**BCM Bible Study: Jan. 29/30, 2019**

**1 Corinthians 14:1-19: Love at Work in the Church Part 4**

Looking Back: Check in to see if anyone memorized 1 Cor. 13:4-7.

Speaking in Tongues

* Does anyone have any personal experience speaking in tongues or witnessing speaking in tongues?
* What do you know about speaking in tongues? What is your level of comfort with it?

In today’s section, Paul will be talking about three spiritual gifts: prophecy, speaking in tongues and interpretation. **Prophecy** is a word from God given to a human who delivers that message in familiar language. **Speaking in tongues** refers to a spiritual gift when a person speaks to God in an unknown language to God (it could be a foreign language or a language unknown to humans). Some are given the gift of **interpretation**, meaning that they can interpret the meaning of the message spoken in tongues.

Speaking in tongues has long been a part of human history. Even in the Old Testament, there are instances of “utterances” of both Godly and demonic source. The gospels do not discuss speaking in tongues aside from the end of Mark. While Mark 16:9-20 is widely recognized as a later addition to the book, it is evidence that the early church affirmed and experienced speaking in tongues. This is not to say that speaking in tongues should be seen as a surprising phenomenon. Twice in the New Testament (Acts 2:15-21 and 1 Cor. 14:21), the Old Testament is referenced to have predicted that speaking in tongues would occur in age of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible’s most prominent source of examples of speaking in tongues is the book of Acts. Let’s take a moment to read some of these passages:

* Pentecost: **Acts 2:1-13**
* Gentile Pentecost: **Acts 10:44-48**
* Ephesian Pentecost: **Acts 19:1-7**
* What observations can you make about these verses? What did you learn?

Before moving forward into 1 Corinthians, some clarifications are needed. There are two big questions about which modern Christians disagree.

1. **Will tongues cease at some point in history?** Some say that speaking in tongues was a sign meant to authenticate the message of the gospel in the early days of Christianity. After these early days, these people say, the gift has ceased. 1 Cor. 13:8 is often referenced as evidence for this viewpoint. **Response:** Tongues did often accompany large conversions of new people groups (Gentiles, Ephesians, etc.) into the church. For the Jews, this was an authenticating sign that God was bringing these people into the Church. However, this does not mean that authentication was the *purpose* of speaking in tongues. Also, this cannot account for countless records of speaking in tongues throughout the entirety of church history, even from great theologians like Luther and Calvin. Moreover, in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, you will see that Paul allows for speaking in tongues (and he even encourages speaking in tongues in private settings) for purposes other than authenticating the conversion of new people groups.
2. **Will all Christians speak in tongues?** All Christians believe that salvation is accompanied by the Holy Spirit coming to dwell in us. Because of these passages in Acts, some say that this will mean that the indwelling of the Spirit will be accompanied by speaking in tongues. **Response:** This view cannot account for many other instances where tongues do not seem accompany conversion. People would receive the Holy Spirit and nothing is recorded about speaking in tongues (see Acts 4:31, 8:17, 9:17-18). In addition, just because something happened in the Bible does not mean that a precedent is being set for the way things must happen in the future. To set such a precedent, explicit teaching is needed, and the greatest source of teaching comes from 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Tongues in the Church

Let’s recall what Paul has said about tongues so far:

* **1 Cor. 12:7-11**
	+ What do you learn from this passage about how spiritual gifts are appointed?
* **1 Cor. 12:27-13:3**
	+ What does Paul say about whether or not everyone will receive every spiritual gift?
	+ What is Paul’s primary concern in exercising the spiritual gifts?

In chapter 14, Paul will give his most direct teaching about speaking in tongues. **Read 1 Cor. 14:1-5**

* Why does Paul seem to prefer prophecy?
* Under what circumstance would speaking in tongues be helpful like prophecy?
* What does this mean about the different functions of speaking in tongues and prophecy?
	+ Ordinarily, tongues is communication between a person and God [see v.2, 14-17] whereas prophecy is communication from God to person intended to be shared with others.

**Read 1 Cor. 14:6-12** (note that in the NIV v.12 says “excel in gifts that build up the church” which could suggest that some gifts to not build up the church. The intent is that gifts expressed in love do not build up the church and come from a spirit of selfishness.)

* What is Paul’s message? How do his metaphors illuminate what he is saying?
* We know from ch. 12 that the Spirit imparts gifts to each person. Then Paul tell us to seek the higher gifts and in 14:1, Paul tells us to “earnestly desire the spiritual gifts?” (v.1) How does v.12 help us interpret all of what Paul is trying to communicate? What does it look like to desire and seek out the spiritual gifts?

**Read 1 Cor. 14:13-19**

* What distinction is Paul making between the mind and the spirit?
	+ “Spirit” refers to our inner will, not the Holy Spirit. “Mind” refers to intellectual understanding.
* Why is it important to be able to engage the mind as well as the spirit?
* Verse 19 is somewhat shocking in modern church culture. Paul is saying that the building up of others ought to always influence our personal worship. We must always be other-centered, even in worship, for to love God is to love others.
	+ How does this shape the way you think about corporate worship?
	+ How does this shape the way you think about worshipping God throughout each moment of the day?

Conclusion: This is an awkward place to stop, so for a full picture of Paul’s idea, **Read 1 Cor. 14:20-26.** We will dive into the particulars of this passage next week, but for now, note these significant themes in the chs.12-14 so far:

* Speaking in tongues should not be evaluated as a superior gift. All gifts are equally important for the body.
* Not all people will receive all gifts. We can pray for gifts, but the Spirit appoints as he sees fit.
* In exercising all gifts, love should be our utmost concern. If we practice spiritual things in unloving ways, we are not in step with the Spirit.
* Therefore, speaking in tongues in public settings should always be accompanied by interpretation. To do otherwise is not uplifting to others.

Challenge: How can you build up the church this week? Think of a way to build up others with your words or a passage of Scripture. Let this be an act of worship for you.