

LESSON 23: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-40

Decently and in Order

1. What is the basic principle that Paul is setting forth in verses 1-5? (See 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10-11; and 1 Corinthians 12:31, 13:13.) What are the differences between speaking in tongues and prophesying, and what is the purpose of each (vv. 1-4; see)? Specifically, Paul contrasts speaking in tongues and prophecy in two ways here. What are they? Which of these gifts is more to be desired and why (vv. 1,5)? How did Moses feel about this (Num. 11:24-29)? Finally, what do you think Paul means when he adds, at the end of verse 5, “unless he interprets”?
2. How might we apply this teaching, on the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues and prophecy, in the context of church life and worship today? How is prophecy like, and perhaps unlike, preaching? Given what Paul writes in verse 3, concerning prophecy’s three benefits to the church, how might we expect this truth to give shape and structure to the pastor’s preaching?
3. What illustrations are offered by Paul to show why tongues do not build up the church (vv. 6-12)? What gifts should you seek (v. 12)? How might verse 12 effectively summarize Paul’s teaching for this entire chapter (cf. v. 5; see also vv. 18-19)?
4. How does Paul show that the improper exercise of the gift of speaking in tongues can be “unfruitful” in the context of the Corinthians’ worship (vv. 13-18)? Why is it vital that our minds be involved in Christian worship and other meetings? Can you think of what an example of “mindless” worship might look like? Are we guilty of meaningless and mindless worship in the church today?
5. What are some of the elements of Christian worship set forth in these verses? (See 1 Chronicles 13:36; Nehemiah 5:13; 8:6; Psalm 104:33; 136:1; 148:1; Romans 11:36; and Ephesians 5:18-20.)
6. How are the Corinthians “thinking like children” (cf. 13:11)? What does Paul mean when he writes “in regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults” (v. 20)?

7. Read the passage from Isaiah that Paul quotes in verse 21. (See Isaiah 28:1-13.) Why is he quoting this passage? What point is he making? What new perspective do these verses teach us concerning the differing purposes of tongues and prophesy (vv. 22-25; see also Acts 2:1-13; Matt. 13:11-16)? Why would visitors to a worship service sense the presence of God, and with what result, if everyone was prophesying rather than speaking in tongues? Indeed, what positive effect might prophecy have on even unbelievers (vv. 24-25)?

8. What restrictions are placed on speaking in tongues in a worship service (vv. 26-28), and on prophesying in a worship service (vv. 29-33)? How would you describe the worship service of the early church, based on these verses? How might we understand and apply these verses in our own context today? What is Paul's main point in all this (v. 33)?

9. What reasons are given for women to "remain silent in the churches" (vv. 32-35)? In the light of 11:3,5-6, and of our previous discussion concerning those verses, what do you think Paul means by instructing women to remain silent in Church?

10. What then is the underlying principle for Christian worship – indeed for all of the activities of the Church (v. 40)? Why do you think "order" is such an important principle in the context of Christian worship?