

## Small Group Study Guide

### *The Gift of Speaking in Tongues*

1 Corinthians 14:1-19

**Introduction:** This past Sunday Steve mentioned that 1 Corinthians 14 doesn't tell us everything we'd like to know about tongues; but that it does tell us everything we need to know. Apparently, there were some in the church at Corinth who had elevated speaking in tongues to a place of supremacy. They believed that if a person didn't speak in tongues that believer was in some way inferior. In this context, Paul's main point is that prophecy is preferable over tongues when the church gathers for corporate worship since understandable speech is what benefits others. Paul urges that the Corinthians should especially desire the gift of prophecy. He doesn't, however, argue that speaking in tongues has no value. And so, with this background, let's consider the nature and value of speaking in tongues.

Steve said:

It's an understatement to say that followers of Christ have very different opinions about the gift of speaking in tongues.

1. Why do you think this is true that believers have very different opinions about the gift of tongues?
  
2. What influences have shaped your opinion of the gift of speaking in tongues?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-19**

3. What are the commands in this passage?
  
4. What does Paul teach about tongues? List the truths that Paul teaches.
  
5. Do you think Paul is primarily positive or negative about the gift of speaking in tongues? Why?

6. How does Paul contrast the gift of tongues with the gift of prophecy?
7. Why does Paul argue that the Corinthians should desire the gift of prophecy more than the gift of tongues?
8. What does Paul mean when he says that the Corinthians should “seek to abound for the edification of the church” (v. 12)? How does this statement relate to spiritual gifts?

Steve said:

***Speaking in tongues is spirit to Spirit communication with God, bypassing the mind yet edifying the speaker.*** Sorry that’s so wonky, but that’s the best way I can describe it. Even though I’ve got a nice, tight description of tongues here, there is tons of mystery that surrounds this gift, and I’m perfect fine with that. But if this is indeed what the gift of tongues is all about, I hope you can see that everyone – both those who have this gift and those who don’t – can appreciate tongues as a good gift of God. There is no reason to take an all-or-nothing, hard-line approach to tongues.

9. How do you respond to this? Are you able to “appreciate tongues as a good gift of God?”

Steve said:

If you do not have the gift of tongues, ***appreciate the gift of tongues as an expression of the goodness of God.*** God only gives good gifts. If God wants to give some the gift of tongues, who am I to object? A believer should no more disparage the gift of tongues than the gift of mercy or leadership or teaching or giving.

10. In what ways is this gift of speaking in tongues sometimes disparaged?
11. How can we avoid doing this?

Steve said:

Some have found that tongues allows them to intercede for others in a unique way. There are times when they don't know what to pray for another person, and so they are led to pray in tongues. Even though they don't understand exactly what they are expressing through tongues, they have the sense that they are praying according to the will of God for the person/issue on their heart. Others have found that tongues allows them to praise God with great freedom and expression. Others have found that during times of great stress, tongues allows them to unburden their hearts in a way that they cannot fully explain. My encouragement is to receive everything God has for you through this gift.

12. If you have the gift of tongues and feel comfortable and free to speak of your experience, how would you affirm or add to what Steve says?