SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · LIVING IN THE LIGHT

†
14:26

DEEP DIVE

1 Corinthians

Chapter Fourteen, Verses 1–40

Let All Things Be Done for Edification — love walks into the meeting, and every gift is measured by whether it builds

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Paul brings chapters 12 and 13 into the Corinthian meeting itself: love first, then the gift the church can understand, then two or three in turn — because God is not a God of confusion but of peace. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 14:1–40

love · clear sound · mind · visitor · order

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Six movements from "Pursue love" to "properly and in an orderly manner"

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"for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." — 1 Corinthians 14:33

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 14:1–40

Let All Things Be Done for Edification — Pursue love, desire the gifts, and let every word in the meeting build the man beside you

† How to Read This Study

This study walks 1 Corinthians 14 in 6 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 14:26

"What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification."

† Before the Passage

Chapter 14 is where Paul walks chapters 12 and 13 into the room. Chapter 12 laid the foundation: one Spirit, one body, every member placed by God, "to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (12:7). Chapter 13 gave the governing principle: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (13:1). Now Paul applies both to the Corinthian gathering, and the chapter's first words join them: "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (14:1).

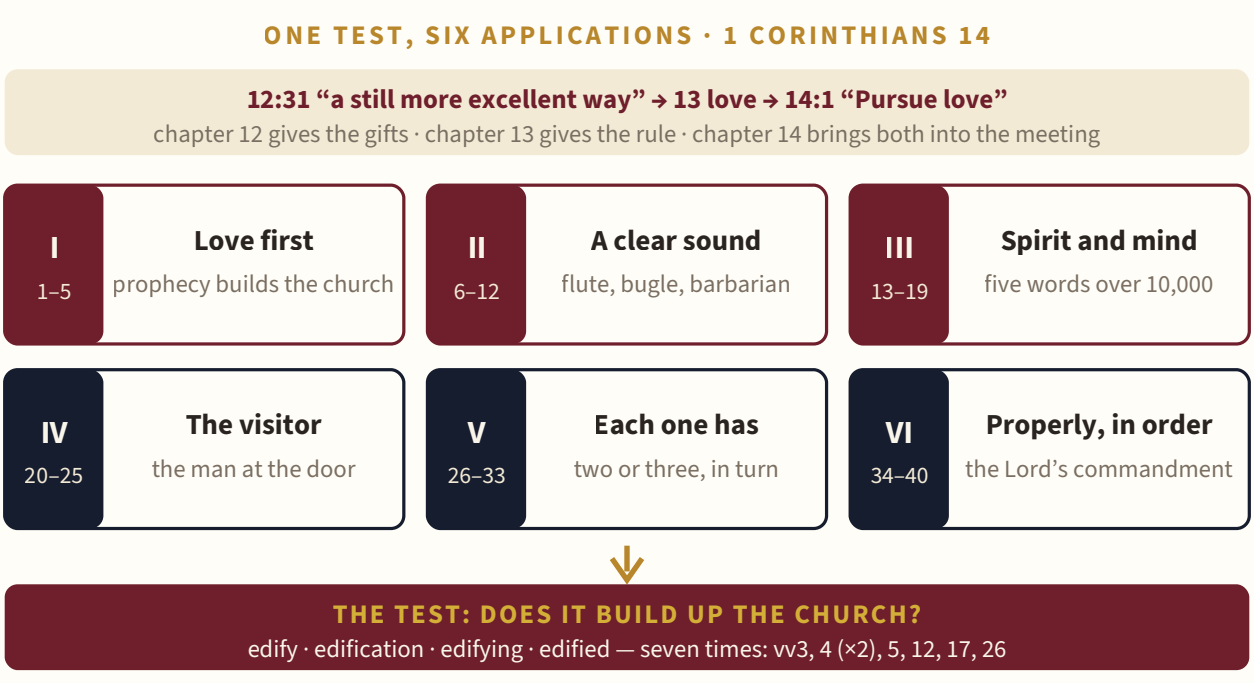
The Corinthian meetings were loud. Many spoke in tongues with no interpretation; a visitor could walk in and conclude the church had lost its mind (v. 23); prophets talked over one another (vv. 30–31); the gathering had become a place to display a gift rather than to build a brother. Paul does not shut the meeting down, and he

does not forbid the gifts (v. 39). He gives it one test, and the NASB says it seven times in forty verses — edify, edification, edifying, edified: does it build up the church? Matthew Henry heads the chapter with the same thought: the apostle prefers the gifts "that are best and fitted to do the greatest good."

The Old Testament runs underneath the chapter. Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11–12 in verse 21 — a people who would not listen to plain speech hearing the foreign tongue of an invader — and Henry adds Deuteronomy 28:49, the nation "whose language you shall not understand," as its background. Moses' wish, "Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets" (Numbers 11:29), stands behind Paul's "I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy" (v. 5). And the "Amen" of verse 16 is the people's word from Deuteronomy 27 and Nehemiah 8:6 — the congregation agreeing with what it has understood.

This is also the chapter where sincere Christians part ways. Do tongues and prophecy continue today, and what were they? What do "The women are to keep silent in the churches" (v. 34) and "as the Law also says" mean, beside 11:5, where women pray and prophesy? Our four teachers do not agree, and this study gives each in his own terms without settling the question for you. But all four agree on the chapter's spine: love first, edification as the test, the apostle's word as "the Lord's commandment" (v. 37), and a God of peace who wants His people's gatherings to look like Him.

FIGURE · ONE TEST, SIX APPLICATIONS



Follow the six movements in order and notice that every one of them answers the same question Paul asks seven times: does it build up the church?

I
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:1–5

Love First, Then the Gift That Builds

Prophecy over tongues in the meeting — because the church can understand it

> 1 *Pursue love*, yet *desire earnestly spiritual gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 *For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.* 3 *But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.* 4 *One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.* 5 *Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1–5

FIGURE · A TONGUE AND PROPHECY IN THE MEETING

1 COR 14:1–31	A TONGUE, UNINTERPRETED	PROPHECY
SPEAKS TO	God, not men (v2)	men (v3)
WHO UNDERSTANDS	no one — “mysteries” (v2)	the hearers: edification, exhortation, consolation (v3)
WHO IS BUILT UP	himself (v4)	the church (v4)
THE MIND	“my mind is unfruitful” (v14)	“that I may instruct others also” (v19)
THE OUTSIDER	“will they not say that you are mad?” (v23)	convicted, falls on his face: “God is certainly among you” (v25)
IN THE MEETING	only with an interpreter; else silent (vv5, 13, 27–28)	two or three, in turn; the others judge (vv29–31)

Not good against bad, but good against better — in the meeting (v19: “in the church”).

Read across each row: Paul does not call one gift good and the other bad; he asks what each does for the people in the room.

διώκετε … ζηλοῦτε

DIŌKETE … ZĒLOUTE · "PURSUE … DESIRE EARNESTLY" · G1377, G2206

Diōkō is a hunting and chasing verb — the same word Paul uses for persecuting the church (15:9) and for pressing on toward the goal (Philippians 3:12, 14). Love is not to be admired; it is to be run down. *Zēloō* is "to burn with zeal," the root of English "zeal" and "jealous"; in 13:4 the same verb is what love does *not* do ("love … is not jealous"). The difference is direction: zeal for my own standing is the jealousy love refuses; zeal for gifts that serve others is what Paul commands. Verse 12 names the Corinthians *zēlōtai* (G2207), "zealots" of spirits, and Paul does not quench that zeal — he aims it: "seek to abound for the edification of the church." The command returns in verse 39, bookending the chapter.

οἰκοδομή

OIKODOMĒ · "EDIFICATION" · G3619

A builder's word — *oikos*, house, and *domeō*, to build. With its verb *oikodomeō* (G3618) it appears seven times in the NASB of this chapter (vv. 3, 4 ×2, 5, 12, 17, 26), and it is Paul's test for every gift. He has used it all through the letter: the church is "God's building" (3:9, *oikodomē*), "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies" (8:1), "not all things edify" (10:23). Verse 4 uses the verb twice, and the contrast is the whole point: one builds a house of one; the other builds the church.

παράκλησις … παραμυθία

PARAKLĒSIS … PARAMYTHIA · "EXHORTATION … CONSOLATION" · G3874, G3889

Paraklēsis is a calling-alongside — the same family as *Paraklētos*, the Helper of John 14:16 — and it can lean toward urging or toward comfort; verse 31 uses its verb (*parakalōntai*, G3870), "all may be exhorted." *Paramythia* appears only here in the New Testament: speech that steadies and cheers the faint-hearted. With *oikodomē* the three words of verse 3 are all aimed at someone else — build him up, urge him on, steady him. That is what Paul means by prophecy here, whatever else his readers decide about its nature today.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik starts with the order: because love is the greatest, we must pursue it. There was nothing wrong with Corinth's desire for gifts, but "they made a godly desire into an obsessive pursuit." He holds that prophecy is not simply preaching, since Paul had *kerusso* available and did not use it. Tongues are spoken to God, not to men; to forget that is, he says, one of the most significant misunderstandings of the gift — at Pentecost the crowd overheard praise to God (Acts 2:11). "Edifies himself" is not a rebuke: "Paul is simply stating the nature of the gift of tongues." Edification is "a construction term," exhortation is the coach rallying his team, comfort is strengthening, not only consoling. And "Paul was positive about the gift of tongues!"

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

In his article "Zeal without Knowledge," Sproul tells how, as a young professor in 1965, he met students praying in tongues and went back to 1 Corinthians 12–14 to test it. He found Paul correcting abuses, not banning the gift: "Though he warns sharply against many abuses of tongues, he does not outlaw their use." He also found a ranking — "Paul clearly is teaching the comparative superiority of prophecy over tongues" — but a ranking of two good things: "But he is comparing the good and the better, not the good and the bad." Because Paul wished they all spoke in tongues (v. 5) and spoke in tongues himself, Sproul took it that he should pursue the gift. (What came of that is in Movements III and VI.)

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry hears in “Follow after charity” the Greek *diokete*, which signifies “a singular concern to obtain it.” Gifts are fit objects of desire, but “in subordination to grace and charity.” He takes prophesying as “interpreting scripture” and the tongue as a foreign language no hearer understood, and draws the rule: “What cannot be understood can never edify.” On verse 3 he pairs the words: “Duty is the proper way to comfort; and those that would be comforted must bear being exhorted.” No gift is to be despised, but the most useful are most to be valued, for “Benevolence makes a man truly great.” Greater is the man who builds the church than the one who displays himself.

II
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:6–12

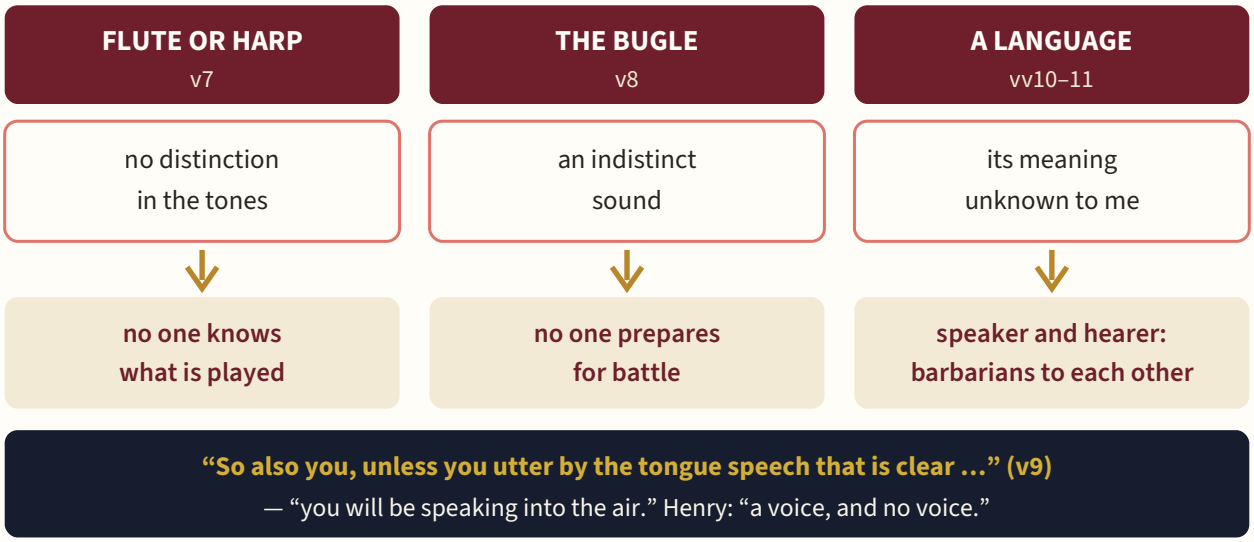
A Trumpet With a Clear Sound

Flute, bugle and barbarian — sound without meaning builds no one

6 *But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by*
way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching? 7 *Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in*
producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the
flute or on the harp? 8 *For if the bugle produces* ⚠ *an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?* 9 *So*
also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be
⚠ *speaking into the air.* 10 *There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is*
without meaning. 11 *If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a*
barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. 12 *So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual*
gifts, 🖹 *seek to abound for the edification of the church.*

1 CORINTHIANS 14:6–12

FIGURE · THREE SOUNDS WITHOUT MEANING



Each of Paul's pictures fails the same way — the sound is made but nothing is communicated — and verse 9 applies all three to the church.

ἄδηλον … σάλπιγξ

ADĒLON … SALPINX · "INDISTINCT … BUGLE" · G82, G4536

Adēlos is "not plain, unclear" (only here and Luke 11:44, "concealed" tombs). The *salpinx* is the war trumpet — the same instrument that will sound at the resurrection (15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16), and the silver trumpets of Numbers 10:9 that sounded the alarm for battle. A bugler who plays a tune no one recognizes leaves the army in its tents. Henry translates the phrase *adelon phonen*, "a sound not manifest." Verse 7's "distinction in the tones" is *diastolē* (G1293) — the gaps between notes that make a melody.

εὔσημον … εἰς ἀέρα

EUSĒMON … EIS AERA · "CLEAR … INTO THE AIR" · G2154, G109

Eusēmos — "well-marked," easily recognized — occurs only here in the New Testament. The opposite of clear speech is speaking *eis aera*, "into the air" (Paul uses *aēr* again in 9:26, the boxer "beating the air"). Verse 10 then plays on *phōnē* (G5456), sound / voice / language: there are many kinds of *phōnai* and none is *aphōnon* (G880), "voiceless," without meaning. Henry renders it "a voice, and no voice."

βάρβαρος

BARBAROS · "BARBARIAN" · G915

To a Greek ear, foreign speech sounded like "bar-bar," and the word stuck to the speaker. Paul uses it of people outside the Greek tongue (Romans 1:14; Colossians 3:11); Luke uses it of the islanders of Malta, whom the NASB calls "natives" (Acts 28:2). Here it is the church itself that is made foreign: uninterpreted speech turns brothers into barbarians to each other (v. 11). Verse 12's "zealous" is *zēlōtai* (G2207) and "abound" is *perisseuēte* (G4052) — excel, overflow — in building the church.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads verse 6 as four ways Paul could actually help them — revelation, knowledge, prophesying and teaching — all in a language common to everyone. A child banging on a piano may enjoy the sound, but no one else does; so too someone speaking to God in tongues may be blessed while others are not. Speaking into the air is "simply putting sounds into the air, not words and ideas into the minds and hearts of others." He calls the thrill of hearing tongues "a soulish curiosity" rather than spiritual edification. Language itself is God's gift to creatures made in His image, and so, he adds, God understands even when no one else does. But in the meeting the rule stands: if there must be tongues, there must be interpretation.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul does not expound these verses in the sources found for this study, but on his podcast "Worshiping God in God's Way" (*Ultimately with R.C. Sproul*, January 2025) he states the principle behind them. The church is "a fellowship and communion of believers to gather for mutual support and edification and encouragement," and "the way to the heart is through the mind." He warns that "mindless Christianity never really produces the purification of the soul"; purification comes through obeying the truth of God's Word by God's Spirit. A bugle that no one can read, in his terms, is worship that bypasses the mind.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry calls the speaking of unknown languages in the assembly a vain "ostentation." An apostle with all his learning could not edify unless he spoke to the capacity of his hearers. Pipe or harp in one tone cannot direct a dancer's steps; a trumpet with *adelon phonen*, "a sound not manifest," leaves the army "at a perfect nonplus." Words not understood have no meaning to the hearer: "to talk to them in such language is to waste our breath." Every language has its signification, else it is *phonai aphonoi* — "a voice, and no voice." He quotes Ovid in exile — *Barbarus hic ego sum*, "I am a barbarian here, none understand me" — and turns verse 12 into the great rule: be zealous to edify the church.

III
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:13–19

With the Spirit and With the Mind

Pray, sing, bless — so that the man beside you can say the "Amen"

13 *Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.* 14 *For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.* 15 *What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.* 16 *Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?* 17 *For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.* 18 *I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all;* 19 *however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

1 CORINTHIANS 14:13–19

νοῦς … ἄκαρπος

NOUS … AKARPOS · "MIND … UNFRUITFUL" · G3563, G175

Nous is the understanding, the thinking mind — Romans 12:2's "renewing of your mind." It appears four times here (vv. 14, 15 ×2, 19); the KJV renders it "understanding." *Akarpos* is "without fruit," the word Jesus used of the seed choked by thorns (Matthew 13:22): something is happening, but nothing is harvested. Paul's answer to "What is the outcome then?" (v. 15) is not to pick spirit over mind or mind over spirit, but both: "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also." The verb "sing" is *psallō* (G5567), the root of "psalm" (v. 26).

ἰδιώτης … Ἀμήν

IDIŌTĒS … AMĒN · "UNGIFTED … AMEN" · G2399, G281

Idiōtēs is the private person, the layman without special training — used of Peter and John as "untrained men" (Acts 4:13) and by Paul of himself as "unskilled in speech" (2 Corinthians 11:6). Here it names the ordinary believer (and in vv. 23–24 the inquirer) who has no gift to decode what is said; NASB "ungifted," KJV "unlearned." *Amēn* is Hebrew for "so be it," the people's response (Deuteronomy 27; Nehemiah 8:6). The article in the Greek — "say *the* Amen" — points to the congregation's customary Amen. You cannot say it to what you did not understand.

διερμηνεύω

DIERMĒNEUŌ · "INTERPRET" · G1329

From *dia*, through, and *hermēneuō*, to explain — to carry the meaning across. Luke uses it of Jesus on the Emmaus road, who "explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27). The interpreter (*diermēneutēs*, G1328, v. 28) and the gift of interpretation (*hermēneia*, G2058, v. 26; 12:10) are what turn a tongue into something the church can say Amen to. Paul's instruction is to pray for it (v. 13).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that verse 13 points to a way the interpretation can be given without the tongue itself being spoken aloud. In tongues "my spirit prays," bypassing the understanding; he loves God with all his mind (Matthew 22:37) yet thanks Him for a way to relate to Him beyond intellect, and he describes the gift as words occurring to the mind and spoken in trust. One need not fear blasphemy, he says, citing 12:3 and Luke 11:10–13. So Paul will pray and sing both ways — but his tongues were focused in his devotional life, for in the meeting "his concern was to be a blessing, not with getting a blessing." He notes, with Clarke, the early church's custom of an audible Amen.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul's article tells the outcome of his own pursuit. "In any case, I sought the gift and soon was able to join my friends in praying in tongues." But the result disappointed him: "I found no great edification from it and still preferred to pray with understanding." He quotes verse 18 — "I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all" — as one of the reasons he had sought the gift at all. He is careful about others: "I don't doubt anyone's experience of praying in such a fashion." But his own verdict lands on the side of verse 15's second half — prayer "with the mind also."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry reads verse 15 as permission, not prohibition: Paul does not forbid inspired prayer or song, but would have both performed so others can join. “Public worship should be performed so as to be understood.” The unlearned who fill the place of the people cannot say Amen to what they do not follow, and the ancient Christians said Amen aloud: “There can be no concurrence in those prayers that are not understood.” Paul is not envious — he spoke with tongues more than them all and “did not vilify their gift because he had it not.” Yet five intelligible words beat ten thousand: a true minister values “doing the least spiritual good to men’s souls” above “the greatest applause.”

IV
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:20–25

When the Visitor Walks In

Grow up in your thinking — and measure the meeting by the man at the door

20 *Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.* 21 *In the Law it is written, “BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME,” says the Lord.* 22 *So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.* 23 *Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?* 24 *But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all;* 25 *the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.*

1 CORINTHIANS 14:20–25

“Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, He who said to them, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,” And, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen.”

ISAIAH 28:11–12

τέλειοι … νηπιάζετε

TELEIOI … NĒPIAZETE · “MATURE … BE INFANTS” · G5046, G3515

Three words for age in one verse. “Children” is *paidia* (G3813); “be infants” is *nēpiazete*, found only here in the New Testament; “mature” is *teleioi*, full-grown — the family of “the perfect” in 13:10 and of the “mature” to whom Paul speaks wisdom in 2:6. “Thinking” is *phrēn* (G5424), used only here (twice): the mind that weighs and judges. Paul had already called Corinth “infants in Christ” (3:1). In evil, stay a baby — inexperienced, unskilled; in thinking, be an adult. *Kakia* (G2549) is malice, the bad will that harms.

ἑτερογλώσσοις … σημεῖον

HETEROGLŌSSOIS … SĒMEION · “STRANGE TONGUES … A SIGN” · G2084, G4592

Heteroglōssos, “other-tongued,” is used only here, in Paul’s rendering of Isaiah 28:11. In Isaiah the drunken leaders of Israel mocked the prophet’s plain teaching as baby-talk (28:9–10); so God would speak to them through Assyrian invaders whose language they could not understand — and “even so they will not listen.” A *sēmeion* is an indicator, a pointer. What the sign points to, and why verse 22 seems to run the other way from verses 23–25, is one of the hard questions of the chapter; our teachers answer it differently.

ἐλέγχεται … ἀνακρίνεται

ELENCHETAI … ANAKRINETAI · "CONVICTED … CALLED TO ACCOUNT" · G1651, G350

Elenchō is to expose and convict — what the Spirit does to the world (John 16:8). *Anakrinō* is to examine, question closely — the word of the spiritual man who "appraises all things" (2:15). "Secrets" is *krypta* (G2927), the hidden things God will bring to light (4:5; Romans 2:16). And the outsider's verdict on a room full of tongues, "you are mad," is *mainesthe* (G3105), the word Festus threw at Paul ("Paul, you are out of your mind!" Acts 26:24). Prophecy does to the visitor's heart what tongues cannot: he falls on his face and confesses *ontōs* (G3689), "certainly," God is among you.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik says the Corinthians showed themselves children by edifying themselves at others' expense. Isaiah 28 announced judgment: Israel would not heed the prophets in Hebrew, so they would hear the Assyrians. He calls verse 22 "one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament," since verses 23–25 seem to say the opposite, and lays out options — tongues as a sign of judgment on unbelief, or J.B. Phillips' view that an early copyist reversed Paul's word order. His rule: interpret the hard by the easier. Whatever verse 22 means, tongues do not draw the unbeliever closer to God. Prophecy reveals the secrets of the heart, whether an evident word or one "hidden" in the preacher's message.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

In "Love and Maturity," an excerpt from his book *What Is Love?*, Sproul quotes verse 20 — "Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature" — and says Corinth was "filled with diverse manifestations of the spectacular gifts of the Spirit, but there was no love there." The gifted thought themselves superior; Paul showed them they were immature. "Spirituality is the means to the end; it is not the end." On the visitor, his podcast "Worshiping God in God's Way" calls the motive to reach the lost "a righteous one," but warns against tailoring worship to the unbeliever's "tastes and their preferences." For Sproul the outsider is served by truth he can grasp, not by a meeting shaped to please him.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry reads Isaiah 28:11 with Deuteronomy 28: being taught in a language you cannot understand is a threatening, so tongues as the Corinthians used them were "rather a token of judgment from God than mercy." Tongues were given "for the conviction and conversion of infidels" — needed to spread Christianity — while prophesying in the people's own language built up believers. An outsider hearing a whole church in unknown tongues would think them "a parcel of wild fanatics," yet "The Christian religion is a sober and reasonable thing in itself." Plain preaching wins him: "Scripture—truth, plainly and duly taught, has a marvellous aptness to awaken the conscience, and touch the heart." "The ministry was not instituted to make ostentation of gifts and parts, but to save souls."

V
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:26–33

Each One Has — Two or Three, In Turn

Every member brings something; the Spirit does not overrule the speaker; God is a God of peace

> 26 *What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.* *Let all things be done for edification*. 27 *If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and* *each in turn*, *and one must interpret;* 28 *but if there is no interpreter, he must* *keep silent* *in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.* 29 *Let two or three prophets speak, and* *let the others pass judgment*. 30 *But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must* *keep silent*. 31 *For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;* 32 *and* *the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets*; 33 *for* *God is not a God of confusion but of peace*, *as in all the churches of the saints.*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 14:26–33

FIGURE · THE ORDERLY MEETING

"WHEN YOU ASSEMBLE, EACH ONE HAS …" · 1 CORINTHIANS 14:26–33

a psalm | a teaching | a revelation | a tongue | an interpretation

"Let all things be done for edification" (v26)

TONGUES · vv27–28	PROPHETS · vv29–31
two, or at the most three	two or three
each in turn	the others pass judgment
one must interpret	revelation to another →
no interpreter → keep silent;	the first keeps silent
speak to himself and to God	all, one by one

WHY THE RULES — THREE REASONS IN THE TEXT

The goal: "so that all may learn and all may be exhorted" (v31)

The gift: "the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (v32)

The God: "not a God of confusion but of peace" — in all the churches (v33)

Every member brings something; the limits on tongues and prophecy serve the goal, and the goal reflects the character of God.

ἕκαστος … ἔχει

HEKASTOS … ECHEI · “EACH ONE HAS” · G1538, G2192

The verb *echei*, “has,” is repeated five times — a psalm (*psalmos*, G5568), a teaching (*didachē*, G1322), a revelation (*apokalypsis*, G602), a tongue, an interpretation (*hermēneia*, G2058). The picture is not an audience watching performers but a body where “each one” brings something. Paul does not cancel that; he governs it with one imperative: *panta pros oikodomēn ginesthō*, “let all things be done for edification.” Verse 27’s “in turn” is *ana meros* (G3313), “by parts,” one after another.

διακρινέτωσαν

DIAKRINETŌSAN · “LET THEM PASS JUDGMENT” · G1252

Diakrinō is to separate thoroughly, sift, discern — the verb of “judge the body rightly” at the Lord’s Table (11:29), and the noun *diakrisis* is “the distinguishing of spirits” in 12:10. Prophecy in the church is not received raw; it is weighed. The same instinct runs through the New Testament: “examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21); “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1). Who “the others” are — the other prophets, or the whole congregation — is read differently by our teachers.

Ὑποτάσσεται … ἀκαταστασίας … εἰρήνης

HYPOTASSETAI … AKATASTASIAS … EIRĒNĒS · “SUBJECT … CONFUSION … PEACE” · G5293, G181, G1515

Hypotassō is to arrange under, a military word for ranks; “the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets” means no true gift is uncontrollable. The same verb returns in verse 34. *Akatastasia* is instability, disorder, unrest — the word James uses for the fruit of envy (3:16) and Luke for the “disturbances” of the last days (21:9). Its opposite is not silence but *eirēnē*, peace — wholeness, everything in its place. Paul grounds the rules of the meeting in the character of God.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik pictures Corinth’s house churches, where each could give, not merely receive; in a large church the same heart says “everyone shares something with someone else.” He passes on Spurgeon’s story of a man leaving a meeting where “No one knew anything and we all taught each other!” The rules are plain — two or three, in turn, interpreted — and the “prayer language” distinction is “an excuse for not obeying the Scriptures.” Yet too much fear of excess gives the “order” of a dead body. Prophecy is judged by the Word and by agreement, and should never eclipse Scripture. The spirits are subject because “The Holy Spirit does not take control like a demon does in demonic possession!” And the slogan that God must offend the mind? “This is unscriptural nonsense.”

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

What Sproul heard in the charismatic meetings he joined is the reason he presses verse 29’s judging so hard. “The more interpretations of tongues-speaking and prophecies I heard, the more false doctrine and false prophecy I heard.” Predictions with dates attached came to nothing: “Every single prophecy of that sort failed to materialize.” He also saw a teaching spread that split the body in two — “The church now had two classes of Christians—those who were baptized in the Spirit and those who were not” — which he concluded the New Testament does not teach. His standard for every word spoken in the Spirit’s name: “the Spirit never works against the Word but always with it and through it.”

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's note on verses 26–40, "Edification the Aim of Christian Speech," tells of Handel, praised for the noble entertainment of his *Messiah*, answering, "I should be sorry if I only entertained them; I wish to make them better." Spurgeon fears many public speakers could not say as much, and asks "how dare any of us waste the time of our fellow-immortals in mere amusing talk!" His conclusion is verse 28 applied to every mouth: if we have nothing to speak to edification, "how much better to hold our tongue!" Guzik also quotes Spurgeon on the hearer's side of verse 26: "Spiritual self indulgence is a monstrous evil; yet we see it all around."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry sees the Corinthian meeting with everyone producing a psalm or doctrine at once: "Is not this perfect uproar?" Tongues: two or three, successively, and only with an interpreter other than the speaker; otherwise silence, for "Solitary devotions are out of time and place when the church has met for social worship." The other prophets are to discern pretenders. On verse 30 Henry takes a minority line — the newly inspired man should wait until the first has finished, since the Spirit would not interrupt Himself: "This seems to me an unnatural thought." Inspiration is not like heathen frenzy: "The man inspired by the Spirit of God may still act the man." Disorder gives observers an unlovely notion of the God of peace.

VI
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:34–40

Properly and in an Orderly Manner

The silence of verse 34, the Lord's commandment, and two final words: do not forbid, do it in order

34 *The women are to* ↻ *keep silent* *in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.* 35 *If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.* 36 *Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?* 37 *If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are* △ *the Lord's commandment*. 38 *But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.* 39 *Therefore, my brethren,* ▤ *desire earnestly to prophesy*, *and* ▤ *do not forbid to speak in tongues*. 40 *But* ▤ *all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner*.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:34–40

σιγάτωσαν … λαλεῖν

SIGATŌSAN … LALEIN · "KEEP SILENT … TO SPEAK" · G4601, G2980

Sigaō appears three times in seven verses: the tongue-speaker with no interpreter (v. 28), the prophet who yields (v. 30), and the women (v. 34). In the first two the silence is specific and limited — silent *in that* speech, in that setting. Readers divide over how specific the third is. *Laleō* is Paul's ordinary verb for speaking throughout the chapter (23 times in the NASB's "speak" family), including tongues and prophecy; Guzik, citing Alan Redpath, presses its sense of talking, questioning and chatter. "Improper" (v. 35) is *aischron* (G150), shameful, disgraceful by the standards of the setting — the word of 11:6.

ἐντολή … ἀγνοεῖται

ENTOLĒ … AGNOEITAI · "COMMANDMENT … IS NOT RECOGNIZED" · G1785, G50

Paul claims for his letter what the prophets claimed for theirs: it is *Kyriou entolē*, "the Lord's commandment" (singular in the SBLGNT and NASB; the KJV, following other manuscripts, "commandments"). The test of a prophet or a "spiritual" man (*pneumatikos*, G4152 — the word of 12:1 and 14:1) is whether he *recognizes* it (*epiginōskō*, G1921). Verse 38 turns on *agnoeō*: the SBLGNT and NASB read the passive, *agnoeitai*, "he is not recognized" (by God, or by the church); the KJV follows the imperative reading, "let him be ignorant."

εὐσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν

EUSCHĒMONŌS KAI KATA TAXIN · "PROPERLY AND IN AN ORDERLY MANNER" · G2156, G5010

Euschēmonōs is "in good form, becomingly" — the opposite of the *aschēmonei* of 13:5, "love does not act unbecomingly"; Paul uses it of walking "properly" (Romans 13:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:12). *Taxis* is rank, order, sequence — Paul's joy at the Colossians' "good discipline" (Colossians 2:5). And before it, verse 39's *mē kōlyete* (G2967), "do not forbid," the very words of Jesus about the man casting out demons in His name: "Do not hinder him" (Mark 9:39). Paul ends with freedom and form together.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik's heading is plain: women should not judge prophecy or disrupt meetings. Since Paul assumed women may pray and prophesy (11:5), he holds that "keep silent" probably means they are not to take part in judging prophecy, which he assigns to the church's male leadership, and not to disrupt with questions called across a seating divided by sex; citing Alan Redpath, "It has nothing to do with prophecy or prayer." Verses 36–38 rebuke anyone who claims a word against the apostle: "if we are really spiritual, we will stick to the Word of God, and not go 'beyond' it." Paul regulates tongues but will not forbid them — and "the order should always be the order of the living, not of the dead!"

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul quotes verse 39's "do not forbid to speak with tongues" as part of the case he once made for seeking the gift, and he never denies that Paul allowed it. But his settled judgment about the modern movement is cautious: "I began to see that anyone who is uninhibited enough can utter unintelligible sounds while in a posture of prayer," and he is concerned that "it is not a supernatural event and is not the same as what was experienced in the early church." He left the movement because "I must live by the Word" — verse 37 as a life rule — yet says, "I still enjoy fellowship with my charismatic friends and delight in their love for prayer." (No Sproul treatment of vv. 34–35 was found.)

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon is heard here only through Guzik, who sets two of his sayings beside verse 40 to guard it from gloom: "Never hang your flag at half-mast when you praise God," and "We are really most horribly afraid of being too happy." Spurgeon would not join those who censured the Primitive Methodists' shouts, lest he be numbered with the Pharisees who said, "Master, rebuke thy disciples": "I wish more people were as earnest and even as vehement as the Methodists used to be." Decency, for him, is not the same thing as dullness.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry reads verses 34–35 strictly: silence "to such a degree that they must not ask questions" in the church, with 1 Timothy 2:11–12. He notes the tension with 11:5 and that "praying, and uttering hymns inspired, were not teaching," so some allow speech on extraordinary occasions; but ordinarily "women must be silent in the churches, not set up for teachers." He presses the husband too: "it is a shame for him to be silent when he should speak." "Came the gospel out from you?" rebukes Corinth's pride, and verse 37 is a test, for "The Spirit of Christ can never contradict itself." Verse 40 is no license to add ornaments to worship — only to keep out what is childish, mad or confused.

VII
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From Moses' wish and Isaiah's warning to Pentecost and the word that builds

"But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!""

NUMBERS 11:29

"Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

ACTS 2:11

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1

"But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved."

1 CORINTHIANS 11:5

"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;"

EPHESIANS 4:12

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

COLOSSIANS 3:16

> *“Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;”*
>
> 1 THESSALONIANS 5:19–21

> *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*
>
> 1 JOHN 4:1

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads Pentecost through verse 2: in Acts 2:11 the disciples were speaking to God and the crowd overheard “the wonderful works of God,” and Acts 10:46 has them “magnify God.” He sets Ephesians 4:12 beside verse 26 — we gather to be equipped and built up for lives lived outside the walls.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry reads verse 21 with Deuteronomy 28:46, 49 as well as Isaiah 28:11, and verses 34–35 with 1 Timothy 2:11–12 — while noting 11:5 and the women with spiritual gifts in the early church.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter — and here they genuinely differ. Guzik, a continuationist, regulates tongues as a living devotional gift; Sproul, who once prayed in tongues, came to doubt the modern practice; Henry takes tongues as real languages given to spread the gospel; Spurgeon, whose words on this chapter are few, presses edification and joyful worship. On vv. 34–35 Guzik and Henry read the silence differently. All four agree on love, edification, Scripture's authority and a God of peace.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Love first	Pursue love; tongues are to God and edify the speaker — not a rebuke.	Paul does not outlaw tongues; he compares the good and the better.	No Spurgeon sermon on these verses was located for this study.	What cannot be understood can never edify; benevolence makes a man great.
II · A clear sound	Sounds into the air, not ideas into minds; if tongues, then interpretation.	The way to the heart is through the mind; mindless Christianity cannot purify.	No Spurgeon sermon on these verses was located for this study.	A voice, and no voice — talking unknown words wastes our breath.
III · Spirit and mind	Paul's tongues were devotional; in church he came to bless, not be blessed.	He prayed in tongues, found no great edification, preferred praying with understanding.	No Spurgeon sermon on these verses was located for this study.	Public worship must be understood; no concurrence in prayers not understood.
IV · The visitor	Verse 22 is hard; read it by vv23–25 — tongues do not win unbelievers.	Gifts without love is immaturity; don't tailor worship to unbelievers' tastes.	No Spurgeon sermon on these verses was located for this study.	A sober, reasonable religion; plain Scripture awakens the conscience.
V · Each one has	Everyone brings something; judge prophecy by the Word; the Spirit is no tyrant.	False prophecies failed; the Spirit never works against the Word.	Handel: not only entertain but make them better; else hold our tongue.	Perfect uproar corrected; the inspired man may still act the man.
VI · In order	Silence = not judging prophecy or disrupting; the order of the living, not the dead.	Do not forbid — yet he doubts modern tongues; live by the Word.	(via Guzik) Never fly the flag at half-mast in praise.	Women not to teach publicly; Christ's Spirit never contradicts itself.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:1–40 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The chapter begins with love.** "Pursue love" (14:1) is the hinge from chapter 13. Every rule that follows — interpret, take turns, yield, keep silent — is love applied to a meeting. THE TEXT
- **Edification is the test.** *Oikodomē* and its verb appear seven times in the NASB. The question is not which gift is holier, but which one builds the house. THE GREEK
- **Paul regulates; he does not forbid.** He wishes all spoke in tongues (v. 5), speaks in tongues more than all (v. 18), and ends with "do not forbid" (v. 39). Sproul: "he does not outlaw their use." SPROUL
- **Sound is not communication.** Flute, bugle, barbarian (vv. 7–11): a sound without meaning is "speaking into the air." Henry: "a voice, and no voice." HENRY
- **The mind is never bypassed in the meeting.** "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also" (v. 15). You cannot say the Amen to what you could not follow. THE TEXT

- **Five words over ten thousand.** Paul's ratio — two thousand to one — is what love does with a gift. Guzik: his concern was "to be a blessing, not with getting a blessing." GUZIK
- **Paul watches the door.** The ungifted man and the unbeliever appear three times (vv. 16, 23, 24). The goal is a visitor who falls on his face and says, "God is certainly among you" (v. 25). THE TEXT
- **The Spirit does not overwhelm.** "The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (v. 32). Guzik: the Spirit does not take control as a demon does; Henry: the inspired man "may still act the man." GUZIK
- **Every word is weighed.** "Let the others pass judgment" (v. 29) — *diakrinō*, sift. Sproul's experience is the warning: interpretations and prophecies that taught false doctrine and failed. SPROUL
- **Freedom and order belong together.** "Do not forbid" and "properly and in an orderly manner" (vv. 39–40) stand side by side — the order of a living body, not of a graveyard. THE TEXT

† Questions for the Table

1 **When I bring something to our Thursday table — a word, a prayer, a story — do I first ask whom it will build?**

"Let all things be done for edification." Love does not seek its own (13:5).

14:1, 26; 13:5

2 **Where am I zealous for God in a way that is really about being seen? How would I aim that zeal at building the house?**

Paul does not quench the Corinthians' zeal; he aims it (v. 12).

14:12; 8:1

3 **Do I pray with my mind engaged, or on autopilot? What would it look like this week to say, "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also"?**

The mind unfruitful is the problem Paul names (v. 14).

14:14–15; Rom 12:2

4 **Think of the last man who walked into our group for the first time. What did he understand — and what would it take for him to say "God is certainly among you"?**

Plain truth reaches the secrets of the heart (vv. 24–25).

14:23–25

5 **Where am I tempted to say "I couldn't help it" — in anger, in talk, in an outburst I call spiritual?**

"The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets." No gift, and no Spirit-led man, is out of control.

14:32–33; Gal 5:22–23

6 **Our teachers disagree about tongues today and about verses 34–35. How do I hold a conviction on a disputed text and still keep peace with a brother who reads it differently?**

Weigh every word by Scripture, love the brother, and remember the God of peace (v. 33).

14:33, 37–40

Paul ends three chapters on the gifts with two words for every gathering of God's people: properly and in order. But he got there by way of love. The Spirit gives every member something to bring, love asks whom it will build, and the God of peace makes room for every voice in turn — until the man who walks in off the street falls on his face and says, "God is certainly among you."

Teaching the Word. Living in the Light. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; his *Commentary* on 1 Corinthians was completed after his death by Simon Browne from his notes and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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