

Read

1 Corinthians 14:1-33

Consider

When it comes to speaking in tongues, I have never personally experienced the gifting myself. The closest that I came was when the Holy Spirit gave me words to another person that led to a deep revelation and conviction. But in terms of spontaneously starting to speak in a different language, I have only been able to observe it in others a handful of times.

The first experience was when I was a guest worship leader at a youth retreat. On the final night, when emotions were running high and there was an invitation for everyone to pray and cry out to God, the room erupted with voices and students shaking and falling to the ground. The language they used did not resemble their native tongue, nor any that seemed like human speech. There were many repetitive phrases, interspersed with loud shouts. I must admit, I was a bit shocked and did not know how to process everything I was seeing or hearing. I thanked God that this group was having such an intense spiritual encounter, but I was confused and felt left out of what seemed so meaningful for everyone else.

The other circumstance that sticks in my mind in regards to speaking in tongues happened when I was attending a charismatic Pentecostal service. When the pastor asked if anyone had a specific word from God that they would like to say, there were a few that stood up and the wireless microphone was passed around. The first lady was given a chance to offer a few words and what she said was spoken in tongues. Immediately, another woman came alongside her and offered an interpretation to the rest of the congregation, in which the original speaker and the congregation nodded and responded in agreement. Similar to my first example, I could see that there was a connection to the divine character and power of God, yet in this instance, a way was made for everyone to be included and participate.

In today's chapter, Paul's exhortation to the church in Corinth focuses more on how and when to best use our spiritual gifts for the building up of others in Christ. Holding onto this posture and goal helps us to stay the course as we participate in what God is doing in and through His people, prevents us from becoming distracted and preoccupied with the gifts themselves, and becomes a discipline that transforms our lives. The apostle's address gives us pause to consider if the ways in which we utilize whatever gifts we have are in line with God's desire and purposes for the church and her mission.

Pastor Jonathan Nip

Pray

Gracious God, we give you all of our praise as you are the faithful one over all of creation and our lives. You are the One who continues to redeem and restore all things in yourself.

Our hearts are full of gratitude because you have saved and brought us back into a right relationship with you and with one another and invite us to be part of your ongoing renewing work as part of your church. Thank you for the unique ways in which you have made and gifted each one of us for your Kingdom and the purpose of building one another up.

Forgive us when we have not used our spiritual gifting for your glory and for the sake of the church. We also repent when we have focused on ourselves rather than on you and others and have misused our gifts in ways that have caused division and confusion. We ask for your forgiveness when our hearts have been critical, resistant to your Spirit's promptings, and distracted.

Father, restore unto us a clean heart and fill us up with your Holy Spirit's wisdom and discernment so that we may know how to best use what you have given us to edify and build up others. Show me how to be considerate of those around me and how best to sensitively and intentionally walk alongside them so that they would know and follow you more.

In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen

Diving Deeper

What has been your experience and understanding of the gifts of speaking in tongues and prophecy? What do you think they reveal about God's character, nature, and how He works?

In the use of our spiritual gifts, are there specific ways in which we can be acting out of love, fostering a greater sense of unity and mutual encouragement, and emboldening them to follow and live for Christ deeper and fully?

How can we be more considerate and aware of how others receive and respond to our ministry in their lives?

How can we live closer **WITH** GOD in our lives?

How are we being **TRANSFORMED** to be more like Christ?

How is the Holy Spirit empowering us to imitate Christ in what we **DO** this week?