



PRODIGAL

CHURCH

SERMON SERIES: PRODIGAL CHURCH

DATE: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15TH, 2020

SPEAKER: CRAIG VERNALL

SERMON TITLE: FUSION

SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 14

Q1. What impacted you, stood out or challenged you the most about Sunday's message?

Chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians takes us deep into a worship service. It's as if we're a fly on the wall observing what's happening as God's people gather and seek to glorify God as well as strengthen each other. This picture that Paul paints for us is a fusion of spirit and human effort trying to discern the will of God. So, let's dive into this fascinating chapter.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-5.

"Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. ² For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. ³ But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. ⁴ Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. ⁵ I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified."

The opening of this chapter encourages Christians to pursue spiritual gifts. "especially prophecy"

Q2. By listening to the apostle Paul's opening instructions, each of us are encouraged to eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit. How seriously do you take this directive from Paul? Do you understand what gifts you have and how to grow in this gift?

Q3. The older we become the easier it is to limit our expectations of God to the experiences we've already had. How can we be open to something fresh from God? How could God grab your attention afresh?

In the verse below we see how Paul differentiates between bringing a word in tongues rather than revelation, knowledge, prophecy or word of instruction.

"⁶ Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction?"

Q4. When I read this verse above, I feel that I'm responsible for bringing something to my Christian brothers and sisters that will encourage them. How different would our gatherings be if all took responsibility for bringing something for each other?

Below Paul corrects what appears to be a problem within the Corinthian worship experience. The gift of tongues is being used to overwhelm or dominate the times they shared in corporate worship. Paul reasons his way into this conversation by asking the church to separate what's good from what's better.

"⁷ Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? ⁸ Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? ⁹ So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. ¹¹ If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me. ¹² So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.

¹³ For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵ So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. ¹⁶ Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? ¹⁷ You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified."

Q5. What does Paul say about the importance of the mind in worship according to verses 14-16? What application would you make for the way the mind is used and involved in worship today?

As you've read above, Paul is gently maneuvering a selfish mindset into one that respects the greater good of others. Those speaking in tongues are exercising a God given gift but Paul wants them to see that it's actually better for the church to focus upon prophecy. Paul says in vs 17 *"You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified."* Paul is correcting the church's worship experience for the sake of those who are inquiring about the faith. (cf vs 16)

Q6. When we meet for worship, are we mindful of those who would be present in our services that are inquiring about the faith? It appears that Paul wants us to be aware that this is happening around us. What could we do to help others know Jesus even when we are meeting together for worship?

Paul now continues in this same theme of ensuring that the church sees the value of prophecy over tongues. Prophecy is a word used to describe revelation, teaching, understanding or knowledge about God. You'll read these repeated themes in the next few verses. In today's church, preaching as well as songs with well written lyrics will fall into this category for they bring knowledge and instruction.

¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. ¹⁹ But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

²⁰ Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. ²¹ In the Law it is written:

“With other tongues

and through the lips of foreigners

I will speak to this people,

but even then they will not listen to me,

says the Lord.”

²² Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. ²³ So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? ²⁴ But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, ²⁵ as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

Q7. In verse 23 we see how aware or empathetic Paul is towards the inquirer or unbeliever. But as you can see Paul's confidence is in how the Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin to the unbeliever. Can you describe your own experience of coming under conviction about your sin when you became a Christian? Paul describes this conviction as something normal.

Finally, read below how Paul summarizes these instructions. Here Paul gives very clear directions of how the gift of and interpretation of tongues should work together for maximum effect.

GOOD ORDER IN WORSHIP

²⁶ What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. ²⁸ If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.

²⁹ Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. ³⁰ And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. ³¹ For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. ³² The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. ³³ For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people.”

Here Paul is clear in showing that no person is a law unto themselves. The gift of prophecy and the gift of tongues should be submitted and tested; one to another. This brings checks and balance to the word from the Lord.

Q8. In your Life Group would you be comfortable to share with others a leading from God to be tested by others? Is this something you could give permission to each other to do? Remembering of course that the gifts you have are for others not for you. So, don't be shy!

CONCLUSION

The most natural place to exercise and build up your spiritual gifts is within your smaller group settings. Here we can test and approve each other as we pray for each other, as we worship together and as we learn and share our lives with each other. An environment of love and support will help us step out of our spiritual comfort zone and be a blessing to others. "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit..." vs 14:1