

1 Corinthians 14: Putting Tongues in their place

Getting started: Have you ever been in a tongues service? What did you learn or conclude?

Read vv. 1-6 Something better than Tongues

1. What gift does Paul elevate by putting it both first and last in this chapter? (vv. 1, 39). According to verse 1, what should Christians hold as just as valuable as any spiritual gift?
2. Give some reasons prophesy should be preferred over tongues (vv. 2-4). Under what condition would tongues have some redeeming value for the church? (v. 5)
3. If Paul came to the Corinthians, what would be his preferred methods of speaking to them? (v. 6) Why?

Read vv. 7-25 Some weaknesses with Tongues

4. What items does Paul compare tongues speaking to? (v. 7-9) What does tongue speaking in the church result in? (v. 9)
5. When it comes to voices (i.e. languages), when people can't understand each other's voice, what are they considered? (vv. 10-11) What is the only means by which two foreigners can speak to one another with understanding? (v. 13)
6. What conclusion does Paul reach about tongues? (vv. 15-16, 19) Who is Paul referring to with the term 'uninformed' (vv. 16, 23-24)? What is he likely to think if he hears someone speaking in tongues in the church? (v. 23)

7. So if tongues are of little profit in the church, what is their purpose? Where should they be used? (v. 22) What gift is likely to reach the heart of the uninformed? (v. 24-25)

Read vv. 8-13 Some rules governing Tongues.

8. What kinds of things might reasonably be part of Christian worship? (v. 26) What priority should govern the use of each of these activities in public worship?
9. What two rules are given to govern the practice of tongues in the church (vv. 27-28, c.f. v. 13)?
10. What rules should govern the practice of prophesy in the church? (vv. 29-31) What does he mean by "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets"? (v. 32) What subtle hints was Paul casting about tongues by these rules to the prophets?
11. What rules should govern both tongues and prophecy? (v. 34) What does Paul say about persons making up their own rules? (vv. 36-38) What final rule should govern all gifts? (vv. 33, 40)
12. With the obvious weaknesses with tongues and the trouble keeping things orderly in church, why does the text not forbid speaking in tongues?