Do Your Words Edify?

I Corinthians 14:1-19

11-5-2023

Introduction: (v.1,12)

When you speak..."seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church!" (v.12)

5 Reasons why you should use your tongue to proclaim truth in an intelligible manner:

I. Our message should be <u>CLEAR</u> not cryptic (v.2-3)

<u>Tongues</u>: Mysterious Message *<u>Prophecy</u>: Clear Message*

II. Our message should be <u>OTHERS-CENTERED</u> not self-centered (v.4)

<u>Tongues</u>: Ego-Centric *<u>Prophecy</u>: Others-Centered*

III. Our message should <u>EDIFY</u> not mystify (v.5)

<u>Tongues</u>: Inferior Gift *<u>Prophecy</u>: Superior Gift*

IV. Our message should <u>PROFIT</u> not be detrimental (v.6)

<u>Tongues</u>: No Profit (w/o Interpretation) <u>Prophecy</u>: Beneficial

V. Our message should be <u>RATIONAL</u> not illogical (v.7-17)

<u>Tongues</u>: Unintelligible <u>Prophecy</u>: Understandable

5 Illustrations of the need for understandable communication:

A. **<u>Musical Instruments</u>** must communicate an understandable message (v.7-8)

B. **<u>Language</u>** <u>in General</u> must communicate an understandable message (v.9-11)

C. **<u>Prayer</u>** must communicate an understandable message (v.13-15a)

D. **<u>Songs</u>** must communicate an understandable message (v.15b)

E. **<u>Praise</u>** <u>(Testimonies)</u> must communicate an understandable message (v.16-17)

Conclusion: (v.18-19)

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The Tongue:

There is tremendous power in one of our smallest body parts: the tongue.
With it, we can direct others with words of wisdom, truth, and kindness; or destroy others with error, lies, and maliciousness (Ja. 3).

Solomon said: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" Prov. 18:21

The power of speech is one of the greatest powers God has given us.
With the tongue, man can praise God, pray, preach, lead a soul to Christ, comfort, encourage . . . What a privilege!

But that same tongue can tell lies, ruin a man's reputation, split a church, or break a person's heart.
"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

V. 1

"Follow after" - A term denoting concentrated earnestness; lit. to hunt after, to pursue habitually without diversion.

God never says to pursue tongues, but He spent an entire chapter giving us reasons why we should pursue *agape* love (ch. 13).

"Desire" - We should be zealous about the gifts God has to offer us. Anything the Holy Spirit has to offer; I want what He wants for me! (Nothing more, nothing less)

When it comes to prioritizing which spiritual gifts we should desire, Paul is now going to say that we should desire those gifts that will benefit others.

The ultimate way we benefit others in a church is by the words we say.

Hence, Paul's emphasis on the word *"prophesy."*

"Prophesy" - to foretell or forthtell God's Word (in this chapter, the word is used of forthtelling or declaring the truth of God).

V. 12

Note the theme (major point of emphasis) in this chapter in verse 12. Paul says: Since you have a zealot's passion for spiritual gifts, channel that zeal toward seeking to ***"excel*** (abound) ***"to the edifying*** (building up) ***of the church."*** [Seek to possess and implement gifts that will edify the people of your local church!]

"Church" - local church, as in v. 19 *"in the church."*

In chapter 14 Paul shows the pre-eminence of prophecy over tongues.
[Give BACKGROUND to the origin of tongues - Mark 16; Acts 2.]

****When you speak..."seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church!" (v.12)***

5 Reasons why you should use your tongue to proclaim truth in an intelligible manner:

I. Our message should be <u>CLEAR</u> not cryptic (v.2-3)
<u>Tongues</u>: Mysterious Message *<u>Prophecy</u>: Clear Message*

V. 2

"Unknown" - Unknown to the speaker, but known somewhere in the world (Acts 2); yet unless perchance it happens at a United Nations gathering (or the day of *"Pentecost"* - Acts 2), no one will understand you, except God who knows all languages.

"In the Spirit" - two possibilities:
1. Holy Spirit - instrumental use
2. Human Spirit - locative use

"Mysteries" - Something that is kept secret, not revealed, cryptic (EX: When James Cherian speaks in Malialam or Hindi, it is a mystery to me).

V. 3

1) ***"Edification" -*** to <u>build</u> up
(to impart <u>strength</u>)

2) ***"Exhortation" -*** to <u>encourage</u>
(to impart <u>challenge</u>)

3) ***"Comfort" -*** to <u>console</u>
(to impart <u>peace</u>)

No one is strengthened, challenged, or comforted by someone speaking in a language they don't understand.

God expects us to seek to communicate a message that is not cloudy, but clear; not confusing, but convicting; not chaotic, but calming.

II. Our message should be <u>OTHERS-CENTERED</u> not self-centered (v.4)
<u>Tongues</u>: Ego-Centric *<u>Prophecy</u>: Others-Centered*

"Edifieth himself" - Paul is <u>NOT</u> saying that this is the <u>purpose</u> of tongues, but the <u>problem</u> of tongues. If no one understands what is being said, then the only one being edified is the speaker. And since he may not have the gift of interpretation, he may not even know what he is saying, and the only thing being edified is his own ego (pride).

"But" - (in contrast) one who speaks God's truth in a language others know imparts blessing.

III. Our message should <u>EDIFY</u> not mystify (v.5)
<u>Tongues</u>: Inferior Gift *<u>Prophecy</u>: Superior Gift*

Since tongues was a gift given by the Spirit of God for a definite purpose, Paul (in his human reasoning) thought it would be neat if all of the Corinthians had the gift.

However, not all did speak in tongues (12:30), and such was never the Spirit's intention (12:11).

Why is a preacher (prophet) greater than a tongues talker? One is serving others and the other is serving himself. (Greatness is in serving others and not in being served - Mt. 20:25-26).

The truly great Christians use their gifts to edify others.

True greatness as a servant of Christ is to minister to His people in the local church.

Without interpretation tongues had zero value (no purpose) in church.

IV. Our message should <u>PROFIT</u> not be detrimental (v.6)

Tongues: No Profit (w/o Interpretation) Prophecy: Beneficial

"Profit" - benefit, gain

What good would Paul's teaching be to the Corinthians if he didn't speak their language?

"Revelation" - to unveil truth (visually)

"Knowledge" - to comprehend truth (mentally)

"Prophesying" - to declare truth (boldly as a prophet)

"Doctrine" - to teach truth (patiently as a teacher)

V. Our message should be RATIONAL not illogical (v.7-17)

Tongues: Unintelligible Prophecy: Understandable

Note the repeated references to the mind or reason.

Observe the words:

"Known" (v. 7, 9)
"Understood" (v. 9)
"Know" (v. 11)
"Understanding" (v. 14, 15a, 15b, 19)
"Understandeth" (v. 16)

5 Illustrations of the need for understandable communication:

A. **Musical Instruments** must communicate an understandable message (v.7-8)

V. 7

"A distinction in the sounds" - a logical difference in the notes

Music communicates a message (even without the words!). But <u>not</u> if you only hit one note or if you randomly hit any note without order, purpose or intention.

V. 8

"An uncertain sound" - If no one knows the piece of music, nor associates it with an expected response, it will not lead to the desired action. The troops don't prepare for battle to a foreign blues tune of Louis Armstrong.

B. **<u>Language</u>** <u>in General</u> must communicate an understandable message (v.9-11)

V. 9

"Easy to be understood" - With right words, right word order, right syntax, right grammar.

If I said, "Died their sin sinners to Jesus from save" - I make no sense.

However, when I say the same words in the correct grammatic order, it comes out this way: "Jesus died to save sinners from their sin."

Every "tongue talker" in church today is doing nothing but ***"speaking into the <u>air."</u>***

V. 10

Many languages exist in our world, but not one is without meaning. The purpose of language is to communicate meaning.

V. 11

"Barbarians" were European foreigners whose language sounded like "Bar-bar" to the Greek or Hebrew speaking people of Paul's day.

C. **<u>Prayer</u>** must communicate an understandable message (v.13-15a)

V. 13

Since edification is the goal, communication is the means to that goal. Hence, interpretation was a worthy gift for some to pray for.

Incidentally, no one prayed in tongues to receive the gift of interpretation of

tongues; rather, one prayed for God's will with meaning.

V. 14

Many use this verse in an attempt to show tongues to be a private "Prayer Language." However, Paul is speaking "hypothetically," as evidenced by the word ***"if."***

Some try to tie in Rom. 8:26 (*"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."*) to prove that tongues is a prayer language.

However, Rom. 8:26 is teaching that the Holy Spirit prays for us in intercession, not through us in tongues; it also teaches that His groanings cannot be uttered by any human tongue or language!

V. 15

"What is it then?"- What good is such prayer? No good!

To pray without understanding is to violate everything the Bible teaches about prayer. (Prayer must never be without meaning or understanding.) (EX: The Lord's prayer, not speaking God's name in vain, not praying in vain repetitions).

D. **Songs** must communicate an understandable message (v.15b)

Whenever we sing, we must mean what we are singing, or else we may in fact be uttering God's name in vain!

Both spirit and mind must be engaged whenever we pray or sing.

To engage the human spirit without the mind is New Age spooky metaphysics. To engage the mind without the spirit is cold, plastic, carnal, human rationalism.

We need both mind and spirit to be in sync together.

E. **Praise** (Testimonies) must communicate an understandable message (v.16-17)

V. 16

"Bless" - to say a good word about God

"Unlearned" - One who does not understand the message

The Early Church had testimony meetings. Giving testimonies (publically thanking God for what He has done either for you or through you) was a part of the church service (keep testimonies clear, concise, and Christ-centered).

V. 17

One goal of a testimony meeting was to edify others by allowing them to hear how God has worked in your life.

Conclusion: (v.18-19)

V. 18

Tongues was a sign gift, and Paul had signs authenticating his apostolic office in abundance (II Cor. 12:12 - *"Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds")*.

V. 19

In church, five words spoken with comprehension are better than 10,000 unintelligible foreign words.

--Tongues were never intended for private use.

--Tongues were never intended for church use (without an interpreter).

How interested (concerned) are you in your words to others in this church?

May we use our tongues unselfishly to build up others rather than to blow our own horns and promote self.

When others leave your presence, are they strengthened, encouraged, stimulated or provoked unto good works, or are they weakened, depressed, or confused?