

Mosaic: Unused is as bad as Misused (5)
1 Corinthians 14:12-19, Week of March 4, 2018
Bay Park Life Groups – Leader

The 'secular' world has starved us of spirituality, and many are now eager for any kind of 'supernatural' or 'spiritual' manifestation, any sense of a power or life-source beyond the material world.

~ N T Wright¹

The highest expression of the Spirit is self-sacrificing love.

~ Luke Timothy Johnson²

1 Corinthians 14 (vv 15, 19 & 28) debunks the common myth that it's of God if I loose control. God gave us hearts and minds and wants us to use both equally in the exercise of our spiritual gifts.

~ Sunday Sermon

Warming up . . .

1. Which of the above quotes resonates most with you and why?

Digging in . . .

Read 1 Corinthians 14:12-19 together

The Greek word *glōssa* means *tongue* or *language*. In the New Testament the word is used to describe:

- The tongue as a body part (cf Mark 7:33-35, James 3:5)
- Language in terms of a spoken dialect (cf Revelation 5:9, 14:6)
- Communication produced by the tongue (cf 1 Peter 3:10, James 3:6)

The gift of tongues in the New Testament falls into two categories:

- Supernatural ability to speak a foreign language (Acts 2:5-13)
- Supernatural ability to speak a heavenly language (1 Cor 13:1, 14:2, 9-13)

2. Finish one of the following:

- My first experience with tongues was . . .
- I was taught that tongues . . .

3. In groups of 2-3 take a few minutes to answer the following:

- What does 1 Corinthians 14:12-19 teach us about the gift of tongues?
- About spiritual gifts in general?

Share your top 2-3 answers with your group.

¹ N T Wright, *Paul for Everyone, 1 Corinthians*, (Society of Christian Knowledge, March 2003)

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*, (Fortress Press, 2010) p 275

Leaders

- The misuse of tongues did not lead Paul to conclude they should be banned (v 39). Rather, Paul instructed in their proper use. This applies to all spiritual gifts from leadership to healing. Just because the gifts get misused doesn't mean we should avoid or ignore them.
- In the context of vv 12-19, tongues appear to have been practiced as a heavenly prayer and praise language (vv 14, 19). Paul made it clear that corporate church gatherings are for mutual edification not personal validation or glorification. Paul went so far as to say no tongues in a corporate setting unless there's an interpreter (1 Cor 14:13, 27-28). All gifts are to be used for the building up of others and not ourselves (1 Cor 12:7, 13:1-3, 14:12, 19)
- Tongues are not an indication of salvation, indwelling of the Holy Spirit, or spiritual maturity (which some denominations teach). Every generation and denomination needs to be careful not to single out one gift as "the gift" be it knowledge, teaching, music, leading etc.
- Loss of control does not equal Spirit filled. The use of any gift is to be done with our spirit and understanding/mind (15). This same principle can be seen throughout the Bible. Those God called and anointed were in full control of their actions and choices. So much so that they sometimes resisted God's anointing (ex Moses, Jonah).
- Not using our gifts is as much a problem as misusing them. Every Christian is responsible for using their gifts to build up the church (vv 19, 26).

Historically many Baptist churches use to preach "cessationism." Cessationism is the believe that God has permanently done away with certain "sign gifts" like tongues. Most theologians, including those with Baptist leanings, argue that such definitive statements are not biblical or helpful. Just because gifts are abused, or in apparent disuse, doesn't mean God can't or won't use them ever again. A good thorough exegetical examination of this subject can be found at <https://bible.org/article/questions-cessationists-should-ask-biblical-examination-cessationism>

4. Read 1 Cor 14:22-23 and compare it to 1 Cor 14:16 in the ESV:

*Otherwise, if you 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?*

Paul's concern was for the saints and seekers present in any given worship service. Healthy Christian gatherings are a place to grow in Christ as well as to discover Christ. How can we do a better job of communication for the sake of seekers on Sundays and weekdays in our LifeGroups?

Be sure to record your top answers and have someone from your group share them with Randy Hawley (randy.hawley@baypark.ca)

5. Some have called the church in Corinth, "Dysfunction Junction." There were leadership factions, jealousies, rivalries, immorality, law suites and misuse of spiritual gifts. Instead of starting over, the Apostle Paul chose to love this church he planted. He persevered with them through all their dysfunction. That means there's hope for us too friends!

At the root of their dysfunction was an immature understanding of what love is, and what love does. Love is laying down your life for others, even when they aren't doing the same for you. That's why 1 Cor 13 lands in the middle of 1 Cor 12 & 14. *Because of their lack of mature love, God's gifting led them to places their character wasn't ready to handle.* It's easy for us to see how this applies to public gifts like teaching and leadership. But it also applies to behind the scenes gifts like serving, administration and encouragement. Our serving, administering or encouraging can become a means of controlling, manipulating or lime lighting.

What can we do to ensure we are maturing in our love so as to using all our gifts and abilities productively?

6. This weeks two gifts are tongues and leadership. Read the descriptions below and discuss the gifts together. Do you know anyone that might have them? Questions about them?

Tongues (glōssa); Tongue or language. The gift of tongues in the New Testament can be broken down into two expressions:

- The ability to speak in other human languages previously unknown to the speaker but understood by listeners (Acts 2:5-13). There are historical accounts of this form of tongue speaking beyond Acts 2. There are also accounts of Christian going to foreign lands to evangelize, fully believing God would grant them the gift of tongues upon arrival. It didn't happen. Given that they had sold most of their stuff to get there, they decided to stay, learn the language and love the people in Jesus' name.
- The ability to speak in heavenly languages not understood by the speaker or listeners (1 Cor 14:2, 14). It's a form of ecstatic speech used in prayer and praise whereby an individual is praying with their heart. Their spirit is mingling with the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26).

Leadership (*proistemi*); Literally to stand before; being in front to move people forward. The gifts is mentioned in Romans 12:8 sandwiched between the gifts of giving and of mercy. Those with the gift of leadership tend to be more visionary and less concerned with the minutia, though this is not an absolute.

The bible teaches that:

- Aspiring to leadership roles is a good thing (1 Timothy 3:1).

- How well a person leads at home determines whether or not they get to lead in church (1 Timothy 3:5).
- Leadership is ultimately about people (1 Thes 5:12)
- Leaders are to be respected and obeyed (1 Thes 5:13, Heb 13:17). In other words they're not God, but using their God given gifts. Their leading won't always be personally pleasing or appealing, but they must answer first and foremost to God.

Driving it home . . .

7. How can we pray for each other . . . in English?