

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN GIFTS: PROPHECY AND TONGUES

The Church at Brook Hills

Matt Mason

October 6, 2013

1 Corinthians 14

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives:* Praise God for all the gifts with which His Spirit empowers us, including those we may not be very familiar with. Ask the Spirit to guide our understanding of tongues and prophecy. Pray we would all be able to set aside pre-conceived notions and past experiences in order to seek the Scriptures for that understanding. Pray for our corporate worship gatherings to be orderly and God-glorifying. Pray our gatherings, in addition to times of worship of God, will be edifying to believers and inspiring and attractive to unbelievers. Pray for the gift of prophecy Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 14 to be manifest among us.
- *Pray for Our City:* This week we are praying for The Nurses Clinic, an outreach ministry that was started by Brook Hills' members several years ago. The Nurses Clinic ministers to the homeless at the Church of the Reconciler in downtown Birmingham. We are also praying for Liberty Park Baptist Church and Scott Guffin, Pastor.
- *Pray for Our World:* This week we are praying for Brook Hills' Mid-termers, Royce and Sandra Watkins, who are currently serving in Gulu, Uganda. Royce and Sandra have been serving in Gulu since January 2013 with Four Corners Ministry. Royce and Sandra oversee a ministry called Abaana's Hope aiding the marginalized people in this war-torn community. To learn more about what Royce and Sandra are part of, visit fourcorners.org/abaanas-hope. We are also praying for our short-term team serving in North Africa, lead by Ande Underwood.

MAIN TRUTH

Controversy and Christian Love

- There aren't many passages that prescribe for us what NT prophecy and tongues are supposed to look like in gatherings of believers.
- It's hard to tell what kind of gathering is being spoken of in 1 Cor 14 (1 Cor 14:26, 31)
- Debate over spiritual gifts should be a respectful conversation void of demonizing those who differ with us (1 Cor 1:2; ch. 13; 16:24)

Paul, ~~Un~~-Leashing the Gifts in Corinth

Tongues

- When people spoke in tongues in the gathering, it was pure chaos and non-Christians who came in were almost guaranteed to never come back (1 Cor 14:23).
- Bottom line: uninterpreted tongues do not stimulate belief but seal unbelief. (1 Cor 14:23)

Apostolic Affirmations of Tongues

- Earnestly desire the gifts of the Spirit. (14:1)
- Speaking in tongues is a gift of the Spirit. (12:10, 30; 13:1)
- The gift of tongues edifies the tongues-speaker. (14:4)
- Correction of their abuses should not be confused with a prohibition of a genuine gift of the Spirit. (14:29)
- Paul says that interpreted tongues are capable of edifying believers. (14:5)
- Unlike prophecy (14:3), tongues-speech is Godward (14:2, 17), like prayer.
- Paul would love for every believer in Corinth to have this gift. (14:5)
- Paul speaks in tongues more than anyone in Corinth. (14:18)

Prophecy

- New Testament prophecy is not identical to Old Testament prophecy.
- There is a transition from prophecy as authoritative speech to Spirit-prompted encouragement (1 Cor 14:3, 6).
- There is a transition in how believers are to respond to a prophetic word. (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:20; Acts 21:10-15)

Contrasting OT Prophecy from NT Prophecy

- Old Testament prophecy was frequently associated with an office. (Nu 11:29; 1 Sam 10:11; Eph 2:20)
- Prophecy in Corinth is to be sought by every member of the church. (Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 14:1, 39)
- Genuine Old Testament prophecy, by definition, possessed divine authority. (1 Sam 13:8-13; 2 Pet 1:21)
- Prophecy in Corinth was to not be regarded as divinely authoritative. (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:20-22)
- Old Testament prophecies that did not come to pass earned one a label of "false prophet" and led to death by stoning. (Deut 13:1-5, 10; Deut 18:20)
- Prophecies in Corinth are sifted. That which seems to be from God is taken. Anything which seems to not come from God is left aside. And no one dies. (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:20)

*Prophecy - a human reporting of something we believe God has brought to mind.
(Wayne Grudem's definition of NT prophecy)*

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN GIFTS: PROPHECY AND TONGUES

The Church at Brook Hills

Matt Mason

October 6, 2013

1 Corinthians 14

- The great news is that the better we know the Bible the more discerning we'll be about impressions we might have or guidance we sense may be coming from the Spirit.

Spiritual Gifts at The Church at Brook Hills

- We should never mock or belittle a gift of the Holy Spirit.
- One test of whether spiritual gifts are being used properly in a given gathering is the effect it has on non-Christians in attendance (1 Cor 14:13-25).
- Spiritual gifts point to gospel truth.
- Spiritual gifts must not to be confused with the gospel.
- God has given spiritual gifts to members in the church because he loves us and he is intent on strengthening us. He strengthens us through our imperfect use of the gifts.
 - God would rather us function imperfectly in spiritual gifts than not use them for fear of making a mistake.
- Let's lean forward. Let's ask God for any gift he'd want to give us. And let's use those gifts, by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, to build up Christ's church for Christ's glory.

Message Summary

Concerning some of the more sensational spiritual gifts, specifically tongues and prophecy, many of today's churches discuss 1 Corinthians 14 in terms of arguments and controversy. However, much like a belief regarding the exact nature of tribulation in the end times, the truth of these spiritual gifts is not a dogmatic theology that affects the ability of salvation to reach our souls. Therefore, we much approach this subject with love and respect, without demonizing those who have different opinions.

Paul wrote this part of his letter to the Corinthian church to address problems that were arising from their misuse of the spiritual gifts of tongues and prophecy. People were talking over one another, interrupting one another, not providing interpretation, critiquing without respect, and basically causing chaos and disorder. One of Paul's main concerns was that the Corinthians were confusing unbelievers and driving them away from the gospel of a very orderly God. Paul wanted to leash these gifts so that they could be used rightly—to edify the Body of Christ. He repeats the truth that spiritual gifts are for edification not division or confusion. Therefore, tongues are to be used in an orderly fashion and with an interpreter in public settings; prophecy is to be evaluated according to the authority of God's word. All of this is for the sake of the gospel and the building of the church for its mission to make disciples of all nations.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

As we discussed in previous weeks, the Corinthian church had a tendency to perceive some spiritual gifts as more desirable and of greater importance than others. Namely, these gifts seemed to be the kind that were more visible and more charismatic, such as prophecy and tongues. These gifts, specifically, were being misused in the church and Paul addressed them to insure that the Corinthians knew how to set appropriate parameters for the use of these gifts so that they were helpful to the Body of Christ. However, we must note that he didn't give a clear picture of exactly what the exercise of these gifts would look like in a gathering of believers.

As a result, these gifts still cause much controversy today. Some people believe these gifts have ceased while others believe these gifts are special manifestations of the Spirit for believers who are more filled with the Spirit than others—and anywhere in between these two ideas. Having a healthy understanding that smart and theologically sound scholars debate this issue today, why must we not belittle or mock these gifts among

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN GIFTS: PROPHECY AND TONGUES

The Church at Brook Hills

Matt Mason

October 6, 2013

1 Corinthians 14

believers? Also, point out that Paul's main concern for the misuse of the gift of tongues was that their disunity and chaos were driving away unbelievers. How can we biblically view tongues, and all gifts, in light of the need to not only build up the Body but also as a Christ-honoring display of God's grace in view of unbelievers? It might be helpful to start the conversation about this passage by asking the group to share what they have been taught in the past regarding tongues and prophecy and what questions they have about the subject. Also, discuss how 1 Corinthians 14 fits with the previous chapter – a chapter on love.

Concerning prophecy, we must be careful to remember that prophecy in the New Testament and today is not considered to be a new word from God but an explanation of an already revealed word from God. If the church is not careful, we can set up teachers with authority who attempt to bring new revelation from God separate from Scripture. How have other major religions formed from this same error? Prophetic words in today's culture are authoritative only in that they are based in the Word of God. Today's culture often wants to set up personal experience as equal to the authority of the Bible. What is dangerous in this practice, and how has such a mindset created a relative view of authority, even within the church? We must be careful to stand firm on the truth that the Bible is God's authoritative word. Why does our sinful nature deeply impact our need to see ourselves as solely reliant on God's Word for authority?

As part of Paul's instructions to the Corinthians, he addressed a very vocal group of women in the Corinthian church who were causing a disturbance. One of the "rules" for biblical understanding is to use the Bible to interpret itself because the Bible does not contradict itself. Thinking about this truth, how can we understand verses 33-35 in light of Paul's instructions for women praying and prophesying in church in 1 Corinthians 11? In its immediate context, this instruction was given in terms of orderly worship as prophecy was critiqued in public. In that sense and in light of the greater context of worship, Paul was not giving a direct command for all women to be silent in worship but that the critiquing was to be reserved for church leadership, namely the elders, who were men. Why does this example illustrate why we must study the whole teaching of Scripture within context?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- Paul addressed the use of tongues in this chapter, but neither a clear practical description nor an exhaustive definitive prescription of New Testament prophecy and tongues exist for the church today. How can this lack of information create fear or overconfidence in the study of these gifts?
- Why can we value these gifts, at the very least, as something the Holy Spirit has seen fit to give as a gift in the culture of the New Testament? How can we allow Scripture to speak truth into our pre-conceived ideas about these gifts? Are we open to truth over personal traditions or beliefs?
- Describe how the Corinthians were creating confusion with their disorderly use of their gifts. One of Paul's main concerns with the Corinthians' chaotic use of tongues was that the church was driving unbelievers away from the gospel. How does this concern tie to our understanding of Christian liberty and a biblical understanding of spiritual gifts?
- What other issues, like the gift of tongues, are often a disturbance within the church and serves as a distraction from its mission? How are these distractions sinfully and needlessly blocking unbelievers from the gospel?
- What arguments do we have with co-workers, friends, or family that serve to point others away from gospel truth? What about arguments that happen online with acquaintances, strangers, or those you barely know? How can we respectfully discuss differences while consciously keeping the gospel at the forefront of conversation?

Small Group Guide

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN GIFTS: PROPHECY AND TONGUES

The Church at Brook Hills

Matt Mason

October 6, 2013

1 Corinthians 14

- Prophecy in the New Testament was not identical to the Old Testament understanding of it. Namely, a prophet in the Old Testament was to be delivering a message of divine authority to be understood as God's words; New Testament prophecy did not bear this kind of divine authority, but was a message to encourage, build up, comfort, or instruct. However, the New Testament church was to weigh the prophecies against the Scriptures, much like the church at Berea did for the preaching of Paul and Silas in Acts 17. What, then, is the responsibility of one who hears teachings or receives a word from God from others?
- What is the responsibility of one who offers a prophetic/encouraging/teaching message from God's Word? Why is Bible study imperative to a non-abusive use of spiritual gifts, particularly ones like we studied today?
- When considering the biblical truthfulness of a prophetic word, why must we remember that there is no new authoritative word from God apart from the Bible?
- How do we put our own and our family's spiritual health in danger when we do not know the Bible enough to discern the Scriptural integrity of spiritual messages?
- What are some resources available to us to help us have better biblical literacy and to develop a better foundation and understanding of biblical theology? How can we also be a part of helping others understand these truths?
- How can our fears about spiritual gifts cause us to become complacent in using them?
- How can we focus the use of our gifts around the centrality of the gospel?