

Discovering the Voice of the Lord
A Study in the Gifts of Prophecy and Tongues
Discovering the Supernatural - Part 4
1 Corinthians 14:1-25

Introduction

- **Weird External God Talk** - We are going to talk about some weird stuff today. External communication from God. God speaking through people.
 - **I do not have it all figured out in this area** – I am still in process and learning. I have studied this intensely for over a decade and yet I am still growing and discovering. I’m merely teaching in the midst of my learning.
 - **How many of you are familiar with Supernatural Prophecy and Tongues?**
- **Miraculous for Today** – if you are new here and are still sorting out how the supernatural works and maybe have been told that supernatural ministry and miracles are not for today, I recommend two things: 1.) Go back and Listen to Part 1 of this series; 2.) If you want a deep dive, I taught a 4 part series on the Supernatural in 2017. Look on our website for the Faith & Culture Series and there is one on the supernatural. There’s more than enough information there.
- **Re-Imagining Weird** – I’ve mentioned quite a bit that for all of us who call ourselves Christians, the weird ship sailed a long time ago. We are weird. We believe that Jesus rose from the dead. We believe in an invisible all powerful God. We pray aloud to someone we cannot hear. Oddly enough once we are used to something we don’t call it weird anymore and we only put that label on things we are less experienced in. For many of us, reading the Bible is totally a normal thing to do. But have you forgotten what the Apostle Peter said?
 - *2 Pe 1:20–21 – “...no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”¹*
 - **The Bible in your hand is a supernatural book.** It was written by very similar means as to what we are about to talk about today. Apparently we feel find about supernatural revelation as long as we write it down.

All of God’s COMMUNICATION is SUPERNATURAL

Lesson

- **Recap** – Last week in Part 3 of this series, I taught on the Love Chapter, 1st Corinthians 13. Paul the Apostle saw the amazing gifting and anointing that the Corinthian church demonstrated and yet also saw the distortion that was happening because they were not operating completely out of love. Selfishness and pride had taken root and were ruining the blessing that God intended for them. So, right there in the middle of his talk on the supernatural he puts in a HUGE passage on the necessity of love to be mixed with all of our ministry, radically supernatural or otherwise.

¹ Cf. 1 Cor 2:12-16

- **Love & Gifts**
 - **Paul Combines Worlds**
 - **1st Corinthians 14:1a** – *“Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts²,...”*
 - **Love AND Gifts** – Paul talked before and will talk again about the mess that can happen with spiritual gifts. As I mentioned, he took a break to talk about the importance of doing it with love. But here’s the point, it’s not an EITHER/OR, it’s an AND. It’s GIFTS AND LOVE, simultaneously.
 - **The Mess is Worth it³** – pursuing the spiritual gifts has cost me a lot, but I can tell you that I don’t regret any decision I’ve ever made to chase after all the Lord has. But it’s not easy. And wow, is it messy.
 - **My Story and Struggle with the Charismatic World**
 - **The Importance of Experience** - We need more experiences with God in church and in our personal lives.
 - **The Necessity of Spiritual Gifts in Action** – They are how we connect and partner with God on a day by day basis. They are a key tool in how we develop and maintain a personal relationship with God.
 - **What God Gave the Church** - 1 Co 12:28–31 – *“And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts.”*
 - **Teaching Sandwich⁴** - Notice teaching is sandwiched between prophets and miracles. No one thinks that the teaching gift stopped. Neither did the others.
 - **Not Everyone Has These** - Notice that not everyone has every gift, including the ones that we are going to be talking about today.
- **The Greater Gift**
 - **Paul Assesses the Usefulness of Prophecy vs. Tongues**
 - **1st Corinthians 14:1b-5** – *“...especially [earnestly desire] that you may prophesy. ² For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. ³ On the other hand, the one who*

² “The imperative “eagerly desire spiritual gifts,” although it resumes the argument from 12:31, is nonetheless not a precise repetition. The verb remains the same, but the object is no longer “the greater charismata,” but ta pneumatika, which probably means something like “utterances inspired by the Spirit” (see on 12:1). Some have argued for more significant differences between these two words; more likely it is a matter of emphasis. At the end of chap. 12, where he had been speaking specifically of the gifts themselves as gracious endowments, he told them, “eagerly desire the greater charismata.” Now in a context where the emphasis will be on the activity of the Spirit in the community at worship, he says, “eagerly desire the things of the Spirit.” Gordon Fee, NICNT Commentary.

³ “At a time in history when there is a broad range of opinion about speaking in tongues in the church, both its validity and its usefulness, the point of this text needs to be heard again—on both sides of that question. It is sheer prejudice to view Paul here as “demoting” tongues as such. Uninterpreted tongues in the assembly, yes; but for the edification of the believer in private, no. Anyone who would argue that what is spoken to God by the Spirit for the edification of a believer is of little value is hardly reading the apostle from Paul’s own point of view. On the other hand, there is a tendency on the part of some Pentecostals to fall full into the Corinthian error, where a “message in tongues,” interpreted of course, is often seen as the surest evidence of the continuing work of the Spirit in a given community. Paul would scarcely agree with such an assessment. He allows tongues and interpretation; he prefers prophecy.” NICNT

⁴ Cf. Ephesians 4:11-14

prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴ *The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.* ⁵ *Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up."*

- **Prophecy vs. Tongues** – why is Paul matching them up against each other? It's about the situation in Corinth (the context). They were pursuing speaking in tongues because it was extra flashy and considering prophecy less important. Paul explains that the only reason they think that is because they are looking through a selfish lens. IF it's true that all Spiritual gifts are given for the building up of the Body of Christ, and it is, then what gifts should end up higher on the list. The ones that minister to the most, most clearly. All gifts are necessary and valuable, but some gifts are an immediate blessing and others take a bit. Prophecy is an immediate benefit.
- **What They Have in Common** - Prophecy and tongues are God communications to His people. Both are in the context of getting supernatural downloads for the moment (not prepared sermons⁵). Yes they are weird, but they matter. They are supernatural downloads, usually through our thoughts and spirits, giving us His revelation for us to be blessed by and to use to bless others. It is important to note that although they are similar, the purpose of tongues and prophecy is slightly different.
- **We Serve a Continually Communicating God**⁶ – God spoke the world into existence. The Son of God was even called, the Logos, or The Word. The Bible tells us to live by the Word of God like daily bread. It says that we will overcome the Enemy by the Word and our Testimony. It says that the way we get saved is to believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths. God isn't a silent, distant God. He is a talkative, ever-present God. Jesus said that the sheep of God, that's us, follow His voice and know His voice⁷. That means He's still leading us and it's not only through the Bible.
- **What's Prophecy?** – prophecy is a gift from the Lord when He speaks through you. Sometimes He's telling you what's happened, sometimes He's telling you what's happening and sometimes He tells you what's going to happen. The future element is a bit rarer. Usually, it's God revealing something to us that's true right now, but we didn't know it until He says it.
- **The Bible has a bunch of stories of prophecy.** Sometimes they look super normal and sometimes they seem really intense. Let me give you some examples:

⁵ "At the same time Paul's clear preference for prophetic utterances is often neglected throughout the church. By prophecy of course, as the full evidence of this chapter makes clear, he does not mean a prepared sermon, but the spontaneous word given to God's people for the edification of the whole. Most contemporary churches would have to be radically reconstructed in terms of their self-understanding for such to take place."

NICNT

⁶ Gen 1:1-27; Heb 11:3; Jn 1:1; Mt 4:4, 14, 18; Rev 12:11; Eph 6:17; Ro 10:8-10; 1 Jn 4:15 (1 Jn 2:26-27)

⁷ John 10:4

- **The OT Prophetic Big Dogs** - Daniel, Joseph and the majority of Old Testament prophets that wrote books in the Bible had dramatic elements of telling the future and talking for God directly without error.
- **The New Testament Prophets** – in the New Testament we have people sharing prophecy like John the Baptist; Agabus; Jude & Silas, the Four Daughters of Philip, Anna and Paul (along with others).
 - **Prophesying vs. Being a Prophet** – The Bible has different people prophesying one or two times, but not being consistent prophets⁸. There is the OFFICE of Prophet and that means that it's their continual role for the Body of Christ (like I'm a Pastor/Teacher). But the rest of us are able to prophesy here and there but it's not our role.
- **Jesus was a Continual Prophet**⁹ - Jesus said in the Book of John, multiple times¹⁰, that He only spoke what He heard from the Father. That meant all of His teaching was direct prophecy from God. It was not His humanity speaking but God directly. That is why almost all religions at least consider Jesus to be a prophet. Of course we know Him as the Son of God and therefore so much more. Sometimes He spoke of the future, but mostly He talked about what was real, right now.
- **Aren't False Prophets Supposed to be Stoned to death?** – I know that a lot of you were told growing up that if people are prophesying today that they BETTER BE RIGHT because people that don't prophesy accurately are supposed to be stoned. Although that was true in the Old Testament era (Dt 13:1-5), it is NOT TRUE today. We'll talk about that more extensively next week.
- **What're Tongues?** – Tongues are when the Holy Spirit speaks through you in an unknown language. Sometimes that is in a prayer language that is more personal in nature and sometimes that's in a corporate (group) gift that is used in a larger setting, where God is sharing a revelation or truth through a more supernatural packaging (usually linked to prayer and praise specifically¹¹). In other words, sometimes God tells us stuff in English and sometimes He doesn't.
- **Examples of Prayer Language** –
 - **Praying in the Holy Spirit** - Jud 20 – *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,...”*
 - **Defining a Personal Prayer Language**
 - **What is it for?** – Private spirit-based prayer and praise¹². Connection with God spirit-direct, not through the brain.

⁸ Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, Peter cursing Ananias & Sapphira. Even accidental prophecy through Caiaphas the High Priest

⁹ Dt 18:15–22

¹⁰ Jn 8:28; 12:48-50

¹¹ “Such a person is “speaking to God,” that is, he or she is communing with God by the Spirit. Although it is quite common in Pentecostal groups to refer to a “message in tongues,” there seems to be no evidence in Paul for such terminology. The tongues-speaker is not addressing fellow believers but God (cf. vv. 13–14, 28), meaning therefore that Paul understands the phenomenon basically to be prayer and praise.” NICNT

¹² “Such speech by the Spirit is further described in v. 4 as edifying to the speaker. This has sometimes been called “self-edification” and therefore viewed as pejorative. But Paul intended no such thing. The edifying of oneself is not self-centeredness, but the personal edifying of the believer

- **Brain, Emotions & Spirit** – I have detected at least three ways that we commune with God and they all have a different entrance point. Our brains involve our will and our thinking side of things. This is usually connected through revelation either written or spoken. Emotions are reached through experience (e.g. atmosphere, music, feelings, etc.). Spirit is connected (and I mean the spirit of man, not the Holy Spirit) on an entirely spiritual level, which is the hardest to track. It happens in a way that bypasses our intellect and many times our emotions as well. It's the one area that we likely have the least knowledge and understanding of.
- **Connection with God**
- **Release of Intellect – emotional connection**
- **An Added Weapon in Our Arsenal for Supernatural Prayer Breakthrough**
- **Praying in the Spirit**
 - *Ro 8:26–27 – “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*
- **Prayer Language Types:**
 - **1.) Repeated Phrases** – could be emotional gibberish (see Babble Below) or selected phrases from God.
 - **Agreement Repeated Phrases** - Think about how you agree in prayer or how you pray when you are doing other things – I always say, ‘thank you God, thank you God, thank you God. Be praised, Lord. Be praised, Lord, etc.’ Isn’t it kind of the same thing?
 - **Oleg’s Tongues story** – repeated 3 words, shamed, only to be told by a traveling prophet that it’s incredibly powerful short phrase.
 - **2.) Actual unknown Language** (heavenly or earthly doesn’t matter) – it has a meter to it, it’s different words and phrases, it’s continuous.
- **Prayer Language Process for Me** – I have had bad experiences with tongues being prayed over me in the past and they said that it would ‘just come tumbling out’. Now that may be true for a small portion of people but that is not at all what happened to me. I opened, and NOTHING happened. People kept saying that to me through my life. But when I

that comes through private prayer and praise. Although one may wonder how “mysteries” that are not understood even by the speaker can edify, the answer lies in vv. 14–15. Contrary to the opinion of many, spiritual edification can take place in ways other than through the cortex of the brain. Paul believed in an immediate communing with God by means of the S/spirit²⁶ that sometimes bypassed the mind; and in vv. 14–15 he argues that for his own edification he will have both. But in church he will have only what can also communicate to other believers through their minds.” NICNT

began to speak in a prayer language it was more like HUMMING A SONG. It was a continual inspiration to make noise with purpose but I didn't now where it was coming from or where it was going. All I knew was the present. I could shut it off at any time. I could start it at any time. But I was not in control of the inspired song.

- **Examples of the Corporate Gift of Tongues**

- **The Most Famous Example: Pentecost**

- *Ac 2:1–18 – “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.” ¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ “ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.”*

- **Why Drunk and not Educated?** – because it was weird and wasn't coming across as a normal thing. People who were raised religiously conservative (as opposed to charismatic) have had that story cleaned up in their mind as if it was orderly and mellow. It was not. It was ecstatic and passionate and weird.

- **9 years ago, it happened at Bridgeway.** It was the one and only time. A woman spoke loudly in church when I was up at the pulpit. I wasn't in a groove yet and she just spoke out loud. It wasn't in a language that

anyone recognized and so for a split moment it was awkward. Clearly it wasn't a personal message but a message for Bridgeway in general that day. I was just about to say something about it, make sure she was honored in doing so, and letting everyone else know that we hadn't been invaded by aliens, when another voice, this time a man's voice loudly said, 'The Lord says, this place shall be a place of healing. This place will be a place of prayer.' And just like that, we saw the group gift operate in real time, incredibly smoothly and peacefully. Everyone was blessed, albeit a bit weirded out. The man who received the translation, was our very own elder, Dale Johnston, who you just saw on stage a moment ago, far before he became an elder.

- **So, what did the Passage (we just read) tell us about how tongues and prophecy works? Let's re-read it...**
 - **1st Corinthians 14:1b-5** – *"...especially [earnestly desire] that you may prophesy. ²For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. ³On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. ⁵Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up."*
 - **Tongues speaks TO God, not to Men Directly** – it's more of a prayer and praise element. The direction is to the Lord and allowing the Lord to respond as useful.
 - **Prophecy speaks FROM God TO man** – prophecy is different because it's a message from the Lord to people.
 - **People speaking tongues DON'T know what they are saying** – Paul just said that no one understands him and that he utters mysteries IN THE SPIRIT. That is super weird because most of our communication we know how to do it. We've spent our lives trying to shape it to say exactly what we mean. But, that's not always the case.
 - **Baby Talk** – have you ever watched an infant-toddler learning to speak? They are babbling all the time and pointing to stuff assuming that everyone else is in on it. They are sharing their heart about stuff but it's gibberish to the rest of us. But darn it, they are convinced and quite upset when you aren't picking up on it.
 - **Prayer Language Babble?**
 - **People Prophesying Encourage, build up and Console Others¹³** – in other words the **prophecy that is coming through modern day Christians tends to be positive, uplifting and encouraging**. If God has something harsh to

¹³ "The reason for prophecy is that it speaks "edification, exhortation and comfort" to the rest of the people. These three words²⁸ set forth the parameters of the divine intent of prophecy, and probably indicate that in Paul's view the primary focus of a prophetic utterance is not the future, but the present situations of the people of God." NICNT

say He will tend to speak those messages directly. Only in dire circumstances does He speak through someone with the office of a prophet (or really extreme circumstances will use anyone, including a donkey to get his point across).

- **Private Tongues: Prayer Language** – is personal and builds only the speaker up. It's a deeper, spiritual connection thing. (builds up SELF)
- **Prophecy is almost always verbal, public messages to others.** (Builds up Others)
- **Paul wishes ALL OF US spoke in tongues** – why? It's a beautiful connection element to God.
- **Paul wishes EVEN MORE that all of us operated in Prophecy** – why? It's so helpful and powerful.
- **Corporate Tongues WITH Interpretation** – evens the playing field. Because then it becomes another element of prophecy because people are able to be built up because they understand the message.

- **Untangling Tongues**

- **Paul Continues His Explanation and Teaching on Tongues**

- **1st Corinthians 14:6-17** – *“Now, brothers [and sisters], if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? ⁷ If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? ⁸ And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? ⁹ So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, ¹¹ but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.*
 - **How Did Paul Bless Corinth?** – Paul starts talking practically. He said, ‘let’s say that I roll into town and come into your service and all I do is speak in unknown tongues. What will that do for you? Not much. The way that I blessed you, when I came, was that I brought: a revelation or word of knowledge or prophecy or inspired teaching.
 - **Indistinguishable Tongues Don’t Build Up Others** – as awesome as the gift is, when you are speaking a language that no one knows, they aren’t really getting anything out of it, at least not intellectually. It’s the same thing with instruments. You have to hit the right notes that people can understand and that fall into a predictive pattern, like understandable languages, for anyone to be blessed by the song or notification. **Otherwise, it’s kind of a waste of time to get everyone’s attention just to say something they don’t understand.**
 - **Important Note: Correction** – Paul is in the mode of correcting their over focus on tongues. If it was any other church he may have been a lot more encouraging and helpful building up the gift of tongues. But due to the abuse

through pride and arrogance, he needed to knock that gift down a peg or two and clarify why he's doing so.

- *¹² So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. ¹³ Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit¹⁴, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit¹⁵, but I will sing with my mind also. ¹⁶ Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider¹⁶ say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷ For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up."*
- **Manifestations of the Spirit = evidence that the Holy Spirit is here.** How would you know that the Holy Spirit is around you? Would it be chills? That would be a manifestation. Is it tears? Is it a warm feeling? Is it emotion? Is it a miraculous encounter? All of those and so many more, are manifestations of the Spirit.
- **We WANT Those** – we want those. I know that it's tempting if you were raised Cessationist, or maybe conservative Baptist, to think that we can't trust our emotions and we don't want to be led astray by emotionalism. But the truth is, is that **we are emotional human beings and that if we don't have any emotions and experiences our relationship doesn't have any passion. If some of you treated your marriage like you treat your relationship with God, I bet you would get divorced.**
- **My Manifestation Stories**
 - **Heating up right hand** (not left).
 - **Weeping with no emotion** (like at the Wailing Wall and at the Men in HD Retreat). My spirit is doing things but my mind's getting nothing.

¹⁴ "As suggested before, in the present context the difficult wording "my spirit prays" seems to mean something like "my S/spirit prays." On the one hand, both the possessive "my" and the contrast with "my mind" indicate that he is here referring to his own "spirit" at prayer. On the other hand, there can be little question, on the basis of the combined evidence of 12:7–11 and 14:2 and 16, that Paul understood speaking in tongues to be an activity of the Spirit in one's life; it is prayer and praise directed toward God in the language of Spirit-inspiration. The most viable solution to this ambiguity is that by the language "my spirit prays" Paul means his own spirit is praying as the Holy Spirit gives the utterance. Hence, "my S/spirit prays...His answer is that he will do both. On the one hand, "I will pray with my S/spirit," meaning, as vv. 14 and 19 make certain, "I will pray in tongues." Although this is obviously not Paul's present concern, it joins with v. 18 in suggesting that such was his regular practice and that he was edified thereby even if his mind did not enter into such praying." NICNT

¹⁵ "To "praying" Paul adds "singing with the S/spirit" and "with the understanding." Singing was a common part of worship in Judaism and was carried over as an integral part of early Christian worship as well, as v. 26 and Col. 3:16//Eph. 5:19 illustrate. The evidence from Colossians and Ephesians suggests that some of the singing was corporate; the language of these passages²⁸ further indicates that besides being addressed as praise to God, such hymns served as vehicles of instruction in the gathered community. Furthermore, both passages, as well as this one, indicate that some of the singing might best be called "a kind of charismatic hymnody," in which spontaneous hymns of praise were offered to God in the congregation, although some may have been known beforehand. The present passage, as well as v. 26, indicates that some of this kind of singing was "solo." This text also adds a dimension to our understanding of "speaking in tongues." Not only did one pray in this way, but one also praised God in song in this way. Hence the verbs in vv. 16–17 that pick up this theme are "bless" and "give thanks." NICNT

¹⁶ "The alternative is to take the verb in the figurative sense of "one who finds himself in the place or role of an idiōtēs," with the latter word being used in its nontechnical sense to refer to such a person's inability to comprehend the tongues-speaker. This does not mean, as is often suggested, that such people do not have spiritual gifts, so that they are also being "put down" by the one speaking in tongues. Rather, it refers to any and all in the community who become idiōtai to the tongues-speaker—perhaps in the further sense of being "untrained" (cf. Acts 4:13 in the "language" being spoken—precisely because they do not understand what is being said. The reason for the singular is that it corresponds to the second person singular of the person being addressed. Thus, rather than speak to all in the second plural, Paul's point is better made in the singular, with the person addressed representing those speaking in tongues in the community, and the "person taking the place of the unlearned" representing all the rest in the community who at any time must listen to the uninterpreted tongues without understanding. This, after all, is Paul's concern throughout the argument, and is further supported by his own follow-up explanation in v. 17." NICNT

- **Not Falling Down** – I went to a supernatural conference many years back and went up front with a ton of people for anointing prayer and everyone fell down around me. I was the super awkward tall guy in the middle looking extra tall and extra awkward.
 - **The Best Ones Benefit Others Directly** – The best gifts are the ones that directly bless other people. Therefore, **if we are going to pray for spiritual gifts to be unlocked in our hearts or in our church, we need to pray mostly for those** that bless everyone directly. Miracles are rad and build up our awe and faith, so by all means let's pray for those, but direct messages from God to people so they can know that God sees them directly are even more powerful. Let's pray for that.
 - **Paul's Point:** **Public Thanks when no one knows is kind of lame.** It's legit but it's lonely.
 - **Pray for Interpretation** – If you have the gift of tongues that can be used in a group, all that you need is the other part of it, the interpretation. That means either you need someone with that gift to start coming to your Missional Community or our church, OR you can pray that the Lord would allow you to INTERPRET YOUR OWN TONGUES. That's a thing too. You present it in tongues and then share the meaning.
 - **Praying for Spiritual Gifts** – Verse 13 is HUGE. Paul has already said to eagerly desire the gifts but up to this point **he has been rather quiet on how to get one.** Interpretation of Tongues has already been listed as a spiritual gift, so when Paul, here, says to pray for it, it opens up the rest of the conversation to say, **'if you want a spiritual gift, you pray for it.'** Whether God grants it to you is based on His bigger plan (distribution of gifts as is best for the Body).
 - **Prayer Language (or private tongues)** – builds up our spirit but our mind is unfruitful. That means that **we are blessed spiritually but we don't have a clue what we just said.** It's strange to do because we are used to having emotions that flow along with what we are trying to say. With tongues it's usually all-spiritual-all-the-time.
 - **What Will I Do Then?** – Paul says since a pray language leaves my mind and others unfruitful, but really blesses my spirit, what should I do? **BOTH!** He will pray in tongues AND give a word to other people that build them up. The answer again is not either/or, but AND. He said **I will pray with my SPIRIT AND pray with my MIND.**
 - **Singing with Spirit AND Mind** – also Paul said that he would continue to sing praise to God with His spirit (not knowing what he's saying), which is a thing, AND sing praises to God with his mind (where he knows what he's saying).
- **Right Gift; Right Use**
 - **Paul Explains That Purpose Matters**

- **1st Corinthians 14:18-25** – *“I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*
 - **Paul’s Mega-Tongues** – Paul says that he speaks in tongues more than all of them. What’s his point. He’s not saying tongues aren’t valuable. He loves his prayer language. He loves his gift. It’s wonderful.
 - **It’s Practical: Prophecy** (5 words vs. 10,000)– Paul loves to be spiritual and have connections with his Lord, but the bottom line is that when he comes together with others, he’s looking to bless others and that happens more easily and directly through prophecy.
- **²⁰ Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. ²¹ In the Law [Isaiah 28:11-12] it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.”¹⁷”**
 - **Strange, supernatural occurrences can be ignored too** – I know that in context Paul is about to make a point about what the purpose of tongues is for, BUT, I have to admit that when I read this quote it makes me think that Paul is indicating that no matter how strange and supernatural the occurrences are (which Corinthians were so proud of), hard hearts remain hard. It’s not going to change people’s hearts all the time. It can (Power Evangelism) help, but it’s not a guarantee.
- **²² Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers¹⁸, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers¹⁹.”**

¹⁷ “Paul begins redirecting their thinking by adapting a passage from Isa. 28:11–12, which he introduces as a citation from “the Law.” The citation itself is not precise;²⁰ it seems to have been chosen for two interrelated reasons: the occurrence of the language “other tongues” and the fact that in the OT context this “speaking in tongues” by foreigners did not effect belief in Israel²²—indeed, it both led to and was part of their judgment. To bring out his own concerns Paul does four things with the Isaiah passage. (1) He inverts the order of “stammering lips” and “other tongues” to put his interest, “other tongues,” in first position. (2) He changes “stammering lips” to “the lips of others”; the “others” now being the Corinthian believers, whose speaking in tongues would have a deleterious effect on unbelievers.²⁴ (3) In keeping with the MT, but against the LXX, Paul changes “the Lord will speak” to “I will speak” and concludes with the formula “says the Lord,” probably to increase its impact on the Corinthians.²⁵ (4) Most significantly, he skips a considerable section in the Isaiah passage, picking up at the end of v. 12, where he changes “and they would not hear (akouō),” referring to the intelligible words of the Lord, to “and even so [referring now to the ‘other tongues’] they will not obey (eisakouō) me.” In Paul’s context this refers to the outsiders of v. 23, who on hearing the Corinthians speaking in tongues would declare them mad. Paul’s point seems to be that such a reaction would be a “fulfillment” of this “word of the Lord” to the effect that tongues do not lead sinners to obedience.” NICNT

¹⁸ “The first assertion flows directly from the quotation itself: “Tongues are a sign, not for³¹ believers but for unbelievers³³.” Although it cannot be finally proven, the flow of the argument from v. 20, including the strong “so then” of this sentence, suggests that Paul is setting up this antithesis with the Corinthians’ own point of view in mind. That is, “In contrast to what you think, this word of the Lord from Isaiah indicates that tongues are not meant as a sign for believers. They are not, as you make them, the divine evidence of being pneumatikos, nor of the presence of God in your assembly. To the contrary, in the public gathering uninterpreted tongues function as a sign for unbelievers.” The question is, What kind of sign? In light of v. 21, for which this is the inferential deduction, “sign” in this first sentence can only function in a negative way. That is, it is a “sign” that functions to the disadvantage of unbelievers, not to their advantage. Most likely Paul is using the word in a way that is quite in keeping with his Judaic background, where “sign” functions as an expression of God’s attitude; something “signifies” to Israel either his disapproval³⁶ or pleasure. In this case, it is his disapproval that is in view; but not in the sense that God intends unbelievers during this time of grace to receive his judgment. To the contrary, tongues function that way as the result of their effect on the unbeliever, as the illustration in v. 23 will clarify. Because tongues are unintelligible, unbelievers receive no revelation from God; they cannot thereby be brought to faith. Thus by their response of seeing the work of the Spirit as madness, they are destined for divine judgment—just as in the OT passage Paul has quoted. This, of course, is not the divine intent for such people; hence Paul’s urgency is that the Corinthians cease thinking like children, stop the public use of tongues, since it serves to drive the unbeliever away rather than to lead him or her to faith.”

¹⁹ “With a balancing antithetical clause Paul adds that “prophecy, however,” also functions as a sign, but “not for unbelievers, but for believers.”³⁹ With this sentence he once again picks up the contrast between tongues and prophecy that was last expressed in vv. 1–6 (although it is alluded to in v. 19 in anticipation of this argument). This is also the clause in which all the difficulties have arisen, since in the illustration that corresponds to

- **Tongues = Non-Believers** – this is an odd statement considering what he’s about to say (non-believers think you are out of your minds). But the point I think that Paul is trying to make is that they are a signal of something supernatural happening which is to get the attention of the non-believer. The Believer already should believe in God and already know that God exists and is present. So, it’s more of a sign gift & evangelistic.
- **Prophecy = Believers** – prophecy is a sign for believers because they are already convinced in the presence of God and now they are looking for direction and connection. It’s less evangelistic and more edification based. If you tell a non-believer something in prophecy it may or may not capture their attention at first since it seems more ‘normal.’
- ²³ *If, therefore, the whole church comes together²⁰ and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?²¹²²*
²⁴ *But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, ²⁵ the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.”*
- **Too Many Uninterpreted Tongues Overwhelms** – although it is evangelistic and would allow a non-believer at first to think something supernatural is occurring and get their attention, **they honestly don’t have anything to go off of next.**
What do they do with it? It’s weird, but if it just stays weird without direction they will just assume y’all are crazy. **A sign gift, not pointing to anything isn’t very helpful.**

this assertion (vv. 24–25) he does not so much as mention believers but indicates only how prophecy affects unbelievers, and in a way that would make one think that it is really a sign for them, that is, to their advantage.” NICNT

²⁰ “these illustrations give us several insights into an early Christian gathering for worship. (1) The language for their assembling together is nearly identical to that found in 11:20: “the whole church comes together at the same place.” Along with the salutation⁴⁴ and the evidence from Rom. 16:23, this implies that all the believers from all the house churches met together in some way.⁴⁶ Given the limitations of size in even the most commodious of well-to-do homes, does this imply that the church was somewhat smaller than we might tend to think? Or is it possible that one of the houses was considerably larger than archeology has uncovered in Corinth to this point? We simply do not know. (2) Both this text and v. 26, as well as 11:2–16, where women are praying and prophesying in the assembly, indicate that at least one expression of their worship was “charismatic,” in the twofold sense that there was general participation by all the members, including the women, and that there was considerable expression of the more spontaneous gifts of utterance. Two things should be noted in regard to the language “and all speak in tongues.” (a) Even though this is probably overstated, one can hardly escape the implication that all of the believers could potentially do so. This means that Paul’s point in 12:29–30, as we noted there, was to discourage “all” from doing so; he did not mean that only a few could be so gifted (cf. v. 5). The same is true of prophecy. (b) Again, even though it is overstatement, this is probably a generally realistic description of the current scene in Corinth. Not that all were necessarily speaking in tongues at the same time; nonetheless the guidelines in vv. 27–33 seem to imply that many were doing so on a regular basis. If so, then not only did the unintelligibility lead to the exclamation of “madness,” but so also would the general chaos of so much individualized worship with no concern for the general edification of the body as a whole. (3) These gatherings of the “whole church” were also accessible to unbelievers. The term “unbeliever” is the same as in v. 22, making it certain that these verses serve as illustrations for those assertions. Added to “unbeliever” in both instances is the word *idiōtēs* from v. 16. The close ties of this word with “unbeliever” and the nature of their response to tongues and prophecy indicate that such people are not believers. It is also doubtful for the same reasons that it is a technical term for an “inquirer,” someone who stands in some kind of halfway position. Most likely, as before, it carries the nontechnical sense of anyone who is “unlearned,” in this case “untutored” with regard to the Christian faith. Indeed, it is possible that Paul did not intend to designate a second kind of person at all;⁵² rather, he simply begins his description of unbelievers in general with this word. Thus, the visiting “unbeliever” is also “untutored” in the faith. As noted earlier, Paul may very well have in mind an unbelieving spouse accompanying the believer to his or her place of worship. Such a person is both outside of Christ and as yet uninstructed in Christ.” NICNT

²¹ “Uninterpreted tongues do not edify believers; nor do they benefit unbelievers who may visit their assembly. Indeed, the effect would be quite the opposite.” NICNT

²² “The response of the unbeliever to the community’s collective speaking in tongues is to equate the Christian gathering with the mania that attended some of the mystery cults. “Madness,”⁵⁵ they will say. For Paul such a response is totally unworthy of the gospel of Christ.” NICNT

- **Tons of Prophecy Gives Direction & Conviction** – if the church is full of people speaking for God, non-believers will eventually see that it's from God (although it's not as freaky) and begin to listen.
 - **Words of Knowledge/Prophecy** – secrets of his heart are disclosed. That means they are revealed both to him and others. With a word of knowledge or wisdom that's exactly what happens. You feel like God is opening your personal mail through someone else and it feels very personal.
- **The Conclusion = Transformation of the Non-Believer** – again Paul explains his point. If we want to reach the world we have to be more than just weird. We need to be helpful and accessible. Prophecy is more accessible to everyone. It convicts and can change a life. When a message from God is shared it can transform someone in Christ from death to life.
 - **Power Evangelism** - Unbelievers need to experience God and not just intellectual assent. That's why God uses miracles to get people's attention.

Conclusion

- **Paul's Main Concern = Selfishness** – when all of this is said and done, there is really one word that sums up Paul's concern and it's not weirdness or gifts. It's selfishness. All of this can be a blessing but the selfish hearts of the Corinthians were ruining it and turning it into a bad thing.
 - **As Bridgeway Pursues** – **we will be toughest in the areas of blocking selfishness.** Some people here may be highly gifted but if there is a sense of selfishness, we will not use you. We are interested in both protecting the people of God and pursuing all that He has that builds others up, not self platforms.
- **Next week** we will talk about how these gifts are used in church and so much more.