



For The Sake Of Others

1 Corinthians 14:1–19 ~ 1/23/22 ~ Grace Church of Lockeford

Introduction

› Blow Trumpet

Anyone blessed by that one note?

Anyone benefitted? Encouraged? Strengthened?

Let me try again.

Let me play Amazing Grace.

How was that?

It wasn't Amazing Grace, was it?

The purpose of playing an instrument is for a recognizable and pleasing tune or melody to be produced.

When that doesn't happen, it doesn't benefit anyone.

It is at best an irritant, and at worst, a harmful noise.

My ability to play the trumpet was given to me to bless others.

It is for the enjoyment and pleasure of those who hear.

Playing it incorrectly violates the purpose for which the instrument was created.

Here is the spiritual application of this truth.

All who have trusted in Jesus have a spiritual gift.

That gift was given for the benefit of others.

When we use it incorrectly, we violate the very purpose of the gift.

In this section of 1 Corinthians, Paul is answering questions from the Corinthian church regarding spiritual things.

In Chapter 12 Paul begins to explain the purpose and use of Spiritual gifts.

He addressed the purpose in ch. 12, the priority in ch. 13, and now here in ch. 14 he addresses the practice of spiritual gifts.

The purpose of Spiritual gifts is to build and bond the body.

The priority of Spiritual gifts is love, not personal advancement.

Now, we come to the practice of spiritual gifts.

How are they to be used?

What is the goal?

Principle:

Our Spiritual gifts exist for the growth of the body of Christ.

Guidance:

As we seek to develop growth in the body we pursue three goals.

Outcome:

When the body of Christ matures Christ is glorified, lives are transformed, and sinners become saints.

As we seek to develop growth in the body of Christ we pursue three goals.

Goal #1...

1. Your Gift Is To Build Up Others vv. 1-5

Raise your hand if you know what a stair stringer is.

The first time I heard that term, I was working on a friends deck and he asked me if I knew how to cut a stringer.

I think the blank look on my face said it all.

A stringer looks like **this**.

You use it in building to put your stairs on.

The whole point of a stringer is to provide support so you can get to the next level.

That is how our Spiritual gifts are to work.

We provide support to one another so that together we can reach the next level.

We build one another up.

When it comes to building one another up there are two negative realities.

We can only build up others as we understand these.

Negative reality #1...

a. Not everything builds vv. 1-3

The first time I tried to cut a stair stringer on my own I somehow miscounted and left off a whole step.

That won't get anyone to the next level.

We need to recognize that not everything builds other people up.

› Look at v. 1.

1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV

¹ Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.

“Pursue” is an active imperative.

We are to actively pursue love.

We don't wait for it to happen, or wait for it to be formed in us, we pursue it!

We seek after it and hunt it down.

Spiritual gifts are to be desired.

This word speaks of having a passion, enthusiasm, and zeal for them!

Spiritual gifts are not a boring hum-drum thing.

They are exciting!

They are to be exercised with passion!

However, above both of those things, pursue and desire prophecy.

Epecially – μάλλον (mallon) *instead; more; rather. More (extent) – to a greater degree or extent. Comparative adverb.*

This word is a comparative adverb which means that our pursuit of, and desire for prophecy is to exceed our pursuit of love or desire for gifts.

Prophecy is not primarily foretelling the future.

It is the proclamation of God's truth.

Prophecy – προφητεύω (prophēteuō) *prophecy. To prophecy (inspired) – to make a representative declaration of the mind, will, or knowledge of a god, as in his agency, under his influence, or indwelt by him. Finite verb, present, active, subjunctive, second person, plural.*

This is what we do in preaching.

The ability proclaim God's truth should be sought.

Not tongues, but prophecy, or preaching, is the most important gift for the church today.

These are the tools we build with.

Love, spiritual gifts, and prophecy.

When it comes to building, prophecy is primary.

Love is a part of it, but we cannot build people up if we are not teaching them truth.

What does this mean?

It means this.

Preaching the truth of God's Word is vital for the health and growth of the church.

It is the most important spiritual gift.

Why?

Look at verse 2.

1 Corinthians 14:2 NKJV

² For he 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.

Why is this a big deal?

Because it violates the purpose of the church.

The church exists to build up, mature, and grow the body of Christ.

If no one can understand you, that cannot happen.

The task is understanding.

Tongues are all well and good, but they do not build others because they are not understood.

Tongues are always languages that exist in the world.

Here, the problem is that no one in the congregation speaks it!

This is cast in a negative light.

If you are speaking in a language that no one understands, you are benefiting no one.

They don't understand, they can't make sense of what he is saying.

Though his spirit may be speaking mysteries, it isn't profitable.

“Spirit” here is translated with a small “s”.

It is understood as referring to the human spirit.

The spirit of the one doing the speaking.

He is speaking mysteries, but they do not benefit others because they cannot understand.

1 Corinthians 14:3 NKJV

³ But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

In contrast to the exclusively personal benefit of speaking in tongues when no one understands the language seen in v. 2; prophecy is beneficial all the time.

Prophecy or preaching has three positive effects here in v. 3.

Edification, exhortation, comfort.

Edification – οἰκοδομή (oikodomē) *building; edification. Building up – the act of bringing something closer to fullness or completion; understood as if assisting in the construction of an incomplete building.* Direct object, noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

This is what preaching does for the body of Christ, the church!

It brings us closer to completion, to maturity.

Exhortation – παράκλησις (paraklēsis) *comfort; encouragement. Exhortation – the act of earnestly supporting or encouraging (a response or action).* Direct object, noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

This is the effect that preaching has on the believer.

It encourages us to continue in the faith being steadfast and immovable!

Comfort – παραμυθία (paramythia) *consolation. Consolation (act) – the act of giving relief in affliction.* Direct object, noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

God's Word is what gives relief in affliction!

If someone is going through a trial, walking up to them and speaking in a language they don't understand is not going to provide comfort!

What they need is to be fed by the food of the Word!

Here is the summary.

Pursue love, desire spiritual gifts but remember that preaching is primary.

Preaching is primary because it can be understood and it builds people up!

When we preach we do three things.

Teach them, encourage them, care for them.

Tongues do not build up, preaching does.

Therefore, preaching is primary.

Prophecy, the proclamation of God's truth, is more important than tongues.

Two negative realities we must understand to build others up.

Negative reality #1: Not everything builds.

Negative reality #2...

b. Not everything is equal vv. 4-5

1 Corinthians 14:4 NKJV

⁴ He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

Stated here is the reality that speaking in tongues edifies yourself.

How?

The speaker is blessed by having the Holy Spirit speak through them.

They are praising or praying in the spirit.

The problem is this.

It does no good for anyone else.

The word “but” is contrastive here.

In contrast to self-edification, a preacher edifies the church.

The whole point of prophecy is that it builds up the church.

Church – ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia) *assembly; church. Church – an orderly congregation specifically of those who trust in Jesus as the Messiah (or those who compose it).* Direct object, noun, accusative, singular, feminine.

So here is the contrast.

The one who speaks in tongues edifies himself.

The one who speaks prophecy edifies the church.

This is a really really important point because of the stated purpose of Spiritual gifts.

Go with me to [Ephesians 4:11-16](#).

To speak in church and only build yourself up is to violate and abuse the gift you have been given!

It was given for the purpose of building up the church!

Not yourself.

Therefore, if no one can understand the language being spoken, it is meaningless, keep silent.

Paul is very clear.

The purpose of Spiritual gifts according to *ch. 12* and [Eph. 4](#) is the edification of the body of Christ.

Someone who speaks in tongues without an interpreter only edifies themselves.

Therefore.

To speak in tongues without an interpreter is an exercise of sinful pride, it has no desire to edify the church.

The focus is self-promotion.

Look at verse 5.

1 Corinthians 14:5 NKJV

⁵ I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

The result of prophecy is the edification of the church.

Someone speaking in tongues edifies himself and not the church.

Our gifts were given for the benefit of all!

Paul has an earnest desire in *v. 5* that the Corinthians be able to speak in tongues.

He wants them to speak in languages.

Why?

For evangelistic purposes!

He wants people to hear the gospel and be saved!

However, in the church, Paul has a different desire.

“Even more” is the same word used in *v. 1*, translated “especially”.

Paul wants them to speak in tongues, but more than that, he wants them to prophesy.

Why?

Because.

Preaching edifies the church.

Therefore, it is greater than speaking in languages.

Especially if there is no interpreter!

The goal of a church assembly is for the people to be edified.

Prophecy is greater.

This is a comparative statement.

There is also an exception given.

Unless there is one who interprets.

The “he” who speaks in languages is different than the “he” who interprets.

Again, we see a clear statement.

The goal is the edification of the church.

If there is no interpreter, no one is edified and therefore tongues should not be used.

Preaching is greater than tongues because it directly edifies the body of Christ.

Tongues only bring edification if there is an interpreter.

The force of Paul’s argument here is that we should endeavor to prophesy or to preach rather than speak in a language no one can understand.

The goal is the edification of the church.

This brings us to our lesson.

In the church, preaching is most important.

What a blessing to know that God’s desire is for us to be built up!

The proclamation of the truth of God’s Word is the responsibility of every believer.

This is not just the pastor’s job or that of the elders.

Every believer needs to proclaim the truth of God’s Word.

It is God’s Word that builds us up.

As we seek to develop growth in the body of Christ we pursue three goals.

Goal #1: Your gift is to build up others.

Goal #2...

2. Your Gift Is To Benefit Others vv. 6-12

When I was young my mom read us the **little** house on the prairie books by Laura Ingalls Wilder.

There is much I have forgotten from the books but one particular story has stayed with me.

For Christmas Laura and her sister Mary were given chocolate.

Mary shared hers and it was all gone within a few days.

Laura hid hers and ate it a little bit at a time until one day she went to eat it and found it covered with ants.

When we share something, it benefits others.

When we refuse to share, the gift is often corrupted.

That is how Spiritual gifts are.

They were given for the benefit of the entire body of Christ.

If we are going to use our gifts for the benefit of others there are two foundational strategies we employ.

Two foundational strategies.

#1. Be understood. Why? Because...

a. Only what is understood benefits vv. 6-9

1 Corinthians 14:6-9 NKJV

⁶ But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?

⁷ Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played?

⁸ For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?

⁹ So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

There is an underlying assumption in these verses.

Here it is.

We communicate to be understood.

When we are understood, there is a benefit to the other person.

Conversation, in its purest form, adds value to the lives of others.

If what we say is not understood, if it is not adding value to the lives of others, we shouldn't say it.

Notice what Paul said in verse 6.

“What shall I profit you?”

The implication is that if you cannot understand, there is no profit.

Profit – ὠφελέω (ōpheleō) *benefit; aid; profit. to benefit v. — to be beneficial for.* Finite verb, future, active, indicative, first person, singular.

The whole goal is to benefit the church!

There needs to be revelation, knowledge, prophesy, or teaching in order for people to benefit.

Let's run through what those are.

Revelation - the communication of knowledge previously hidden.

Knowledge - the imparting of something learned or reasoned.

Prophesying - the declaration of the mind will or knowledge of God.

Teaching - the explanation of and instruction in sound doctrine.

These benefit the church if and only if they are communicated in a language that is understood by those present!

Plainly stated, here is Paul's argument.

Tongues do not benefit the church.

We don't come to church to get a spiritual feeling!

We come to learn, to grow, and to fellowship.

All of those things require understanding.

To illustrate his point, Paul turns to the area of music in vv. 7-8.

We play music so that people are blessed and benefit.

We blow the trumpet to call people to battle.

These situations are ruined if there is no understanding.

If all the notes played by flute or harp sound the same, there is no benefit or blessing.

If those who hear the trumpet don't understand what is being played, they will not respond.

Paul applies the illustration in v. 9.

The goal of speaking is to communicate.

If people cannot understand what we say, there is no point.

There are two applications here.

1 - Speaking gibberish or an unknown language has no practical benefit to those who hear.

2 - Using big words without explanation has no practical benefit to those who hear.

Both errors are to be avoided!

If I get up here to preach and speak in Portuguese, I can't but if I could, it would not benefit you!

In the same way, if I get up here and only use big theological words and never explain them, I am not using my gift of teaching to your benefit!

Only what is understood benefits!

Here is our lesson.

Speak with clarity and purpose.

We want to benefit others, therefore, we want to be understood.

Two foundational strategies to benefit others.

#1. Be understood. Why? Because only what is understood benefits.

#2. Be intentional. Why? Because...

b. Only what is intentional benefits vv. 10-12

Look at vv. 10-11.

1 Corinthians 14:10–11 NKJV

¹⁰ There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them *is* without significance.

¹¹ Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks *will be* a foreigner to me.

Many languages exist and are significant in parts of the world, however, if we cannot understand someone, it makes the language useless.

The idea of the word “foreigner” here is that of being incomprehensible to one another.

Again, the issue is that of benefit.

We cannot benefit one another if we cannot understand one another.

This means that we must be intentional in our speech!

When we go to other nations, we have interpreters.

People who take the incomprehensible words we say in our language and make them comprehensible in the native language of those listening.

Look at v. 12.

1 Corinthians 14:12 NKJV

¹² Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel.

Spiritual gifts were given to benefit the church.

If your zeal, your enthusiasm is for spiritual gifts, great!
But seek, desire, to use those gifts to build up the church!
Let that be what you excel at.

Here is the underlying message.

Don't seek to excel at something that does not benefit the church.

The whole reason we have spiritual gifts is for the church!

Speaking in tongues does not benefit the church.

Our gifts exist for the sake of others.

Therefore, the growth and strength of others is to be our focus.

Intentional service desires the growth of others.

That is how we benefit them!

By using our gifts to encourage and enable their growth!

As we seek to develop growth in the body of Christ we pursue three goals.

Goal #1: Your gift is to build up others.

Goal #2: your gift is to benefit others.

Goal #3...

3. Your Gift Is To Bless Others vv. 13-19

Here is where Paul applies what he has just said.

In light of the reality that we need to be understood to benefit others.

What do we do about tongues?

What should be our desire as we communicate in the church?

The reality of Spiritual gifts is this.

When we use our gifts, there is blessing.

The body of Christ functions best when it functions together!

Missing even the smallest piece hinders the body.

Andrew got a remote controlled car for Christmas.

Somehow in the process of getting it home, the controller broke.

We took it apart and the piece that broke was a tiny tiny little part.

Yet that's all it took for the controller not to work.

No matter how "small" or how "large" your gift may be, it is vital to the proper function of the body of Christ.

The body is blessed when you and I use our gifts.

There are two types of blessing we experience when we use our gifts.

Type #1...

a. Personal blessing vv. 13-15

What we learn here is that our personal blessing is impacted by understanding.

If we do not understand what we ourselves are saying, we cannot be blessed by what is coming out of our mouths!

› Look at vv. 13-14.

1 Corinthians 14:13–14 NKJV

¹³ Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

Again the focus is on understanding.

Here, however, Paul makes it clear that there is not even a benefit for the one doing the speaking when tongues are involved.

If you speak in tongues, pray for the ability to interpret, to understand them.

Why? Because.

You must know what is being said in order to grow from it.

There can be no growth where there is no understanding.

You can pray in a tongue and have your spirit pray along, but if your understanding is lacking even this is unfruitful.

Understanding – νοῦς (nous) *mind. mind n. — that which is responsible for one's thoughts and feelings; especially the seat of the faculty of reason.* Noun (subject), nominative, singular, masculine.

If our mind is not engaged when we are praying, it accomplishes nothing.

It is unfruitful.

This understanding drives the conclusion in v. 15.

1 Corinthians 14:15 NKJV

¹⁵ What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

Praying and singing are acts of worship.

We cannot render true worship to God if we have no idea what we are saying!

Everything Paul has said in these three verses are focused on personal blessing.

For there to be blessing when we pray and sing praise to God, there must be understanding.

We can learn a song in another language, we can mimic the sounds and intonations, but until we know what the words mean, our mind is not engaged and therefore it is not fruitful.

Paul's conclusion is that in our singing and our praying, understanding is best.

This means that tongues as a prayer language is also unbiblical.

Why?

Because it is not fruitful.

Tongues cannot build up the body of Christ!

That is the clear meaning here.

Now, the question is going to be asked, what about speaking in tongues with an interpreter?

We won't get to that question today, but it is answered in this chapter.

So, stick around and we will get there. :)

Here is our lesson.

I am blessed only by what I can understand.

I have to know the meaning of what I am saying and singing for it to be beneficial.

There is no spiritual fruit produced when our minds are not engaged in what we are singing or praying.

There are two types of blessing we experience when we use our gifts.

Type #1: Personal blessing.

Type #2...

b. Corporate blessing vv. 16-19

› Look at vv. 16-17

1 Corinthians 14:16–17 NKJV

¹⁶ Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

¹⁷ For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Here Paul brings things back around to the core of his argument.

He started with the idea that we need to use our gifts to edify the church.

He made it clear that tongues don't do that.

Here he enforces that reality.

“Bless with the spirit” is a euphemism here for speaking praise or prayer to God in tongues.

If I am praising God or praying in a language no one present speaks, how can anyone say amen?

Paul is talking here about a corporate worship setting.

If I am praising God and praying but no one understands what I am saying, they cannot say amen.

This is a problem because it leaves the body of Christ without the edification that Spiritual gifts are ment to produce!

You may be giving thanks, but no one is being edified.

As a reminded: **Edification**, the building up of the church, is why spiritual gifts exist.

The blessing of the corporate body of Christ is dependent on being able to understand what is being said.

We are to give thanks in the corporate worship setting.

This needs to be in a language those present can understand so that they can say amen.

This act of giving thanks and saying amen is something that brings growth, edification, to others in the body of Christ.

Verses 18-19 are the last two verses we will look at this morning.

They are key to understanding Paul's teaching on tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:18–19 NKJV

¹⁸ I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;

¹⁹ yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Paul spoke in tongues more than any Corinthian, yet his desire was to speak understandable words in the church.

This tells us something important.

Paul's use of tongues was primarily outside the corporate gathering of the church.

Where did Paul use them?

Come back next week to find out. :)

Here's the point.

When Paul spoke to the church, he wanted to be understood.

To advance in the Christian life we must understand, we must be taught.

If we cannot understand the teacher, there is no point in having them teach!

There is more value in 5 words people can understand than 10,000 words that are in a language they do not know.

Here is our lesson

The church is blessed when truth is clearly communicated.

Speaking in tongues does not clearly communicate anything.

Your spiritual gift and mine has been given to us for the sake of others.

We are to bless others, care for others, and build up others.

How are we using our gifts?

Are we using them?

Conclusion

We must use our gifts for the sake of others.

We are gifted to build, benefit, and bless others.

Are we doing it?

COMMITMENT:

I will use my gift to build up the body of Christ.

There are three parts to this commitment.

1 - Know what your gift is.

Come to Sunday School. We will be working on this.

2 - Begin using your gift.

This means getting involved, serving.

3 - Focus on building up others.

This requires intention and self-denial.

This starts in our closest relationships.

If unmarried, starts in friends and family.

Are you building them up?

What about in the church?

Do you build up the body?

Be an encouragement!

If you have children, build them up.

According to both secular and Christian research the ratio of praise to criticism needs to be at least 5 to 1.

That means for everything we criticize our children for, we need to praise them for 5 other things.

There is no age limit on this.

If you are married, build up your spouse.

Encourage them.

Love them how they need to be loved.

Pay attention to them.

Notice their needs and meet them.

We have been gifted to build up the body.

Are we doing it?

4 thoughts and we close.

Every spiritual gift is necessary for the health of the local church.

This means we need you.

Every spiritual gift will manifest according to the uniqueness of the individual.

This means we don't get to say "well someone else is already serving with my gift."

WRONG!

You are the gift.

Every spiritual gift is meant to serve others.

This means that we harm others when we do not use our gift.

Use your gift for the glory of God and the good of the church.