether they come from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Spiritual Principle

Every message claiming to be from God must be tested by God's word.

Application

Do not accept every teaching you hear.

Weigh it carefully against Scripture.

XXX. LET THE FIRST BE SILENT

1 Corinthians 14:30 — Making Room for Others

“If a revelation comes to another who is seated, let the first be silent.”

Paul gives another rule.

If someone is speaking and God gives a revelation to someone else, the first speaker should stop and let the other speak.

No one should dominate the service.

This takes humility.

It means being willing to step back so someone else can share.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 14:40

> But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Philippians 2:3

> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride. Instead, in humility, consider others more important than yourselves.

Romans 12:10

> Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Spiritual Principle

Love makes room for others to share.

XXXI. ALL MAY LEARN

1 Corinthians 14:31 — One by One

“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be encouraged.”

Paul explains why order matters.

“You can all prophesy one by one.”

Everyone who has the gift can share, one at a time.

And the purpose:

“So that all may learn and all may be encouraged.”

Order is not meant to stop people from taking part.

It is meant to help everyone benefit.

When people speak one at a time, everyone can listen, learn, and be encouraged.

Cross References

Acts 2:17

> “In the last days,” God says, “I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.”

1 Corinthians 14:26

> What then, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a song, a teaching, a revelation, a message in another language, or an interpretation. Everything must be done to build up the church.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

> So encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

Spiritual Principle

Order in worship allows everyone to learn and be encouraged.

XXXII. SUBJECT TO THE PROPHETS

1 Corinthians 14:32 — Self-Control

“The spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets.”

This is an important principle.

In pagan religions, people believed that spiritual experiences took control of the person.

They lost control of themselves.

But Paul says the Holy Spirit does not work that way.

“The spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets.”

A true prophet can control when and how he speaks.

He can wait his turn.

He can stop when another speaks.

The Spirit produces self-control, not chaos.

Cross References

1 Samuel 10:10

> When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a group of prophets met him. The Spirit of God came powerfully on him, and he prophesied along with them.

Numbers 11:25

> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. He took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do it again.

1 Corinthians 14:40

> But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Spiritual Principle

The Holy Spirit produces self-control, not loss of control.

Key Truth

No one can say, **“The Spirit made me do it,”** as an excuse for disorder.

XXXIII. NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION

1 Corinthians 14:33 — But of Peace

“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

Here is the reason for everything Paul has said.

“God is not the author of confusion.”

Confusion, chaos, and disorder do not come from God.

“But of peace.”

God is a God of order and peace.

Look at creation.

The stars follow their courses.

The seasons follow their pattern.

God's character is reflected in His works.

So worship that honors Him should reflect His peace.

“As in all the churches of the saints.”

This was the practice in every church, not just Corinth.

Cross References

James 3:17

> But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. It is also peace-loving, gentle, willing to listen, full of mercy and good fruit, fair, and sincere.

Romans 15:33

> May the God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

> May the God of peace Himself make you completely holy. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes.

Spiritual Principle

Worship should reflect the peace and order of God's own character.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Where God is truly at work, there is peace, not confusion.

XXXIV. LET YOUR WOMEN KEEP SILENT

1 Corinthians 14:34 — In Submission

“Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but must be in submission, as the law also says.”

This is one of the most debated verses in Paul's letters.

It must be read carefully and in context.

First, remember what Paul said in Chapter 11.

He assumed that women prayed and prophesied in public worship.

So this verse cannot mean that women must never say a word in church.

What then does it mean?

Faithful Bible students have understood it in different ways.

Some believe Paul is speaking about the weighing of prophecies in verse 29.

Women were not to take part in publicly judging the prophecies, which involved authority over the church.

Some believe Paul is speaking about disruptive questions and talking during the service.

Verse 35 suggests that some were interrupting to ask questions.

Some believe Paul is setting a broader pattern that women should not hold the role of authoritative teaching in the gathered church, as in 1 Timothy 2.

All agree that the theme of the whole chapter is order, peace, and building up the church.

And all agree that the word **submission** here means honoring God's order, as Paul taught in Chapter 11.

“As the law also says” most likely points back to the order of creation in Genesis, which Paul used in Chapter 11.

Cross References

1 Timothy 2:11

> A woman should learn quietly and with full submission.

1 Timothy 2:12

> I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she should be quiet.

Genesis 3:16

> To the woman He said, “I will greatly increase your pain in childbirth; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

Spiritual Principle

Worship must honor God's order and be marked by peace.

Key Truth

This verse must be read alongside Chapter 11, where women prayed and prophesied in worship.

XXXV. ASK THEIR HUSBANDS AT HOME

1 Corinthians 14:35 — A Place to Learn

“If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”

Paul continues.

“If they desire to learn anything.”

This suggests that the problem involved asking questions during the service.

Notice that Paul assumes women **want to learn.**

In that culture, women often had less education than men.

Paul does not say women should not learn.

He says they should learn, but in a way that does not disrupt the worship.

“Let them ask their husbands at home.”

Husbands had a responsibility to help their wives learn.

“For it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”

In that culture, a woman speaking out publicly in this way would have been seen as shameful.

Churches today apply this verse differently.

Some keep public teaching and leadership roles for men while welcoming women's prayers, songs, and other contributions.

Others believe Paul was correcting a local problem of disruption.

Whatever the view, the goal is that worship honors God and builds up the church.

Cross References

Ephesians 5:22

> Wives, submit to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

Titus 2:5

> to be self-controlled and pure, to manage their homes well, to be kind, and to submit to their husbands, so that no one will speak badly of the word of God.

1 Peter 3:1

> In the same way, wives, submit to your husbands. Then if any of them do not believe God's word, they may be won over without words by the way their wives live,

Spiritual Principle

God wants all His people to learn, and to do so in a way that brings peace to the church.

Key Truth

Paul assumes women desire to learn God's truth, and he makes room for it.

XXXVI. DID THE WORD COME FROM YOU?

1 Corinthians 14:36 — A Rebuke to Pride

“Did the word of God come from you? Or did it reach only you?”

Paul now speaks sharply to the whole church.

The Corinthians were acting as if they could do whatever they wanted.

As if they were the source of God's truth.

“Did the word of God come from you?”

No.

The gospel came to them from outside.

“Or did it reach only you?”

No.

They were one church among many.

They had no right to ignore what all the other churches practiced.

Cross References

Isaiah 2:3

> Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go out from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Romans 15:20

> My goal has always been to preach the good news where Christ was not yet known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.

1 Thessalonians 1:8

> The Lord's message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. So we do not need to say anything about it.

Spiritual Principle

No church owns the word of God; every church must submit to it.

XXXVII. THE LORD'S COMMANDS

1 Corinthians 14:37 — Acknowledge It

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I write to you are the Lord's commands.”

Paul addresses those who thought they were especially spiritual.

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual.”

Then they should prove it.

“Let him acknowledge that what I write to you are the Lord's commands.”

A truly spiritual person will recognize the authority of God's word through the apostle.

Spirituality is not shown by ignoring Scripture.

It is shown by submitting to it.

Cross References

1 John 4:6

> We belong to God. Whoever knows God listens to us, but whoever does not belong to God does not listen to us. This is how we can tell the Spirit of truth from the spirit of lies.

Galatians 1:8

> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a good news different from the one we preached to you, let that person be under God's curse!

2 Peter 3:2

> I want you to remember the words spoken long ago by the holy prophets and the command of our Lord and Savior given through your apostles.

Spiritual Principle

True spirituality submits to God's word.

Key Truth

The Spirit who gives gifts is the same Spirit who inspired Scripture.

He never contradicts Himself.

XXXVIII. HE WILL BE IGNORED

1 Corinthians 14:38 — A Warning

“But if anyone ignores this, he himself will be ignored.”

Paul gives a warning.

If someone refuses to recognize God's word, that person should not be recognized as a true prophet or spiritual leader.

Ignoring God's word has consequences.

Cross References

Proverbs 1:24

> But since you refuse to listen when I call, and no one pays attention when I reach out My hand,

Matthew 10:14

> If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that house or town.

Hosea 4:6

> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as My priests. Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children.

Spiritual Principle

Those who ignore God's word lose their claim to spiritual authority.

XXXIX. DESIRE TO PROPHESY

1 Corinthians 14:39 — Do Not Forbid Tongues

“Therefore, brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.”

Paul sums up his teaching on gifts.

“Earnestly desire to prophesy.”

Seek the gift that builds up the church.

“And do not forbid speaking in tongues.”

Paul does not want the church to swing to the other extreme and ban tongues.

Properly used, with interpretation and order, tongues has a place.

Churches today differ on whether tongues continues as in the early church.

But Paul's balance is clear.

Do not overvalue it.

Do not despise it.

Use every gift with love and order.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 5:19

Do not put out the Spirit's fire.

1 Thessalonians 5:20

Do not treat prophecies with contempt.

1 Corinthians 12:31

So eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

Spiritual Principle

God's people should avoid both extremes: overvaluing some gifts and despising others.

XL. DECENTLY AND IN ORDER

1 Corinthians 14:40 — The Final Word

“But let all things be done decently and in order.”

Paul ends with a simple rule.

“Let all things be done decently.”

The word means **fittingly** or **beautifully.**

Worship should be beautiful and honoring to God.

“And in order.”

The word was used for soldiers standing in ranks.

Everything in its place.

This is not about rigid rules.

It is about worship that reflects the peace and beauty of God.

It is about love that thinks of others.

Cross References

Colossians 2:5

> Even though I am far away from you in body, I am with you in spirit. I am glad to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Titus 1:5

> I left you in Crete so that you could put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I told you.

1 Corinthians 11:34

> If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it will not bring judgment. And I will give further instructions when I come.

Spiritual Principle

Worship should be beautiful, fitting, and orderly, reflecting the God we worship.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Order is not the enemy of the Spirit; it is the fruit of the Spirit.

XLI. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 14

1. Prophecy Builds Up the Church

“The one who prophesies builds up the church.”

Principle:

Tongues are valuable, but prophecy edifies the whole congregation.

2. Clarity Matters

“Unless you speak intelligible words... you will just be speaking into the air.”

Principle:

Worship should be understandable so that all can join in and grow.

3. Balance of Spirit and Understanding

“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.”

Principle:

Prayer and song must engage both heart and mind.

4. Tongues as a Sign

“Tongues are a sign... for unbelievers.”

Principle:

Tongues serve unbelievers as a sign, while prophecy strengthens believers.

5. Order in Worship

“God is not the author of confusion but of peace.”

Principle:

Spiritual gifts should be exercised in a way that brings peace and edification, not confusion.

6. Decency and Humility

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Principle:

All things in the church must be done with respect, submission, and unity under God's design.

XLII. TONGUES AND PROPHECY COMPARED

Tongues

- Speaks to God.
- Not understood without interpretation.
- Builds up the speaker.

- Engages the spirit, but not the understanding.
- A sign for unbelievers.
- Must be limited to two or three, in turn, with interpretation.

Prophecy

- Speaks to people.
- Understood by all.
- Builds up the church.
- Strengthens, encourages, and comforts.
- Convicts unbelievers and leads them to worship.
- Must be weighed by the church.

Key Truth

In the gathered church, the gift that is understood and builds up others is the greater gift.

XLIII. PAUL'S RULES FOR ORDERLY WORSHIP

Verses 26–33 give clear guidelines.

For Everyone

- Everything must build up the church.
- Everyone may contribute.
- God is a God of peace, not confusion.

For Tongues

- Two or at most three.
- One at a time.
- Someone must interpret.
- If no interpreter, keep silent and speak to God.

For Prophecy

- Two or three should speak.
- Others should weigh what is said.
- If someone else receives a revelation, the first should stop.
- Prophets are in control of themselves.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Spirit who gives the gifts is the same Spirit who brings order to their use.

XLIV. UNDERSTANDING VERSES 34–35

These verses are among the hardest in the letter.

What Is Clear

- In Chapter 11, women prayed and prophesied in worship.
- So Paul is not forbidding all speech by women in church.
- The whole chapter is about order, peace, and building up the church.
- Paul assumes women desire to learn, and he makes room for it.

Common Views

The weighing of prophecy: women were not to take part in publicly judging prophecies.

Disruptive questions: women were to stop interrupting the service with questions and ask at home.

Teaching authority: the gathered church's authoritative teaching role is reserved for qualified men, as in 1 Timothy 2.

How Churches Apply It Today

Faithful churches differ in how they apply these verses.

Some keep the roles of preaching and pastoral leadership for men.

Others see Paul correcting a local problem of disruption.

All agree that worship must honor God, reflect His order, and be marked by peace.

Key Truth

Hard verses should be read humbly, in context, and in light of the whole of Scripture.

XLV. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 14 TEACHES ABOUT GOD AND HIS WORD

God Is a God of Peace

“God is not the author of confusion but of peace.”

God Speaks to Be Understood

He wants His people to hear and understand His word.

God Reveals Hearts

When His word is spoken, **“the secrets of his heart are revealed.”**

God Is Present Among His People

“God is truly among you.”

God's Word Comes Through the Apostles

“What I write to you are the Lord's commands.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The God of peace speaks clearly through His word so that His people may be built up and the lost may find Him.

XLVI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did Paul write Chapter 14?

Worship in Corinth had become confusing and disorderly.

Many were speaking in tongues without interpretation, and visitors could not understand.

Paul wanted worship to build up the church.

Question 2

Why is prophecy greater than tongues in public worship?

Prophecy is understood by everyone and builds up the whole church.

Tongues without interpretation builds up only the speaker.

Question 3

What are the three purposes of prophecy?

Strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.

Question 4

Was Paul against speaking in tongues?

No.

He spoke in tongues more than all of them and said not to forbid it.

He wanted it used with interpretation and order.

Question 5

What do the pipe, the harp, and the trumpet teach?

Sounds must be clear to have meaning.

Worship and teaching must be understandable to help anyone.

Question 6

What does it mean to pray “with the spirit” and “with the understanding”?

True worship involves both the heart and the mind.

It should be passionate and also understood.

Question 7

What would an unbeliever think if everyone spoke in tongues at once?

He would think the church was out of its mind.

Question 8

What happens when God's word is spoken clearly to an unbeliever?

He is convicted.

The secrets of his heart are revealed.

He falls down and worships God, saying, “God is truly among you.”

Question 9

Why must prophecies be weighed?

Not every message claiming to be from God is true.

Every message must be tested by God's word.

Question 10

What does “the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets” mean?

The Holy Spirit does not take away a person's self-control.

People with gifts can choose when and how to use them.

Question 11

How should we understand verses 34–35?

They must be read with Chapter 11, where women prayed and prophesied.

Churches differ on whether Paul meant the weighing of prophecy, disruptive questions, or teaching authority.

All agree worship must honor God's order and bring peace.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 14 change about the way Christians live today?

1 Corinthians 14 should cause believers to live:

- Pursuing love above all.
- Seeking to build up others in worship.
- Valuing clear teaching of God's word.
- Worshiping with both heart and mind.
- Thinking about how visitors experience the church.
- Testing every message by Scripture.
- Making room for others to contribute.
- Doing all things decently and in order.

XLVII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 14 asks several important questions.

Am I Pursuing Love?

Is love guiding how I use my gifts?

Do I Come to Church to Be Blessed or to Bless?

Am I thinking about building up others?

Do I Worship with Heart and Mind?

Is my worship both passionate and thoughtful?

Are My Words Clear?

When I share God's truth, do people understand?

Would a Visitor Feel Welcome?

Would they understand what is happening and sense that God is present?

Do I Test What I Hear?

Do I weigh teaching by God's word?

Do I Make Room for Others?

Or do I always need to be heard?

Does My Life Reflect God's Peace?

Or do I bring confusion and conflict?

XLVIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Clear Words, Built-Up People”

Some worship impresses.

Some worship confuses.

But God wants worship that builds up.

The Corinthians were impressed by mysterious words.

But mysterious words left people in the dark.

Paul would rather speak five clear words than ten thousand that no one understood.

Why?

Because people matter.

The visitor in the back row matters.

The new believer who is trying to learn matters.

The brother who is struggling matters.

God does not speak to confuse His people.

He speaks to build them up.

And He calls His church to do the same.

This creates a powerful principle.

The measure of worship is not how spiritual it looks.

It is how much it helps people know God.

Principle:

Speak so that others understand, worship so that others are built up, and order everything so that God's peace is seen.

XLIX. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 14 was written to a church whose worship had become chaotic.

They had many gifts.

But they were using them without love.

People spoke over one another.

Few could understand.

Visitors walked away confused.

Paul brought them back to God's purpose.

Worship is for building up.

Words must be understood.

Heart and mind must work together.

Every message must be tested.

Everyone must make room for others.

And everything must reflect the peace of God.

1 Corinthians 14 therefore reminds us:

Never use a gift just for yourself.

Never value what is impressive over what is helpful.

Never forget the visitor in the room.

Never accept a message without testing it by God's word.

Never confuse disorder with the work of the Spirit.

The church does not need more noise.

It needs:

Clear words from God.

Hearts and minds engaged in worship.

Members who build each other up.

And a peace that shows God is truly among us.

The same truth still calls us:

Tell people that God speaks clearly in His word.

Tell people that He reveals the secrets of the heart.

Tell people that He is truly present among His people.

Tell people that He is a God of peace.

And whenever you gather:

Pursue love.

Build one another up.

Worship with spirit and understanding.

Do all things decently and in order.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that You are not a God of confusion, but of peace.

Thank You for speaking to us clearly through Your word.

Thank You for the gifts of Your Spirit, given to build up Your church.

Thank You that when Your word is spoken, hearts are revealed and people fall down and worship You.

Forgive us when we have used our gifts to draw attention to ourselves.

Forgive us when we have valued what is impressive over what is helpful.

Forgive us when our worship has been confusing to others.

Forgive us when we have not made room for others to share.

Teach us to pursue love above all things.

Help us to worship You with our spirits and with our minds.

Give us words that strengthen, encourage, and comfort others.

Help us test every message by Your word.

Make our gatherings places where visitors sense that You are truly among us.

Fill Your church with Your peace.

And may everything we do be done decently and in order, for Your glory.

“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” — 1 Corinthians 14:33

Central Truth

In public worship, love seeks to build up the whole church, so spiritual gifts must be used with clarity, understanding, and order, because God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

1 Corinthians 14 in One Sentence

Paul teaches that love seeks to build up the church, so prophecy and clear words are better than uninterpreted tongues in public worship, that worship should engage both spirit and understanding, and that every gift must be used in turn, tested, and kept in order, because God is not a God of confusion but of peace.