

## Small Group Study Guide

*A Couple of Loose Ends . . .*

1 Corinthians 14

**Introduction:** In the past two studies, we've looked at what Paul had to say in 1 Corinthians 14 about two specific spiritual gifts, speaking in tongues and prophecy. As we've looked at this whole area of spiritual gifts, there appears to be a bit of a contradiction. On one hand we are encouraged to seek spiritual gifts, but on the other hand Paul writes that the Spirit gives gifts as He wills. How do these things fit together? This deserves a closer look. As well, towards the end of chapter 14, Paul makes an interesting comment about women in the church. This too certainly deserves a closer look. And so these two different issues are the focus of this weeks study as we try to wrap up a couple of loose ends.

### **Loose End # 1: Read 1 Corinthians 14:34-35**

1. What commands does Paul give women?
2. How does this strike you?
3. What is the context of this passage? In other words, what does Paul talk about in the verses before and after?
4. How might the context affect how we understand these verses?

Steve said:

There are many different interpretations of these verses. Each of those interpretations has to take into account that in chapter 11 (verses 2 through 16) Paul instructs women to have their heads covered *when* they pray and prophesy. There he is talking about not sending the wrong signals in worship; a woman not covering her head sent a variety of different signals (e.g., that she was available either sexually or relationally). But Paul is acknowledging that it is perfectly acceptable for women to pray and prophesy when the church gathers. That fact needs to be taken into account in interpreting his instruction in chapter 14.

5. If this is not an absolute prohibition against women speaking in the church, what might it be addressing?

## **Loose End #2: Read 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11, 31; 14:1, 12-13**

6. What do these verses teach about spiritual gifts?
7. How does the sovereignty of God (12:7, 11) fit with our desiring and asking for spiritual gifts (12:31; 14:1, 13)?

Steve said:

In Paul's mind there was nothing incompatible between the Spirit sovereignly giving spiritual gifts (chapter 12) and the believer earnestly desiring and praying for spiritual gifts based on his/her understanding of what is needed in that church. When you think about it, there is always this interplay between God's sovereignty and our desiring when we pray. We pray for the things we desire, the things we really want, but we acknowledge God's sovereignty all the while. After all, we are asking God, bringing our requests; we aren't telling God what to do. Whenever we pray we are mindful that God is sovereign and that He can answer yes or no. Our part is to want what God wants and ask accordingly. This – it seems to me – is what Paul is advocating in relation to spiritual gifts: desiring and asking for those gifts that are especially valuable in the body of Christ. We desire and ask, but God can either give or not give according to His sovereign wisdom.

1 Corinthians 14 suggests that we at Faith should ask questions like, "What gifts should we desire so that we might abound for the edification of the church? What gifts will help us pursue our mission of helping people come to faith in Christ and experience God in all of life?"

8. From your observations about Faith EFC, what gifts do you think we, as a church, should desire? Why?
9. How might it affect your motives in asking for a specific spiritual gift if you truly kept the needs of the church in mind in your asking?