

# Prophecy vs. Tongues: When 5 > 10,000

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[0:00] Let me see. Alright, the sermon text for today is 1 Corinthians 14, 1-25.

! At the conclusion of the reading, I will declare,! This is the word of the Lord, and the church in joyful response to his revelation given to us will together say, Thanks be to God.

1 Corinthians 14, 1-25.

1 Corinthians 14, 1-25. Now, I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets so that the church may be built up.

Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring some revelation or knowledge of prophecy or teaching? 1 Corinthians 14, 1-25. Even if lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?

[1:27] And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? So, with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said?

For you will be speaking into the air. There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning. But if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker a foreigner to me.

So, with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret.

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also.

I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. Otherwise, if you can give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say, Amen, to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?

[2:36] For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. Nevertheless, in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. In the law it is written, Thus tongues are a sign not for believers, but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers, but for believers.

If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

This is the word of the Lord. Oh, Heavenly Father, we pray that what we just read would be reality today.

God, the saints are gathered here in the name of Jesus Christ. We have gathered here to meet with you, to worship with you, to glorify your name, and to praise you for who you are, and what you've done in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[4:16] God, we have gathered to build one another up in love, and we also long that if anyone in this room does not yet know you, that they would hear the word spoken, prayed, sung, preached, that they would encounter

you and be drawn to faith in your name.

God, teach us right now. Your spirit is the great teacher of our minds and of our souls. Would you teach us and instruct us in this word? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, good morning, church. My name is Mike, one of the pastors here at Shoreline, and I'm so glad that you have joined us this morning. You know, summer is finally upon us. I was out in the yard yesterday, and some neighbors were going down to a solstice party, which is cool.

I've never been to a solstice party. That sounds fun. Longest day of the year. Summer means warmth and sunshine. Sunshine means beach days for those that like the beach. Our family likes the beach. Long summer evenings.

Ferry rides to Block Island. Highly recommend that. It's a cool thing to do around here. Church picnics, and so much more. And it also means, for many people, summer travel. Now, I don't know if anybody plans to actually leave the country this summer, but if you do, and if you find yourself in a place where English is not spoken, I have this one tip for you, okay?

[5:32] This is Mike Luce's travel tip. And this is something that Americans are actually well known for forgetting around the world. If somebody doesn't know English, speaking louder, speaking slower, and saying more words is not going to help, okay?

That's my tip for you, okay? If the other person doesn't know English, your English will not be intelligible to them, right? So maybe play charades.

I mean, there's different things that you can do to communicate with your bodies, but the language is not going to help. So to be intelligible is to be, this is from the dictionary, to be capable of being understood or comprehended.

To be capable of being understood or comprehended. And according to Paul, intelligibility is vital, not only for interpersonal communication, but in the corporate gathering of the saints.

Now, this is what Paul argues in today's passage, which is 1 Corinthians 14, 1 through 25. Please turn there in your Bibles if you haven't done so already. If you don't have a Bible, we have Bibles available on the back table.

[6:45] Feel free to take one of those and keep it as our gift to you. We have only this week and next in our series in 1 Corinthians before we break for the summer.

And so throughout July and August, we're going to be in the Psalms, which I'm really excited for, hearing other men in the church preach. We're also going to have Randy Matthews here in a few weeks, the missionary that we support preaching from the Psalms.

But all year, we've been in this letter of 1 Corinthians, seeing the church's call to display Christ in all things. And displaying Christ means especially, as we've just seen, imitating his radical, self-giving love.

Paul just expounded on that in chapter 13. Jordan preached that word for us just last week. In many ways, Paul's entire letter reaches a climax in chapter 13. As it paints for the Corinthians this beautiful picture of how Christ-like love is the solution to essentially all of their problems in the church.

And Paul locates that discourse on love specifically within his discussion on the spiritual gifts, which he began in chapter 12. We had two sermons in chapter 12, one in 13, and now he returns more directly to the topic here in chapter 14.

[8:02] So recall that Paul has been reshaping the Corinthians' distorted understanding of the spiritual gifts. They had been misusing them for self-promotion, right?

And rather than for love and for the sake of building up the body and the glory of God. And now with the backdrop of the preeminence of love, chapter 13, Paul continues to reshape their understanding of the gifts by specifically comparing two of them with one another.

Prophecy and the gift of tongues. And so I've titled the sermon today, Prophecy Versus Tongues, When Five is Greater Than 10,000. Prophecy. Now before I go any further, we need to define terms here.

Now you might think this would be easy. Prophecy tongues. It's not. There is a lot of debate over how to define prophecy and how to define tongues.

So I am not presumptuous enough to think that like the definitions I'm going to tell you are the definitions, okay? This is just what I think is helpful in my time of studying.

[9:15] So a few weeks ago, we defined prophecy as this. Spontaneous revelation from the Lord then transmitted by the prophet to the people.

Okay, that's what we said. I think another helpful way to talk about it, maybe even more fundamentally, is speaking forth God's revealed will under divine inspiration. Okay, when we see this in both Testaments.

Many people think of prophecy as only foretelling, right? Predicting the future. And that is certainly true of prophecy. And we see that all over both, again, Old Testament and New Testament.

But more fundamentally, more fundamentally, it is speaking forth. It is declarative. It's declaring a message from the Lord. That's what prophecy is. So preaching is similarly declarative.

It's proclamation. And there's overlap between the two. And they certainly have similar functions. The function of prophecy, the function of preaching is to comfort. It's to exhort.

[10:14] It's to give warning. It's to give rebuke. But what seems to set the two apart is that first, preaching involves more explanation, generally more teaching.

And that's based on a studied reflection of God's word. Whereas prophecy involves, again, declaring spontaneous revelation from the Lord.

The Lord gives a word. That word is spoken to the hearers. And then secondly, which we already mentioned, prophecy sometimes involves foretelling. Preaching can certainly be prophetic at times. But it isn't necessarily. And it's worth, before we move forward here, it's worth noting and we might talk about this more next week. Not sure yet. Prophecy in the New Testament is remarkably tamed compared to the Old Testament.

As the first century unfolds, the increasing emphasis is on the preaching and teaching of the word. Guarding the good deposit of the gospel handed down by the apostles.

[11:18] That's what Paul tells to Timothy. Or as Jude 3 puts it, I love this, the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Like that becomes an increasing emphasis in the New Testament. But even still, Paul names the apostles and the prophets as foundational to the church's establishment.

If we read Ephesians 2, 1 Corinthians 12, the apostles and the prophets, they're the foundation of the church. And for our purposes today, it was clearly one of the spiritual gifts on display in the church in Corinth.

Okay, so that's barely scratching the surface on prophecy. But then there's tongues. Tongues, I'm actually going to say less about this, surprisingly. Tongues, this is what we said a few weeks ago. It is speaking in a language unknown to the speaker.

Okay, speaking in a language unknown to the speaker. Now there is much debate about whether this is another existing human language or not. Now certainly when you read Acts chapter 2 and you see the spirits outpouring at Pentecost, they were speaking other known human languages. Since each of the Jews gathered there, as Acts 2 says, from every nation under heaven was hearing the disciples speak in his own language. Okay, but I'm going to say that does not restrict tongue speaking.

[12:35] Some people think it does. I don't think this restricts tongue speaking to only known human languages. And in the end, I said this a few weeks ago, in the end, it doesn't really matter whether it's a known human language or not because the point is it's a language unknown to the speaker and unless there's an interpreter, it's also unknown to everybody else.

Now I think that's more important than whether we think it's another language or not. I mean, it's the Holy Spirit. He just works in power in people. So I think the Holy Spirit is able to let someone speak in another language that actually exists or not, but that's besides the point.

Prophecy tongues, I think just, I wanted to define terms up front. Let's look now, though, at what God has to say through Paul about these gifts in the Corinthian church. And Paul begins, look at verse 1 in your Bibles.

He says, pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. Pursue love. Love is the more excellent way, right, that Paul just described in chapter 13.

It's the way that transcends the spiritual gifts. And so Paul exhorts the Corinthians, pursue it, right, seek after it eagerly. Andrew Murray writes this, it is in the holiness of love and a loving holiness that the unity of the body will be proved and promoted and, he says, prepared for the fuller workings of the Holy Spirit.

[14:04] So in addition to pursuing love, Paul exhorts the church to also earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. Now, Paul is making clear here, he is not discounting the use of spiritual gifts in any way.

He wants the Corinthians to desire them, but they must be mastered, they must be guided by Christ-like love. Right, that is the, a few weeks ago we talked about the highway of Christian freedom.

The highway is really love. Love is the highway. It is guided by Christ-like love. Pursue love, earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially, he says, that you may prophesy.

Okay, prophecy, we should desire that. Why? Why? Now, Paul goes on to specifically compare the spiritual gift of prophecy to the spiritual gift of tongues.

Now, these were probably the two of the more prominent gifts in the church and it seems as we read this chapter, the gifts of tongues was probably being held in higher esteem because of its showiness.

[15:07] but Paul says, verse 2, the one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God for no one understands him but he utters mysteries in the spirit.

Now, Paul is not saying, again, I don't think, that it's bad or wrong to speak in tongues. Indeed, he says here that the one who speaks in tongues is speaking to God. They're uttering mysteries in the spirit.

Okay, that doesn't seem like a bad thing to me. There is communion with God going on in the soul of the tongues speaker. Paul says in verse 4 that this builds up himself.

Again, some see that as ironic. I don't based on context. I think that's a good thing. There's a building up of self going on spiritually. This is personally edifying. I don't think that's a bad thing.

However, Paul's point though, we're talking about corporate worship. Corporate worship. The assembly of the whole congregation. And so Paul says, look at verse 3, on the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

[16:17] The one who prophesies, verse 4, he says, builds up the church. Builds up the church. Now I hope you've been built up so far in today's service. I have. I have been built up. I have been encouraged.

I have been consoled by the words that have been spoken and sung today. And Paul's saying here that prophecy, because it's spoken to men, has the effect of building up the body.

It brings a word of exhortation. It brings a word of encouragement. It brings a word of comfort to the saints. And this edifies the church.

It builds them up. It does spiritual good to those gathered. Not just to the speaker, like tongues.

Okay, so Paul says, so just stop speaking in tongues entirely.

That's not actually what he says. Look at verse 5. Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. Paul continues, he's upholding tongues.

[17:19] It's a good gift from the Lord. This verse reminded me of in chapter 7, what Paul says about singleness, actually, because it's a similar phrase here. Paul said about singleness, he said, I wish that all were as I myself am.

Was Paul telling all the Corinthians to be single? No. That would be misinterpreting what he's saying. Paul made that statement in light of the benefits he saw to remaining single in the present age, knowing God's good design for marriage, knowing that the majority would be married.

So here, Paul says that, Paul knows chapter 12, the spiritual gifts are apportioned to each believer individually as the Spirit wills. It's up to the Holy Spirit. It's not up to us.

Okay? And we talked about that from chapter 12. Paul knows that not everybody would speak in tongues. And that's another thing that Paul said in chapter 12. Yet he sees its personal benefit and he therefore, he desires that the Spirit would pour out that gift of tongues, but he desires even more

in the corporate gathering.

He desires that people would prophesy. And then he gives this crystal clear statement. In case the Corinthians are missing it, they've been known to miss his instruction, here it is. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues unless someone interprets so that the church may be built up.

[18:43] So if there is an interpreter present, then the tongue speaking rises to the level of prophecy, right? It becomes edifying to the body. People can understand it, but absent any interpretation, he's saying the one who prophesies is greater.

Now he doesn't mean they're greater in essence, like they have more worth intrinsic to themselves. No, no, it's greater in function, right? Functionally, the one who prophesies is greater because they're using their gift, why?

To build up the body. Build up the body. I mean, this is really the first point here. Prophecy is greater than tongues because greatness, and we're talking about the greatness of a spiritual gift here.

Greatness is defined by what builds up the body. This is the outworking of love in the corporate context, right?

This is chapter 13 in the church gathering. Sterling, God is calling us first and foremost to pursue love, right? To chase after love.

[19:44] To chase after God who is himself love. love. And Jesus Christ who manifested God's loving heart in the clearest, in the most radical way on the cross.

So this is a call first to pursue Christ and Christlikeness, which is love. And God is calling us, church, with a heart filled then with Christlike love to then earnestly desire the greater gifts, right? not what would bring us the most acclaim, not what would appear the most flashy, the most showy, but what would maximally build up the body of Jesus Christ.

So I think this is something we ought to be praying into. This has become, a few years ago when I was studying this passage, I was convicted. This is not something I was seeking after we're praying.

Here's a prayer that I've begun praying because of this passage. I encourage us to pray this. God, you are the giver of all good gifts. And Holy Spirit, you are the one who empowers spiritual gifts in every believer for the common good.

[20:48] So pour out on this church whatever gifts you choose according to your sovereign grace to maximally build us up in Christlike love for the glory of Christ.

That's a prayer that we ought to be praying. Greatness is defined by what builds up the body. Now here's the second point. Building up the body requires, here's that word again, intelligibility.

Intelligibility. Look there at verse 6 in your Bibles. Paul asked the Corinthians, Now brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you?

Notice his desire to benefit them. How will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? Note first that revelation and knowledge are both content. Prophecy and teaching are the form that content takes in delivery. This kind of just goes back to our definitions at the beginning. Prophecy involves declaring a revelation from the Lord. Teaching involves speaking a word of knowledge.

[21:55] But more importantly, both of them, prophecy, teaching, they deliver intelligible content to the listeners. And that's what Paul is after.

And he goes on then to offer three different illustrations in the following verses and then apply them to the Corinthian situation. So, in verses 7 and 8, he gives this illustration of instruments.

And the point is pretty obvious. If an instrument's sound is not distinct, then it becomes useless, right? Now, think about what it sounds like when, I wasn't going to say this, but I have flashbacks to like, you know, watching, I don't know, middle school band play and there's always some weird sounds going on that aren't that helpful.

But what I was thinking about is like, even professionals, Coast Guard band, when they're all just tuning their instruments all at the same time, there's this like cacophony of sound. Like, what is

going on here?

Now, they all individually are, they know what they're doing. They're professionals. But how beautiful when that is done and then each part is playing distinctively in the symphony to create this beautiful music, right?

[23:08] And like, like the bugle in Paul's second illustration, it's vital that the alarm going off on the submarine is distinct, right? Navy guys, right? Or the shipyard guys, there's different alarms that sound.

The crew needs to know this is not just some sort of announcement from the XO, but there's an emergency and they need to know what kind of emergency it is, right? Is this a fire or is this a flooding casualty?

Is this a plant casualty or is this something else, right? I mean, that's what Paul's getting at. They need to be distinct. They need to be intelligible and he applies these to the Corinthians in verse 9. If you speak in tongues that are not intelligible, Paul is saying, you might as well just speak into the air.

I mean, that's literally what he says in verse 9. The point is clear. In corporate worship, when we gather, building up requires intelligibility. And then Paul offers a third illustration that's even more to the point about languages.

Now, this was my opening travel tip to you all. See, it comes right out of God's word. It wasn't just me. If you and the other person don't speak the same language, you won't understand one another and you're functionally foreigners, even if they happen to live in the same city even.

[24:18] And so look at verse 12. Paul concludes with these illustrations, so with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

Building up the church. Now look, to zealously desire manifestations of the Spirit in the form of spiritual gifts is not inherently a bad thing. Right?

But it becomes a bad thing when the second half of this verse is neglected. Right? It becomes a bad thing when we desire, when our desire for spiritual gifting is motivated by self-seeking.

Right? By a desire for status and power within the church. But love, on the other hand, does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way. No, love strives to excel in building up the church. So when our desire for spiritual gifts is motivated by love that seeks to abound in building up the church, that is a glorious thing.

[25:28] That's a glorious thing. And I think we experience that here. So let us experience it all the more. And a love-driven, Spirit-empowered believer prioritizes, Paul is saying, intelligibility in the corporate gathering so that everybody's edifying.

So my question, though, is how do we apply this in our context? Like, what does it look like for Shoreline to prioritize intelligibility? I want you to be thinking about that.

But I'm going to keep going forward because I think the next set of verses actually help us out.

Verses 13 through 19, we see this, building up the body engages the spirit and the mind.

Now this is essentially the same point as what we just said, just characterized a little differently.

Paul says in verse 13, therefore, so in light of everything that he's just been arguing, therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret.

Why? Well, I think it's obvious, but because if he or if somebody else is given the gift of interpretation of tongues, then the tongue speaking becomes intelligible, right?

[26:40] It becomes like prophecy or teaching. Everyone else is able to understand and be edified. Verse 14, for if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

My spirit prays, my mind is unfruitful. Okay, again, I want us to see how Paul is not saying that there is no value, double negative intended, he's not saying that there's no value in tongue speaking, right?

He says that when praying in a tongue, his spirit prays. That's a good thing. And I think, some actually see, I wasn't going to say this, but Tyler alluded to Romans 8, 26 before, and some see a correlation there that sometimes we don't even know what words to say and the spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words on our behalf.

Some see a connection here that in the tongues praying or the tongues praying, the spirit is helping communicate with the Lord. So anyway, there's a deep communion going on with the Lord. However, because he doesn't know what he's saying, his mind is unfruitful. Okay? And so while that might be edifying in private, it's unhelpful in the gathering of the saints.

[27:47] So Paul asks, what am I to do? Verse 15, I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also. Okay? And then he gives us two other ways that this plays out.

He says, I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing praise with my mind also. Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of outsider say amen to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?

For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. I think that's the fourth or fifth time he's used the phrase built up.

So whether praying, singing, giving thanks in corporate worship, Paul will not speak in tongues, which he is apparently able to do, and which edifies his own spirit because his aim is for the other person to be built up.

Right? So instead, Paul chooses to engage his mind and speak intelligibly in the corporate gathering. And I think it needs to be said in light of the modern charismatic movement in which some churches prioritize, even require tongue speaking among believers, and often a kind of tongue speaking that is ecstatic and uncontrolled.

[29:10] It's striking how apparently controlled Paul is able to be in his use of the gift of tongues. Now he's going to go on to commend that controlled use in verse 27, which we're going to look at next week.

And I'm reminded of his words at the end of chapter 9. Paul said in chapter 9, I do not box as one beating the air, but I discipline my body and keep it under control.

Right there, he was talking about laying down his rights for the sake of the gospel, and that's not much different than what Paul is talking about here. His desire is for, he says, the outsider to be able to say amen to what's being spoken.

Now, Paul could be speaking of an unbeliever here, but I think it's actually more likely that outsider in this verse denotes anyone in the gathering who doesn't understand the tongue speaking.

Right? His focus so far has been on building up the body of believers. A believer who doesn't understand what's being said effectively becomes an outsider.

[30:13] Right? Like the foreigner in his illustration, they don't know what's going on. They might as well be on the outside. Paul is jealous for all the saints to understand what's being said, so they can declare amen in spirit and mind engaged agreement.

And then we have classic Paul here as he wraps up his point. I thank God, verse 18, I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. Okay? So again, Paul is upholding the value of tongue speaking, and he's thankful that God has given him this gift in abundance apparently.

And this sort of flex of his, it's not actually to boast. Right? It's not, he's not boasting, he's actually heightening the force of his conclusion, which is, nevertheless, in church, I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others than 10,000 words in a tongue.

And so this is how five is greater than 10,000. Five words that instruct or teach. Some of you say, man, I wish your sermons are only five words.

And pray into that, maybe it'll happen. Five words that are intelligible are better than 10,000 that no one understands. Okay, so I return back to my question.

[31:34] Maybe it's hard to think about a question while you're being talked to, but what does it look like for us at Shoreline to prioritize intelligibility for the sake of building up the body.

We don't seem to have the Corinthian problem of unintelligible Tongue speaking dominating our times together, right? Although I know when my two-year-old speaks, I'm praying for the gift of interpretation, usually.

My wife seems to have that one. We don't seem to have that problem in our church, right? But I think this principle of intelligibility, it ought to inform every single aspect of the corporate gathering, right?

From the opening call to worship to the closing benediction and all the fellowship that goes on before and after and all of our speaking and singing and all of our preaching and our praying, we should be striving for intelligibility, right?

Clarity is another word, doesn't quite mean the same thing. We should be striving for clarity, but not clarity for clarity's sake because we can go off the rails there taking great pains just to arrive at clarity.

[32:40] Clarity with the goal of building up the body in love, right? Now I'm so thankful for the other elders and the other saints that get up here and do this week in and week out.

They model building up the body with intelligible speech for my edification, for your edification. And I'm thankful too for those that have the courage to come up and ask me what I meant when I said something in a sermon, right?

Those who humbly point out ways that I may have been unclear that happens, where I may have been unclear in my preaching. Now this is a community effort, church, right? We're all responsible both for what we say, and scripture shows us we're also responsible for what we allow ourselves to hear.

Did you catch that? We're responsible for what we say and for what we allow ourselves to hear. So I want to empower you. I want to encourage you to speak up if you think something that's set up here was confusing or unhelpful, and especially if you think it's unbiblical.

You're called to speak up in our speaking, our preaching, praying, and our selection of music, right? We ought to find and sing songs that intelligibly communicate God's word in the gospel, right?

[33:55] Songs that give verbal expression to our worship, even as they also evoke and express godly affections for the Lord. Music does all of those things. It's amazing. Now, perhaps you'd prefer more hymns at this church, okay?

Perhaps you'd prefer more modern songs in this church, but I'm thankful that Tyler, that the other music leaders, they're regularly choosing songs that do both of the things I mentioned.

They prioritize clear communication of biblical truth, and they evoke and express godly affections in light of that truth. So these things are going on, and these are just a couple ways that they ought to affect that the principle of intelligibility for the sake of building up the body affects what we do right here.

This principle, it also underscores something else, the participatory nature of corporate worship. Notice that Paul assumes that the saints will say amen during the corporate gathering.

Did you catch that? Now, if you've been here long enough, I'm not going to go off on this for too long, you know that I personally love it when people, the people of God respond outwardly with a hearty amen.

[35:07] And I know that wasn't some of your church upbringing culture, that's okay. As a preacher, when you say amen, that tells me that you're tracking, that you're engaged. As a member, when you say amen, I'm instructed that whatever was just said or sung, it resonated with your soul.

And perhaps it should have resonated with my soul as well. Okay, that's all saying that. But whether out loud or not, okay, whether out loud or not, you're off the hook if you don't say it out loud, you ought to be tracking along so that your soul can continually be declaring amen to what was said or sung.

The corporate worship service is participatory. We're seeking to engage spirit and mind in Christ exalting worship.

Thank you, Max. So this is one way, our participation in the corporate gathering. This is a way that we love the Lord our God with all of our hearts and souls and mind and strength.

And he is worthy of that kind of love, is he not? Okay, so we've learned from God's word today, the greatness of a spiritual gift is defined by what builds up the body. Building up the body requires intelligibility.

[36:19] Building up the body engages the spirit and the mind and here is the fourth and the final point. Okay, fourth and final point. God uses his intelligible word to save sinners.

This is awesome. Okay, I'm excited about this point. Paul says in verse 20, brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.

Now, as Jordan preached last week, the whole letter, Paul has been seeking to redefine for the Corinthians what spiritual maturity actually is. They thought they were spiritually mature, and Paul exposes over and over again how they're actually totally missing the mark.

And this climax is in chapter 13, and in verse 11 of that chapter, Paul was gently exhorting the Corinthians to put off their selfish, childish ways, and to put on the mature, adult way of what? Christlike love. Now, you might object here and say, and we were just talking about this in our equipping class, but doesn't Jesus tell us to be like children? Yes, he does, right?

[37:30] There are ways that we're called to be like children. We're to come to Jesus without pretense, right? Children come without pretense. Children come in humble neediness, and they know that they're going to get the help that they need from their parents or from another adult.

So, there are ways we're called to be like children. Paul highlights here how we're to be like children in evil. Not that children don't sin, but that we should be innocent of evil, blameless.

But, when it comes to our thinking, Paul says, we're called to maturity, to think biblically, to think, as he said in chapter two, we have the mind of Christ.

He wants us to put that mind on. think maturely. And now he's going to go give the Corinthians a mature way to think with regards to tongues and prophecy. Look at verse 21.

In the law it is written, by people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.

[38:43] Thus, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. This week I learned of about seven different ways that these verses are understood.

If you're interested in learning about some of those, come talk to me. But I'm interested in talking about what seems most logical based on the context of Paul's letter and of the Bible as a whole.

That's what we're always seeking to do. What is God saying through this word based on the context that it's in? Whenever scripture is quoting itself, we do well to start by reading the quoted scripture in its context so we can understand how it's being used by the biblical author.

That's just a good Bible reading tip. Paul is citing here Isaiah chapter 28 verses 11 12. Isaiah 28. Now we were in Isaiah in the fall.

We weren't in Isaiah 28 though. In Isaiah 28, God through his prophet Isaiah is, surprise surprise, indicting Israel for her persistent sin and rebellion.

[39:55] And the priests and the prophets are scoffing at Isaiah's message as essentially being like baby talk to them. And in comic irony, which is all over the prophets, Isaiah declares that because of their sin, God's judgment is going to befall them and that's going to be signified by them hearing what sounds like baby talk in the streets.

That is, a foreign oppressor having conquered Israel will be speaking a language that they do not understand. Now of course, this comes to pass when Israel falls to Assyria in 722 BC.

Okay? Because God's word always comes to pass. Amen? God's word always comes to pass. It happened. Isaiah prophesied it. It happened in 722 BC. Check your history books. The unintelligible tongue speaking would be to Israel a negative sign of what?

Of judgment, right? Against, well, because of their sin, because of their unbelief. On the flip side, the intelligible prophetic word was a positive sign of favor for believers.

They could hear, they could understand the message with an opportunity to respond in faith. Or it solicited, it elicited faith in unbelievers, calling them to repentance.

[41:20] So you have this negative sign of judgment, this positive sign of favor, and a calling to respond in faith. Okay, here's how Paul then applies that principle to the Corinthians.

So knowing the context of Isaiah 28, it helps us understand what Paul's doing here. If therefore, look at verse 23, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?

Okay, so here I think the outsiders are likely synonymous with unbelievers. Okay, they come into the gathering, but I mean, even if it's just somebody that's visiting, coming in, okay, they come into

the gathering, they hear only unintelligible tongue speaking.

What are they going to do? They're going to say, y'all are nuts, and they're going to leave, right? Now think for a second what just happened. Okay, let's think about what goes on when that happens.

The sinner who stands condemned before a holy God who needs to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. They just left the one place where that message should be clearly on display, right?

[42:36] This is the power of God for salvation, Romans 1.16. They just walked out. They heard nothing but nonsense in the corporate gathering. They've had no opportunity to repent, no opportunity to put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.

That is a tragedy. That's what Paul is getting at. But, now check this out. Look at verse 24. If all prophesy, meaning, back to our definition, revelation from God, it's intelligibly spoken to build up the saints.

If all do that and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all. He is called to account by all. The secrets of his heart are disclosed and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

What has just happened? What just happened? That sinner, right? The sinner who is under just condemnation. They are dead in their trespasses.

They're bound for an eternity in hell. They walk into the room, right? Now, maybe they were invited by one of you. Maybe they heard music and they're a few floors above us and they heard music and just wandered.

[43:52] Maybe their grandmother has been praying for them for 30 years and they just decided they need to get into a church. Whatever it is, they come here in the gathering of the saints and, you know, the music leader, he speaks an intelligible word that they can understand.

It points them to Christ. It points them to the sovereignty of God. The music, it's saturated with gospel truth. Maybe a brother or sister, like we had last week, shares a testimony about how God has worked powerfully in their lives.

During the praying, maybe they sense that that guy up front is actually talking to a real person, the living God. And the sermon just lays out the simple gospel in understandable terms.

That everyone was born separated from God in sin, needing a savior, and God provided that savior in the person of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins, who rose again on the third day, who offers us eternal life in his name if we just repent and believe.

And through all of these intelligible means, the word of God, what happens? We see it here. It enters that person's mind. The spirit of God breathes his life-giving breath into their hearts and says, live.

[45:13] That's what happens. The scales fall from their eyes, and in repentance and faith, they turn to Jesus, us for the salvation of their soul. They have encountered the living God in the midst of the saints.

They have seen the Lord Jesus Christ, and faith unto eternal life has been awakened inside of their hearts. For faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ, Romans 1.17.

And you know, this miracle, this rebel-turned worshiper, is exactly what was foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament. On Paul's mind, and Paul knew the Old Testament better than any of us ever will.

On his mind is Isaiah 45 in particular, which we looked at in the fall. You know, in that prophecy, God extends this worldwide invitation. He says, turn to me and be saved.

All the ends of the earth. Worldwide invitation. And a little later, he says, to me, we were just singing this, to me, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, or every tongue shall swear allegiance.

[46:29] Earlier in that chapter, Isaiah 45, Isaiah depicts a future scene in which the Gentiles from all nations, they will respond to that call. They will flock to Israel, Israel, and they will declare, surely God is in you, and there is no other, no God besides him.

And saints, it is through the gospel of Jesus Christ that this prophecy in Isaiah 45 is being fulfilled all the time. It has been fulfilled for the last 2,000 years as sinners encounter God in Christ through his

intelligible word.

And in repentance and faith, they receive eternal life. Isn't that your story? Isn't that my story, saints, of coming to faith in Jesus? So if we take Paul's point here from the last set of verses, and we combine it with the rest, this is what we have from this text here.

When we gather, God wants the saints to build each other up through the clearly spoken, the intelligible, the clearly spoken word, which manifests his presence and draws sinners to himself. Now I want to press this just into two final points of application as we close. Notice the call here to a radically outward focus, outward focus in corporate worship.

[47:55] I mean, this comes through clear as crystal in this passage, that I should not enter corporate, the corporate gathering looking at me, looking at myself, right?

I should enter focused on three primary things, the glory of God in Christ, the building up of the body, the salvation of the lost. Those are the three chief aims that we have when we gather. And saints, the thing is, if all of us have that mindset, then each of us will be edified when we gather together, right? Like we ought not come here thinking, how are they going to build me up today? How are they going to minister to my needs? Now I get, we go through seasons where we are in dark places, which again, we were singing about before, and we need the saints to help build us up. But our mindset ought to be, how can I build up the body in love? If everyone had the self-centered way of thinking, just think for a second, if everybody came in, how are they going to build me up?

[49:03] Nobody gets edified. Everyone's thinking about how somebody else is going to build them up. But when everyone manifests true spiritual maturity, which is love, which is the outward facing heart of Christ, then everybody actually is edified.

It's counterintuitive, right? It runs contrary to our flesh. It runs contrary to worldly thinking, and it's a manifestation of Christ in our midst, is what it is.

It's a display of the gospel among us. So church, let us prayerfully prepare ourselves every Sunday to gather with these chief aims in view.

And let's teach our children, like this is why we come to church. It's to worship Christ. It is to build up the body. It is to call the lost to faith in his name, and faith in Jesus' name.

Radically outward focus. The second thing, notice the last five words. Here's a five-word sermon. Notice the last five words of this passage. God is really among you.

[50:09] You know, what is right there, a declaration of the newcomer, that ought to be the desire and the delight of the saints. God is really among us.

God is really among us. God is really among us. God is really among us. This ordinary gathering of the saints, it's anything but ordinary. Church, the living God is here.

The living God is among us. So let's come, brothers and sisters, let's come here with an expectation. We are going to encounter the living God as we gather.

And I mean, if we aren't going to do that, why are we even here? If God is not among us, you might as well stay home in your pajamas. Okay? You might as well just go out for brunch or watch sports or just play pickleball, whatever you want to do.

Why would you come here if he's not here? But he is here. He is here. God is here. This is where he promises to reveal himself in power in the gathering of the saints.

[51:16] And over and over again in this book, we find that God's ways confound the wisdom of this world. We want power. He comes in weakness.

We want military conquest. He suffers and dies on the cross. We choose the rich and the famous. He chooses the lowly and despised.

We want spectacular. He just wants intelligible speech. Church, here in this upside-down kingdom that so confounds the world, the living God rules and reigns to build his church in defiance of the gates of hell.

Nobody could have thought this up. Nobody. So to him alone be all the glory. Please pray with me.