SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



INDUCTIVE DEEP DIVE

1 Corinthians

Chapter Fourteen · Verses 1–40

Let All Things Be Done for Edification

NASB 1995 | OBSERVE · INTERPRET · APPLY | TWO VOICES

One passage, read inductively and heard through two teachers — **John MacArthur** and **David Guzik** — with the key verses marked in the Berean standard.

THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 14:1–40

Forty verses · six movements

THE METHOD

Inductive

Observe · Interpret · Apply

WHAT'S INSIDE

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"So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church." — 1 Corinthians 14:12

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 14:1–40

Let All Things Be Done for Edification

† How to Read This Study

The inductive method asks three questions of every paragraph. **Observe** — what does the text actually say? Who, what, when, where, which words repeat, where are the commands and the contrasts? **Interpret** — what did it mean to Paul and the Corinthians, and why? **Apply** — what does it ask of me now? Each movement below walks those three steps. The teachers are heard at the interpretation step, where they belong; the observations come first, from the text alone. Where they disagree — and in this chapter they do — each is given in his own terms.

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Key verses carry the six Berean marks. Mark what the text says — a phrase, never a sentence, and never an interpretation.

▲ GOD ▭ COMMAND ⇄ REPEATED WORD ⚠ SIN / WARNING ★ PROMISE ◷ TIME / PLACE / CONTRAST

KEY VERSE

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.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:26 · NASB 1995

† Before the Passage

Chapter 14 is where Paul brings chapters 12 and 13 into the room. Chapter 12 laid the foundation: one Spirit, one body, every member placed by God. Chapter 13 gave the governing principle: without love, the greatest gift is noise. Now he walks into the Corinthian meeting itself and applies both, and the chapter opens with the sentence that joins them: “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy” (14:1). Love first, gifts second, and among the gifts, the one that builds others up.

The Corinthian gatherings were loud. Many were speaking in tongues at once, with no interpretation; visitors walked in and thought the church had lost its mind (v.23); prophets talked over one another (vv. 30–31); the meeting 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, repeated seven times in forty verses: *edification* — does it build up the church? Everything in the chapter is that test applied: to tongues and prophecy (vv.1–5), to sound and meaning (vv.6–12), to prayer and the mind (vv.13–19), to the visitor (vv.20–25), to the order of the meeting (vv.26–33), and to the authority of the apostle's word (vv.34–40).

† The Text, Marked · KJV

The whole passage in the King James text with every Berean mark applied — the same marks the import file carries, so what you see here is what Berean will show.

▲ GOD ▭ COMMAND ⇄ REPEATED WORD ⚠ SIN / WARNING ★ PROMISE ◷ TIME / PLACE / CONTRAST

1 ▭ Follow after charity, and ▭ desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may ⇄ prophesy.

2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue ◷ speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men ★ to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue ⚠ edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth ▭ edifieth the church.

5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, ▭ that the church may receive edifying.

6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

8 For if the trumpet give ⚠ an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue ▭ words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall ⚠ speak into the air.

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh ⚠ a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be ⚠ a barbarian unto me.

12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, ▭ seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue ▭ pray that he may interpret.

14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but ⚠ my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is it then? I will pray ⇄ with the spirit, and I will pray ▭ with the understanding also: I will sing ⇄ with the spirit, and I will sing ▭ with the understanding also.

16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned ◷ say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but ⚠ the other is not edified.

18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

19 Yet in the church I had rather speak ▭ five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ◷ ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

20 Brethren, ▭ be not children in understanding: howbeit ▭ in malice be ye children, but ▭ in understanding be men.

21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and ⚠ yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

22 Wherefore ◷ tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, ⚠ will they not say that ye are mad?

24 But if all ⇄ prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, ◷ he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

25 And thus are ⚠ the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will ▲ worship God, and report that ▲ God is in you of a truth.

26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. ▭ Let all things be done unto edifying.

27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and ▭ let one interpret.

28 But if there be no interpreter, let him ⇄ keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and ▭ let the other judge.

30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

31 For ye may all ⇄ prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

32 And ◷ the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

33 For ▲ God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, ◷ as in all churches of the saints.

34 Let your women ⇄ keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

36 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are ▲ the commandments of the Lord.

38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to ⇄ prophesy, and ▭ forbid not to speak with tongues.

40 ▭ Let all things be done decently and in order.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:2-34 · KING JAMES VERSION · 43 MARKS

I
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-5

Love First, Then the Gift That Builds

Prophecy over tongues — 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 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- Three commands in one verse (v.1): **pursue** love, **desire earnestly** gifts, **especially** prophecy. The order is the argument.
- Contrast in direction: the tongue-speaker speaks **to God** (v.2); the prophet speaks **to men** (v.3).
- Contrast in result: tongues **edifies himself**; prophecy **edifies the church** (v.4).
- Three purposes of prophecy (v.3): **edification**, **exhortation**, **consolation** — all aimed at someone else.
- Paul is not against tongues: **I wish that you all spoke in tongues** (v.5) — **but even more** that you would prophesy, **unless he interprets**.

I INTERPRET · what it means

The chapter's first word is the last word of chapter 13: love. "Pursue" is a hunting verb — chase it down. Then desire the gifts, and especially prophecy. Why prophecy? Not because it is more dramatic but because it is more useful. The tongue-speaker addresses God and no one in the room understands; the prophet addresses the people and they are built up, urged on and comforted. Paul's comparison is not about which gift is holier. It is about which gift serves. That is chapter 13 applied: love does not seek its own (13:5), and a gift that edifies only its owner is seeking its own.

Notice what Paul does *not* say. He does not call tongues worthless or false. He wishes they all had it (v. 5), and he will thank God that he has it more than any of them (v.18). The issue is not the gift but the setting. In the gathered church, what cannot be understood cannot build, "unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying."

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur reads vv.1–5 as Paul turning the Corinthians' priorities upside down: they exalted tongues, he exalts prophecy, because prophecy communicates God's truth to people in words they understand. He takes the singular "tongue" in vv.2 and 4 (which the KJV marks "unknown") as pointing to the Corinthian counterfeit — ecstatic speech of the kind practiced in the pagan cults, "edifying himself" in the sense of self-gratification — while the genuine gift was the ability to speak real languages one had not learned (Acts 2). Prophecy he defines as proclaiming God's revelation; with the canon complete, its function continues in the faithful preaching of Scripture.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that the Corinthians overemphasized tongues and underemphasized prophecy. Tongues are spoken to God, not to people, and edify the speaker; prophecy is spoken to people and builds the church. He defines the three words of v.3 vividly: edification as construction, exhortation as a coach rallying a team, comfort as strengthening, not merely soothing. He holds that prophecy is a direct word from God rather than simply inspired preaching, since Paul does not use the ordinary word for preaching, and that Paul genuinely valued tongues as a gift for personal devotion — the problem in Corinth was using a private gift in a public setting.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *When I bring something to the gathering — a word, a song, a prayer — I will ask one question first: who will this build?*
- *Am I chasing love the way I chase spiritual experience? Paul says pursue the one, desire the other.*

II
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:6-12

A Trumpet With a Clear Sound

Unclear speech is speaking into the air

> 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 dis-*
> *tinction 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 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- Paul makes himself the example (v.6): if **I** come speaking in tongues, **what will I profit you**?
- Four things that do profit: **revelation**, **knowledge**, **prophecy**, **teaching** — all understandable.
- Three illustrations: the **flute or harp** (v.7), the **bugle** (v.8), a foreign **language** (vv.10–11).
- The verdict (v.9): unclear speech is **speaking into the air**. The relational cost (v.11): we become **barbarians** to each other.
- **"So also you"** twice (vv.9, 12). Verse 12 redirects their zeal: **seek to abound for the edification of the church**.

I INTERPRET · what it means

Paul argues from things everyone in Corinth knew. A flute that plays no distinct notes gives no tune. A bugle that sounds an uncertain call leaves the army in its tents while the enemy comes. A man who speaks a language you do not know is, to you, a foreigner — and you are one to him. Every illustration makes the same point: sound is not the same as communication. A church full of sound and empty of meaning is speaking into the air.

Verse 12 is the turn, and it is gracious. Paul does not rebuke their zeal; he aims it. "Since you are zealous of spiritual gifts" — good — then be ambitious to abound in what builds the church. The word for "zealous" is the same root as "earnestly desire" (12:31; 14:1) and "is not jealous" (13:4). Corinth's zeal was real. Paul does not quench it. He points it at the house.

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur sees in vv.6–12 the principle that God's gifts are for communication, and that God is never the author of meaningless sound. Genuine tongues were languages — "no kind is without meaning" (v.10) — and in the church they had to be translated or they profited no one. The bugle illustration stresses the stakes: unclear speech in the church is not harmless; it leaves believers unprepared. Verse 12 is the corrective: the Corinthians' zeal was misdirected toward display, and Paul redirects it to the building up of others.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik follows the instruments: clear notes make music, a clear trumpet call prepares for battle, and in the same way speaking in tongues in a meeting without interpretation is "speaking into the air" — it may satisfy curiosity but builds no one. He adds that language itself is a gift reflecting the image of God, and that God understands every tongue, so an uninterpreted tongue is not meaningless before God — only before the congregation. His application: seek clarity and edification in the gathering, and keep uninterpreted tongues private.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *What would an outsider understand of our worship this Sunday? Where are we a flute with no notes?*
- *My zeal for God is not the problem. Where is it aimed — at being seen, or at building the house?*

III
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:13-19

With the Spirit and With the Mind

Five words that teach, over ten thousand that don't

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 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- A command (v.13): the tongue-speaker should **pray that he may interpret**.
- Contrast (v.14): **my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful**.
- Paul's resolution (v.15), four times: **with the spirit … with the mind also** — for prayer and for song.
- The outsider again (v.16): how can **the ungifted** say **"Amen"** to what he cannot understand?
- A personal claim (v.18): **I speak in tongues more than you all**. A personal choice (v.19): **five words** that instruct over **ten thousand** that don't.

I INTERPRET · what it means

Here Paul refuses a false choice. The Corinthians had set spirit against mind, as if the less you understood the more spiritual you were. Paul will have both. "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." Worship that bypasses the understanding leaves the mind "unfruitful" — and leaves the man in the next seat unable to say Amen. The Amen matters. It is the congregation making the prayer its own. You cannot agree with what you could not follow.

Then Paul does something disarming. He tells the tongue-proud Corinthians that he speaks in tongues more than all of them. He is not arguing from lack. And yet in the church he would rather say five words that teach someone than ten thousand that teach no one. The ratio is the point: two thousand to one. That is what love does with a gift.

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur reads v.14 as a warning: prayer that bypasses the mind is unfruitful, and Scripture never commends worship disengaged from understanding. "With the mind also" is the Christian standard for prayer and song. On v.18, he takes Paul to be speaking of the genuine gift of languages, used where it served its purpose, and v.19 as the decisive principle for the church: five intelligible words outweigh ten thousand unintelligible ones, because the purpose of the gathering is instruction and edification.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik glosses "mind" (*nous*) as the intellect, which is unfruitful when one prays in tongues because it does not grasp the content. He notes that "spirit" may mean the human spirit, the Holy Spirit, or both. He describes tongues as a real mode of prayer and praise that bypasses the intellect, for private devotion, and insists the Spirit never forces bizarre behavior. In public, blessings must be understood so others can say Amen. His application mirrors Paul's: use tongues freely in private worship; in church, prefer five words with understanding.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *Do I pray with my mind engaged, or on autopilot? I will pray this week with both — the spirit and the understanding.*
- *In the meeting, will I choose five words that help a brother over ten thousand that impress him?*

IV
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:20-25

When the Visitor Walks In

Grow up in your thinking — and think about him

> 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 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- Three commands about thinking (v.20): not **children**, but **infants in evil** and **mature** in thought.
- A quotation from **the Law** (v.21) — Isaiah 28:11–12: strange tongues, and **even so they will not listen**.
- A puzzling pair (v.22): tongues a **sign … to unbelievers**; prophecy **to those who believe**.
- Two scenes (vv.23–25): all speak in tongues → visitors say **"you are mad"**; all prophesy → the visitor is **convicted**, **called to account**, and **worships God**.
- **Ungifted** and **unbelievers** appear four times in four verses. Paul is watching the door.

I INTERPRET · what it means

Verse 20 is a gentle rebuke. Childishness loves what is showy and does not think about its effect on others; maturity thinks. Be as innocent as infants about evil, but think like adults. Then Paul reaches back to Isaiah 28, where God warned Israel that because they would not listen to His prophets in plain Hebrew, He would speak to them through the foreign tongue of Assyrian invaders — and even then they would not listen. Strange speech, in Isaiah, was a sign of judgment on unbelief, not a tool for winning unbelievers.

That explains the puzzle of vv.22–25. Tongues, uninterpreted, function toward the unbeliever as Isaiah's foreign tongue did: he hears sound, concludes you are mad, and leaves unchanged. Prophecy he can understand, and understanding goes where noise cannot — into the secrets of his heart, until he falls on his face and says, "God is certainly among you." That is the meeting Paul wants. Not one the visitor admires, but one in which he meets God.

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur takes Isaiah 28 as the key: tongues were a sign of judgment to unbelieving Israel, God speaking through foreign languages to a people who rejected His plain word. That sign, he argues, fulfilled its purpose in the apostolic era, especially with the judgment that fell on Jerusalem in AD 70, and is one of the reasons he holds that tongues ceased. In the church, uninterpreted tongues only confirmed outsiders in their unbelief, while prophecy — God's word made plain — convicted the heart and brought true worship.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik calls vv.22–25 one of the hardest passages in the New Testament, since v.22 says tongues are a sign to unbelievers yet vv.23–25 show unbelievers mocking tongues and being won by prophecy. He resolves it by reading tongues as a sign of judgment, not blessing: the unbeliever who hears them sees madness and is confirmed in his unbelief, as Israel was in Isaiah's day. He mentions, without adopting, a suggestion that the word order was reversed by a scribe, and settles on interpreting the hard verse by the clear ones: tongues do not minister to unbelievers; prophecy does.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *Who walked into our church last month for the first time? What did he understand?*
- *Grow up in my thinking: will I measure our worship by how it feels to me, or by what it does for the man who doesn't yet know God?*

V
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:26-33

Each One Has — Two or Three, In Turn

God is not a God of confusion but 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 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- A picture of a meeting (v.26): **each one has** — psalm, teaching, revelation, tongue, interpretation.
- The rule over all of it: **Let all things be done for edification** (v.26).
- Rules for tongues (vv.27–28): **two or at the most three**, **each in turn**, **one must interpret** — or **keep silent**.
- Rules for prophets (vv.29–31): **two or three** speak, **the others pass judgment**, the first **keeps silent** if another receives a revelation.
- A statement about the gifts (v.32): **the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets**. A statement about God (v. 33): **not … confusion but … peace**.

I INTERPRET · what it means

Look first at the picture in v.26: an early house church where many members brought something — a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation. Paul does not rebuke the participation. He regulates it. Tongues: two or three, one at a time, and only with an interpreter; otherwise speak to yourself and to God. Prophecy: two or three, the rest weighing what is said, and if someone else receives a word, the first speaker yields. Prophecy is never self-authenticating; it must be judged (1 Thessalonians 5:20–21; 1 John 4:1).

Then comes the sentence that dismantles a whole theology of ecstasy: "the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets." No one in the church is ever overwhelmed into disorder by the Holy Spirit. A man who cannot wait his turn is not being moved by God; he is being moved by himself. Why? Because God is not a God of confusion but of peace. The meeting reflects the God who is in it. And this is not Corinthian custom: it is how it is "in all the churches of the saints."

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur reads vv.26–33 as Paul imposing order on chaos: limited speakers, one at a time, mandatory interpretation, and prophecy always subject to evaluation by others. Verse 32 is decisive for him: the Holy Spirit never produces uncontrollable behavior, so whatever is frenzied or disorderly is not of God. God's character as the God of peace sets the pattern for every gathering of His people, and the closing phrase makes the principle universal — it applied in every church, not only in Corinth.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that small house churches allowed many to contribute, while larger congregations need more structure. He applies Paul's limits plainly — two or three, in turn, with interpretation — and stresses that prophecies must be judged by Scripture and by the church's leaders, warning against recording prophecies and treating them as equal to Scripture. On v.32, he says the Spirit does not overwhelm people; those who shout or act strangely may actually be resisting the Spirit. God may do unusual things, but the atmosphere of the meeting should not be chaotic.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *What do I bring when we gather — or do I only come to receive? "Each one has."*
- *Where am I tempted to say "I couldn't help it"? The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.*

VI
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-40

Properly and in an Orderly Manner

The Lord's commandment — and a closing balance

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 recog-*
nized. 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 · NASB 1995

O OBSERVE · what the text says

- A third **keep silent** (v.34), now for **the women … in the churches**; **subject**; **as the Law also says**.
- A provision (v.35): **ask their own husbands at home**.
- Two sharp questions (v.36): did the word of God **come from you**? Or **to you only**?
- A claim of authority (v.37): what Paul writes is **the Lord's commandment**.
- The closing balance (vv.39–40): **desire earnestly to prophesy**, **do not forbid to speak in tongues** — and **all things … properly and in an orderly manner**.

I INTERPRET · what it means

Verses 34–35 are among the most debated in the letter, and an honest study holds two facts together. First, Paul has already assumed that women pray and prophesy in the meeting (11:5), so "keep silent" cannot mean total silence; it must refer to a particular kind of speech in this setting. Second, the passage sits inside a paragraph about speaking in turn and judging prophecy (vv.29–33), uses the same verb "keep silent" already applied to tongue-speakers and prophets, and grounds itself in "the Law" and the practice of "all the churches." Faithful teachers read it as restricting women from the authoritative judging of prophecy, or from teaching authority over the congregation (compare 1 Timothy 2:11–12), or from disruptive questioning during the meeting; some hold more than one of these together. The two teachers in this study are given below in their own terms.

Then Paul closes the whole three-chapter discussion. To a church that thought it owned the word of God he asks whether the word started with them (v.36). To anyone who thinks himself spiritual he says: prove it by recognizing that this is the Lord's commandment (v.37). And he lands on a balance Corinth needed and every church still needs: do not stop desiring prophecy, do not forbid tongues, and let everything be done properly and in order. Not the stillness of a graveyard — the order of a living body.

JOHN MACARTHUR · 1 Corinthians

MacArthur reads vv.34–35 as a permanent principle, not a local custom: women are not to take the role of preaching, teaching or leading in the gathered church, grounded in the created order ("as the Law also says") and applied "in all the churches." He understands "keep silent" in that setting, not as forbidding women from every form of participation such as singing, and he links it to 1 Timothy 2:11–12. On vv.37–40 he stresses apostolic authority — Paul's instructions are the Lord's commandment — and reads "do not forbid to speak in tongues" as applying while the gift was still operating in the apostolic church.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Paul has already assumed women may pray and prophesy publicly (11:5), so "keep silent" does not forbid all speech. He reads it as restricting the judging of prophecy to the church's male leadership, and as addressing disruptive talk and questioning during the meeting — the verb can mean to chatter or argue — with questions to be asked at home. He presents this as his interpretation. On vv.39–40 he insists tongues are not to be despised, and that "decently and in order" means the order of a living body, not the stillness of a dead one: worship should be orderly without being joyless.

A APPLY · what it asks of me

- *Do I treat Scripture as the Lord's commandment — or as one opinion among many when it presses on me?*
- *Is our church more in danger of chaos or of a graveyard? Paul guards against both in v.39–40.*

† Word Studies

Twenty-four words carry the weight of the chapter — the vocabulary of a meeting where everything is measured by whether it builds. Each card gives the Greek, the NASB rendering, and why it matters here.

οἰκοδομή **oikodomē**

EDIFICATION · 1 COR 14:3, 5, 12, 26

A building word — *oikos*, house, and *demō*, to build. With its verb, seven times in this chapter in the NASB. The test Paul applies to every gift: does it build the house?

παράκλησις **paraklēsis**

EXHORTATION · 1 COR 14:3

A calling alongside — the coach who comes beside the runner. The same root as *Paraklētos*, the Spirit as Helper (John 14:26).

παραμυθία **paramythia**

CONSOLATION · 1 COR 14:3

Comfort that steadies, speech that strengthens the fainting. Only here in the New Testament. Prophecy builds, urges and comforts — all three aimed at another person.

προφητεύω **prophēteuō**

PROPHESY · 1 COR 14:1, 3, 24, 39

To speak forth what God has given. With its noun, fourteen times in the chapter (NASB). Paul ranks it above tongues because the church can understand it (v.5).

γλῶσσα **glōssa**

TONGUE · 1 COR 14:2, 4, 13, 39

Tongue, language. Sixteen times in the chapter. The KJV adds "unknown" in italics to the singular; whether the singular and plural mark a difference is one place MacArthur and Guzik part.

διερμηνεύω **diermēneuō**

INTERPRET · 1 COR 14:5, 13, 27

To translate, to explain through. The gift that turns a tongue into something the church can say "Amen" to. No interpreter, no tongue in the meeting (v.28).

νοῦς **nous**

MIND · 1 COR 14:14, 15, 19

The understanding. "My mind is unfruitful" (v.14). Paul refuses worship that bypasses the mind: "I will pray with the spirit and … with the mind also."

ἄκαρπος **akarpos**

UNFRUITFUL · 1 COR 14:14

Without fruit. A mind that produces nothing for anyone else. The opposite of the edification Paul is after.

αὐλός · κιθάρα **aulos · kithara**

FLUTE · HARP · 1 COR 14:7

Corinth's everyday instruments. A flute that plays no distinct notes is not music; it is noise.

σάλπιγξ **salpinx**

BUGLE · TRUMPET · 1 COR 14:8

The battle trumpet. An indistinct call leaves the army standing in its tents. Unclear speech in church leaves the people of God unready.

εὔσημος **eusēmos**

CLEAR · 1 COR 14:9

Well-marked, easily recognized. Only here in the New Testament. Speech in the church must be *eusēmos* or it is "speaking into the air."

βάρβαρος **barbaros**

BARBARIAN · 1 COR 14:11

Originally anyone whose speech sounded like "barbar" to a Greek. Uninterpreted tongues turn brothers into foreigners to each other.

ἰδιώτης **idiōtēs**

UNGIFTED · 1 COR 14:16, 23, 24

The outsider, the uninitiated, the ordinary man without the gift. Three times. Paul keeps asking how the meeting sounds to him.

ἀμήν **Amēn**

AMEN · 1 COR 14:16

Hebrew "so be it," said by the congregation to a prayer it has understood. You cannot say Amen to what you could not follow.

τέλειοι **teleioi**

MATURE · 1 COR 14:20

Full-grown — the same root as "the perfect" in 13:10. Be infants in evil, but adults in your thinking.

σημεῖον **sēmeion**

SIGN · 1 COR 14:22

A pointer, an indicator. In Isaiah 28, foreign speech was a sign of judgment on a people who would not listen; Paul applies it to unbelievers who hear tongues and stay unbelieving.

ἐλέγχεται · ἀνακρίνεται **elenchetai · anakrinetai**

CONVICTED · CALLED TO ACCOUNT · 1 COR 14:24

Exposed and examined. Prophecy the visitor understands does what tongues cannot: it reaches the secrets of his heart (v.25).

ψαλμός **psalmos**

PSALM · 1 COR 14:26

A song, often with accompaniment. The first item in Paul's picture of a meeting where "each one has" something to bring.

ἀκαταστασία **akatastasia**

CONFUSION · 1 COR 14:33

Disorder, instability, unrest. James uses it of the fruit of envy (James 3:16). God is not its author.

εἰρήνη **eirēnē**

PEACE · 1 COR 14:33

The opposite of confusion — not silence, but wholeness, everything in its place. The God of peace produces meetings of peace.

ὑποτάσσω **hypotassō**

SUBJECT · 1 COR 14:32, 34

To arrange under. The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets (v.32); the same verb is used of the women (v.34). No gift is uncontrollable.

σιγάω **sigaō**

KEEP SILENT · 1 COR 14:28, 30, 34

Three times in seven verses — the tongue-speaker with no interpreter, the prophet who yields, the women. Each silence is a specific kind of speech in a specific setting.

εὐσχημόνως **euschēmonōs**

PROPERLY · 1 COR 14:40

Fittingly, with good form — the opposite of the "unbecoming" of 13:5. Love does not act unbecomingly; neither should the meeting.

κατὰ τάξιν **kata taxin**

IN AN ORDERLY MANNER · 1 COR 14:40

In order, in sequence — a military word for ranks. Not the order of a graveyard, but of a body where every part works in turn.

† Why Edification Is the Test

Paul applies one question to every gift in chapter 14: does it build up the church? Eight reasons from the text and the rest of Scripture why that is the right question — and why it is still the right question for us.

1. **Love edifies.**

   "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies" (8:1). Edification is simply what love does with a gift. Chapter 14 is chapter 13 walking into the room: a gift that builds only its owner is seeking its own (13:5).

2. **The gifts were given for it.**

   "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (12:7). Christ gave gifts "for the equipping of the saints … to the building up of the body" (Ephesians 4:12). Using a gift for anything else is using it against its design.

3. **The church is a house under construction.**

   Oikodomē is a building word. Paul pictures the church as God's building (3:9), God's temple (3:16). Every gathering either adds stones or knocks them loose. Edification asks which one we are doing.

4. **The mind matters to God.**

   "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also" (v.15). We are transformed "by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). Worship the congregation cannot understand cannot renew anyone's mind, and leaves the man beside you unable to say Amen.

5. **The visitor matters to God.**

   Paul keeps asking how the meeting sounds to the ungifted and the unbeliever (vv.16, 23–24). A church that edifies is one in which an outsider can hear God speak, fall on his face and say, "God is certainly among you" (v. 25).

6. **God is a God of peace.**

   "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (v.33). The meeting shows the world what its God is like. Disorder dressed as spirituality misrepresents Him; order that builds reflects Him.

7. **Every word, not only every gift.**

   "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification" (Ephesians 4:29). The test of chapter 14 reaches past Sunday into every conversation: will this word build?

8. **We gather to build one another.**

   "Not forsaking our own assembling together … but encouraging one another" (Hebrews 10:25). "Each one has" (v.26). The meeting is not an audience watching performers; it is a body building itself up in love (Ephesians 4:16).

† Reading the Chapter Whole

The three movements, the word studies and the cross-references pulled into one reading — what the chapter is doing, and the threads that tie it to the rest of the letter and to the gospel.

1. **One test, six applications.**

   Read whole, the chapter applies a single question — does it edify? — to six things: tongues and prophecy (vv.1–5), sound and meaning (6–12), prayer and the mind (13–19), the visitor (20–25), the order of the meeting (26–33), and the authority of the word (34–40). Seven times the NASB says *edify* or *edification*.

2. **Chapters 12–14 are one argument.**

   Chapter 12: every member is gifted and placed by God. Chapter 13: every gift is nothing without love. Chapter 14: love, applied to the meeting, means every gift is measured by whether it builds others. "Pursue love" (14:1) is the hinge between the last two.

3. **Paul regulates; he does not forbid.**

   He wishes all spoke in tongues (v.5), speaks in tongues more than all of them (v.18), and ends with "do not forbid" (v.39). His limits are about setting: in the gathered church, what cannot be understood must be interpreted or kept private.

4. **Spirit and mind, together.**

   Corinth set spirit against understanding. Paul refuses the choice four times in one verse (v.15). Christian worship engages the whole person, and the whole congregation.

5. **The outsider in every paragraph.**

   The ungifted man (v.16), the barbarian (v.11), the visitor who says "you are mad" (v.23), the unbeliever who falls on his face (v.25). Paul measures the meeting by the man at the door.

6. **Order is not the enemy of the Spirit.**

   "The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (v.32). The Spirit does not overwhelm His people into disorder; self does. Order and life belong together — the order of a body, not of a graveyard.

7. **The teachers differ — and agree.**

   MacArthur holds that genuine tongues were languages that ceased with the apostolic age; Guzik holds that tongues continue as a prayer gift, regulated in public. On vv.34–35 they read the restriction differently. Both agree on the chapter's spine: love first, edification as the test, Scripture as the Lord's commandment, and God as a God of peace.

† The Passage in the Whole Bible

Scripture interprets Scripture. These passages stand behind Paul's argument or carry it forward — Pentecost, the prophets, the gathered church, and the word that builds.

1 Corinthians 12:31

"But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way."

The door into chapter 13; chapter 14 walks back through it.

1 Corinthians 13:1

"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."

Why chapter 14 ranks tongues below prophecy in the meeting: sound without love is noise.

1 Corinthians 8:1

"Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies."

"Love edifies" — chapter 14's test was set six chapters earlier.

1 Corinthians 10:23

"All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify."

Liberty measured by edification — the same test, applied to gifts.

Romans 14:19

"So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."

Peace and building up — the two words of 14:26 and 14:33 together.

Romans 15:2

"Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification."

Edification as the shape of love toward a neighbor.

Ephesians 4:12

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

Every gift is for building the body.

Ephesians 4:29

"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear."

Edification applies to every word, not only to gifts.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

"Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing."

Building up is every believer's work.

Numbers 11:29

"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!""

Moses' wish echoes Paul's in 14:5: that all would prophesy.

Joel 2:28

"It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions."

The promise of a prophesying people, quoted by Peter at Pentecost.

Acts 2:6

"And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language."

At Pentecost, tongues were heard as known languages.

Acts 2:11

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

What the tongues said: the mighty deeds of God.

Acts 10:46

“For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,”

Tongues as praise to God — the direction of 14:2.

Acts 19:6

“And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.”

Tongues and prophecy together at Ephesus.

Isaiah 28:11

“Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue,”

The passage Paul quotes in 14:21.

Isaiah 28:12

“He who said to them, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,” And, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen.”

Why the foreign tongue came: they would not listen to plain speech.

Matthew 6:7

““And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.”

Jesus on many words in prayer — compare five words with the mind (14:19).

Psalm 47:7

“For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with a skillful psalm.”

Praise with skill and understanding — singing “with the mind also.”

Colossians 3:16

“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.”

Songs that teach — the psalm of 14:26 aimed at one another.

Romans 12:2

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

The renewed mind — never bypassed in Christian worship.

Hebrews 5:14

“But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

Maturity in thinking (14:20) is trained discernment.

1 Corinthians 3:1

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.”

Paul had already called Corinth infants — 14:20 asks them to grow up.

1 Thessalonians 5:19

“Do not quench the Spirit;”

The balance of 14:39 — do not forbid.

1 Thessalonians 5:20

“do not despise prophetic utterances.”

Do not despise prophecy…

1 Thessalonians 5:21

“But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;”

…but judge it (14:29).

1 John 4:1

“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.”

Why the others “pass judgment” (14:29).

John 14:27

““Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

The God of peace (14:33) gives His peace to His people.

1 Corinthians 7:15

“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”

“God has called us to peace” — the same character in another setting.

Hebrews 10:25

“not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

Why the meeting matters: we gather to encourage one another.

1 Timothy 2:12

“But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.”

The parallel many teachers read with 14:34–35.

2 Timothy 3:16

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;”

Every gift and every word is tested by the written Word — “the Lord’s commandment” (14:37).

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Six movements, three questions

The inductive walk in one table: what the text says, what it means, what it asks.

THE MOVEMENT	OBSERVE	INTERPRET	APPLY
Love first (14:1–5)	Three commands; to God / to men; himself / the church	Prophecy ranks higher in the meeting because it builds others	Ask who it builds
Clear sound (14:6–12)	Flute, bugle, language; “into the air”; “so also you”	Sound is not communication; zeal aimed at the house	Aim my zeal at the church
Spirit & mind (14:13–19)	Spirit / mind ×4; the Amen; five vs ten thousand	Worship engages the understanding; love chooses the five words	Pray with my mind engaged
The visitor (14:20–25)	Children / mature; Isaiah 28; mad / worship	Tongues as a sign of judgment; prophecy reaches the heart	Think about the man at the door
Order (14:26–33)	Each one has; two or three; subject; peace	Participation regulated; no gift is uncontrollable	Bring something; wait my turn
The Lord’s word (14:34–40)	Keep silent; did it come from you; the Lord’s commandment; do not forbid	Apostolic authority; a closing balance of freedom and order	Submit to the Word; guard life and order

1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-40 · AN INDUCTIVE READING

† Teaching Outline for the Table

Forty-five minutes, five parts. Built so the men do the reading and the chapter does the work.

PART	WHAT TO DO
Open (5 min)	Read 13:13 and 14:1 aloud. Ask: what does it mean to "pursue" love? Land on the order — love first, gifts second, the gift that builds above all.
Clear sound (10 min)	Read vv.6–12. Ask the men to name a time they sat through something in church they could not follow. What did it build in them? Read v.12.
Spirit and mind (10 min)	Read vv.13–19. Ask: is my prayer life engaged with my mind? Have each man pray one sentence aloud that the others can say Amen to.
The visitor (10 min)	Read vv.20–25. Picture a man who walked in last Sunday for the first time. What did he hear? What would it take for him to say "God is certainly among you"?
Close (10 min)	Read vv.26 and 40. Each man names one thing he will bring to the next gathering — a psalm, a word, a prayer — and whom it is meant to build.

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The chapter begins with love.** "Pursue love" (14:1) is the hinge from chapter 13. Every rule that follows is love applied to a meeting.
- **Edification is the test.** Seven times in forty verses (NASB). Not which gift is holier, but which one builds the church.
- **Paul is not against tongues.** He wishes all had it (v.5), has it more than all of them (v.18), and forbids forbidding it (v.39). His limits are about the setting.
- **Sound is not communication.** A flute with no notes, a bugle with no call, a language no one knows — speaking into the air (vv.7–11).
- **The mind is never bypassed.** "With the spirit and with the mind also" (v.15). You cannot say Amen to what you could not follow (v.16).
- **Five words over ten thousand.** Paul's ratio in v.19 — two thousand to one — is what love does with a gift.
- **Paul watches the door.** The ungifted and the unbeliever appear again and again. The goal is a visitor who says, "God is certainly among you" (v.25).

- **The Spirit does not overwhelm.** “The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets” (v.32). Disorder is not a sign of the Spirit.

- **God’s character sets the meeting’s tone.** Not confusion but peace (v.33) — in all the churches of the saints.

- **Freedom and order belong together.** Do not forbid; do it properly and in order (vv.39–40). The order of a living body, not of a graveyard.

† Questions for the Table

1 **Why does chapter 14 open with “Pursue love”?**

Because every rule that follows is love applied to the meeting.

1 COR 14:1; 13:13

2 **What makes prophecy “greater” than tongues in the meeting (v.5)?**

Not holiness but usefulness — the church can understand it and be built up.

1 COR 14:3-5

3 **What do the flute, the bugle and the foreign language have in common?**

Sound without meaning communicates nothing; it is speaking into the air.

1 COR 14:7-11

4 **Why does Paul insist on praying “with the mind also”?**

So the understanding is fruitful and others can say Amen.

1 COR 14:14-16

5 **Paul speaks in tongues more than all of them. Why does that make v.19 stronger?**

He is not arguing from lack; he chooses five words that teach out of love.

1 COR 14:18-19

6 **How does Isaiah 28 help explain “tongues are for a sign … to unbelievers”?**

Foreign speech was a sign of judgment on a people who would not listen.

1 COR 14:21-22; ISA 28:11-12

7 **What happens when a visitor understands what is said (vv.24–25)?**

He is convicted, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and he worships God.

1 COR 14:24-25

8 **What does “the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets” rule out?**

The idea that the Spirit forces disorder; no gift is uncontrollable.

1 COR 14:32-33

9 **What do vv.34–35 clearly not mean, given 11:5 — and how do our two teachers read them?**

Not total silence; MacArthur: no teaching/leading role; Guzik: no judging prophecy or disruptive questioning.

1 COR 14:34-35; 11:5

10 **What will you bring to the next gathering, and whom is it meant to build?**

"Each one has" — the meeting is a body building itself up.

1 COR 14:26

❖

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 a gift; love asks whom it will build; and the God of peace makes room for every voice in turn. When that happens, the man who walks in from the street does not say "you are mad." He falls on his face and says, "God is certainly among you."

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

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