

Worksheet 11: 1 Corinthians 14:1–40

Introduction: Chapter 14 draws Paul's discussion on the matter of spiritual gifts to a close. Once again, Paul's conclusion focuses on practical application. Paul's applications in this chapter fit under two broad headings: a) the need for intelligibility (14:1–25), and b) the need for order (14:26–40).

A key point for understanding this chapter is to identify the first-century gift of tongues as the Spirit-given ability to speak in (previously unstudied) foreign human languages. This provides the most natural reading of 14:9–11 and 14:22–25. Although this definition is uncommon within the modern Charismatic movement, it corresponds with the practice of tongues in the New Testament church and historical evidence from the writings of ancient Christians.¹

Abbreviated Outline² (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1–9)
- II. Response to Oral Reports (1:10–6:20)
 - A. A Proper Perspective on Christian Ministers and Ministry (1:10–4:21)
 - B. Immorality in the Church (5:1–13)
 - C. Disputes Between Believers (6:1–11)
 - D. Limitations on Freedom in Christ (6:12–20)
- III. Responses to a Letter from the Corinthians (7:1–16:4)
 - A. Matters related to Sex and Marriage (7:1–40)
 - B. Matters related to Idol Feasts (8:1–11:1)
 - C. Matters related to Christian Worship (11:2–34)
 - D. Matters related to Spiritual Gifts (12:1–14:40)**
 - 1. Diversity of Gifts, Unity in the Body (12:1–31)
 - 2. The Supremacy of Love (13:1–13)
 - 3. Prophecy and Tongues (14:1–40)**
 - E. Matters related to the Resurrection (15:1–58)
 - F. Matters related to the Relief Offering (16:1–4)
- IV. Conclusion (16:5–24)

¹ See quotations from Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, and Augustine in John MacArthur, *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2013), 139.

² The complete outline is available on the Meadowlands Baptist Church website (www.meadowlandsbaptist.ca). Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2009), 482–483.

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Complete this phrase, using statements from chapter 14 (include references), “It is loving to build up the entire church by...”

2. Which is more important (prophecy or tongues) in 14:1–19, and why?

3. What is the point of Paul’s illustration from musical instruments (14:7–8), based on the immediate context?

4. What does Paul mean when he says in 14:14, “if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful”? [Hint: Consider the nearby context in 14:13–17.]

5. Paul quotes Isa. 28:11–12 in 14:21. Based on this quotation, he concludes “tongues are for a sign ... to unbelievers” and “prophesying is [a sign to] ... those who believe” (14:22). How do tongues and prophecy function as signs?

6. What promotes understanding in the church, according to 20–36?

7. Summarize Paul’s guidelines for women in 14:34–35. Consider the relationship of this text with these cross-references: Eph. 5:21–24; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11–15; Tit. 2:3–5; 1 Pet. 3:1–6.

8. Why should someone who claims spiritual wisdom acknowledge Paul’s writings as authoritative (14:37)?

Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?
