

Series: Together Toward Maturity

Inductive Bible Study Guide: 1 Corinthians 14:1-25



Step 1: Observation – What does the passage say?

Read **1 Corinthians 14:1–25** slowly and carefully. Paul continues his discussion of spiritual gifts, focusing especially on prophecy and tongues in the gathered church.

Observation Prompts:

- What command does Paul give at the beginning?
 - How does Paul compare prophecy and tongues?
 - What purpose does Paul assign to each gift?
 - What concern does Paul raise about intelligibility, clarity, and understanding?
 - What does Paul say about unbelievers and unlearned in worship?
-

Read the passage and note what you see:

What does Paul instruct believers to pursue in verse 1?

How does Paul describe the difference between speaking in tongues and prophesying in verses 2–5?

What examples does Paul give in verses 6–12 to explain the importance of clarity?

What does Paul say about praying and singing with both spirit and mind in verses 13–19?

What does Paul teach about the effect of tongues and prophecy on unbelievers in verses 20–25?

Step 2: Interpretation – What does the passage mean?

Paul is not diminishing spiritual gifts — he is prioritizing what builds up the church. In the gathered assembly, clarity and edification matter more than personal spiritual experience.

- Prophecy (intelligible speech that strengthens, encourages, and comforts) benefits the whole body.
- Tongues without interpretation do not build up others.

Paul’s central concern is that worship be understandable, orderly, and centered on the growth of the church and the conviction of unbelievers.

Questions to Explore:

Why does Paul say to “pursue love” while also desiring spiritual gifts?

Why does Paul prioritize prophecy over uninterpreted tongues in the church gathering?

What do Paul’s illustrations (musical instruments, battle trumpet, foreign language) teach about communication in worship?

What does it mean to pray and sing with both the spirit and the mind?

Why is intelligibility so important in public worship?

How does prophecy potentially impact an unbeliever who enters the gathering?

What does this passage reveal about God's heart for outsiders in worship?

Word Study Suggestions:

- **Pursue (v.1):** actively chase or strive after
 - **Build up (vv.3–5,12):** strengthen, edify, construct spiritually
 - **Mysteries (v.2):** truths hidden unless revealed or interpreted
 - **Interpretation (v.5):** explanation that makes the message understandable
 - **Convicted (v.24):** exposed or brought under conviction
-

Step 3: Application – How should I respond?

This passage challenges believers to think beyond personal experience and ask:

- Does what I do in worship build up others and point people to Christ?

Love governs how gifts are used. Edification guides what is prioritized. Clarity protects unity and witness.

Personal Reflection:

Do I prioritize my own spiritual experience or the growth of others?

How does this passage challenge the way I think about corporate worship?

Am I attentive to how newcomers or unbelievers might experience the Holy Spirit move in our church gatherings?

What does it look like for me to pursue both spiritual experience, spiritual gifts, and thoughtful clarity?

How can I contribute to a worship environment that strengthens believers and convicts unbelievers through spiritual gifts, edifying talk, and loving actions?

How can I pursue love and earnestly desire the gifts intentionally with the focus of glorifying God and building up those around me?

Is there any fear in me regarding pursuit of the spiritual gifts and if so is it based on biblical understanding or past experience?

Am I willing to seek the supernatural gifts through the filling (baptism) of the Holy Spirit for the purpose building up the church (the common God) and witnessing to the lost (helping unbelievers experience the power of God)? If not, Why not?

Summary Truths:

- Love remains the guiding principle for spiritual gifts.
 - Gifts are meant to build up the church, not elevate individuals.
 - Clarity and understanding matter in corporate worship.
 - God is a God of Order but not a God of Boxes
 - God desires worship that strengthens believers and reaches unbelievers.
 - Spiritual maturity values edification over self-expression.
 - Every Christian is called to intentionally pursue spiritual gifts for the good of others
-

Optional Memory Verse:

“So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.”— 1 Corinthians 14:12 (ESV)

Prayer Prompt:

Lord, help me pursue love above all. Help me to be open to the supernatural work of Spirit in my life. Holy Spirit I ask you to fill me to overflowing with your power, love, and gifts. Teach me to use every gift You give for the strengthening of others. Remove any fear I have of your supernatural work in my life. In our worship, let us be Christ-centered, edifying, and welcoming to those who need to hear the truth.

For Further Study:

- Ephesians 4:29 — Speech that builds up
- Colossians 4:6 — Words seasoned with grace
- Acts 2:1–13 — Tongues at Pentecost
- Hebrews 10:24–25 — Encouraging one another