**INTRODUCTION**

**Paul has led us up to the wonderful summit of this letter in Chapter 13, with its description of Christian love and the superiority of love to every spiritual gift. Leaving the mountaintop, Paul now takes us back to the valley of the everyday realities of life in the church. Chapter 14 gives us an oft-quoted verse that is familiar to most Christians – “Let all things be done decently and in order”. We usually apply this command to things like ministry or church meetings. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul means it to apply to worship – specifically, the use of spiritual gifts during worship.**

**To the unbelieving idol-worshippers of that time, worship tended to be unruly. Accompanied by loud music, and often with the help of intoxicating substances, the worshippers would stagger about, uttering incomprehensible sounds, until they entered a trance-like state which represented some sort of mystical union with the object of their worship. See Exodus 32:3-25; Numbers 25:1-9; I Kings 18:25-29.**

**Some of the Corinthian believers, especially those endowed with the gift of tongues, followed this spontaneous but unruly style of worship. In this chapter, Paul tells the church that the purpose of corporate worship is the edification – or building up – of the faith of every Christian participant. The gift of tongues was more limited in its ability to edify others than some of the other gifts, especially the gift of prophesy. These two are compared and contrasted in this chapter.**

1. **Read verse 1. What two recommendations does Paul make to the Corinthians in this verse? Answer: “Follow after and desire .”**
2. **Which spiritual gift would Paul “rather” that the Corinthians desire? (v. 1) Answer: Paul would rather that the Corinthians “may “.**
3. **Read verses 2-5. Here, Paul compares and contrasts the gift of tongues with the gift of the “word of prophecy”. When Christians speak in an unknown tongue (with no interpreter present), to whom are they speaking? (v. 2) Answer: They are not speaking to , but to .**
4. **When Christians use the spiritual gift of prophecy, to whom are they speaking, and for what three purposes? (v.3) Answer: They are speaking to , for the purposes of , , and .**
5. **Who is being edified (built up) when a person speaks in an unknown tongue (if no one interprets)? (v. 4)**
6. **Who is being edified when a person uses their gift of prophecy? (v. 4)**
7. **Verse 5 summarizes Paul’s comparison of the gifts of tongues and prophecy. Of the two, which does Paul consider the better, and why (with what important exception)?**
8. **Read verses 6-13. Paul now makes a case for the importance of the gift of INTERPRETATION of tongues. In doing so, he mentions three musical instruments. What are they?**
9. **One of the instruments Paul mentioned – the trumpet – was (and still is) used for military purposes. Describe what could happen if, before the battle the trumpet gave an “uncertain” (indistinct) sound?**
10. **If a Christian pastor, teacher, or fellow church member wants to edify or build up the church, how should they speak? (v.9) Answer: They should “utter with the tongue” words that are “ to be “.**
11. **As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul encountered many different local languages on his missionary journeys. What does he say about those languages – what do they all have? (v. 10)**
12. **When two people who do not speak each other’s language try to have a conversation, what is the result? (v. 11)**
13. **The Corinthians were “zealous” to receive and practice the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues. What is the main purpose or motive that Paul recommends for the users of this (and every) spiritual gift? (v. 12) Answer: Paul tells them to seek that they may excel to the “ of the .”**
14. **Since the building up of the church is the purpose of every spiritual gift, Paul says that Christians who speak in tongues should also pray for the ability to . (v. 13)**
15. **Read verses 14-22. In this passage, Paul counsels the Corinthian church of what can happen if spiritual gifts are used in worship without maturity or understanding. For example, if a believer prays in an unknown tongue, what happens? (v. 14) Answer: His spirit prays, but his understanding (mind or intellect) is .**
16. **To Paul, worship involves both the and the . (v. 15)**
17. **If you bless person in an unknown tongue (“with the spirit”) and they do not understand you (they are “unlearned”), what can they NOT say? (v. 16) Answer: they cannot say “ “ ! And, as a result, they are not . (v.17)**
18. **Read verse 18. What did Paul say about his own ability to speak in tongues? How might this gift have been especially useful to him? (Example: Acts 14:8-15)**
19. **When Paul is speaking in church, he would rather speak words that can be used to teach others than words in an unknown tongue. (v. 19)**
20. **In verse 20, Paul desires that the Corinthian saints be in malice, but to be (the word translated as “men” in the King James is the Greek word *teleios*, meaning complete, of full age, or perfect) in understanding.**
21. **In verse 21, Paul cites a verse from the Old Testament. Where is it found, and how did you find it?**
22. **Verse 22 states that tongues are for a sign to those who , but the gift of prophecy serves those who .**
23. **Read verses 23 - 25. In these verses Paul presents two “what if” situations. In the first he asks the Corinthians, “What if everyone in the church is using the gift of tongues at the same time, and there is no one present to interpret what they are saying? What would an ‘unlearned’ Christian or ‘unbelieving’ visitor think?” (v. 23) Answer: They would say that you were .**
24. **Paul’s second “what if” situation brings the same unlearned or unbelieving visitor to a church where every member is prophesying – speaking truth under the inspiration of God. What results will this have on them? (v. 24-25) Answer: the of their hearts will be ; they will be and by all. In response, they would God and “report” to others that is in . (See John 4:15-19, 28-30, 39-42)**
25. **Read verses 26-33. This passage gives the Corinthian church an “order of worship”. It establishes guidelines for the use of spiritual gifts. This is in sharp contrast to the “wild and crazy” worship of idols by their pagan followers. First, what does Paul want “every one” of the Christians to do when they come together for worship? (v. 26) Answer: He wants them each to have a , a , a , a , or an , for the purpose of .**
26. **How many believers with the gift of tongues should be permitted to speak? (v. 27) Answer: At least but no more than . Who else needs to be present? (v. 27) Answer: one who can .**
27. **If there is no interpreter, what should the Christians with the gift of tongues do? (v. 28) Answer: They should in the church use their gift by speaking to and to .**
28. **There were also guidelines for the users of the gift of prophecy. How many of them were permitted to speak? (v.29) Answer: or . What should happen after they speak? Answer: the rest of the congregation should (weigh carefully or discern). (See Romans 16:17-18; I Thessalonians 5:21; I John 4:1-3) And what if God reveals something to a person sitting nearby? (v. 30) Answer: the first person should their .**
29. **How should those who have the gift of prophecy use their gift? (v. 31) Answer: they should prophesy by . And what is the result of such an orderly presentation of the Word? Answer: All may , and all are .**
30. **What important truth about the “spirits of the prophets” does Paul reveal in verse 32?**
31. **In the church, God is NOT the of (disorder, commotion, tumult). (v.33) WHO IS? (Hint: read James 3:14-16; Proverbs 6:12-19) Answer:**
32. **Read verses 34-35. Many have erroneously concluded that Paul was a “sexist” because of these verses, completely ignoring the fact that Scripture lists several women as important assistants in his ministry, among them being Chloe (I Corinthians 1:11), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), Priscilla (Acts 18:1; Romans 16:3; I Corinthians 16:19), Mary (Romans 16:6), Tryphena and Tryphosa (Romans 16:12), and Phebe (Romans 16:1-2), besides others. Paul also wrote Galatians 3:26-29, which asserts that we all stand as equals before God. The reason behind these instructions to the Corinthian church is Paul’s desire that they not offend anyone for the sake of the Gospel, even to the point of restricting their own freedom, as in the case of eating foods dedicated to idols, which we discussed in Chapters 8 and 10 (I Corinthians 10:32-33) and the wearing of the veil, as we discussed in Chapter 11 (see also Romans Chapter 14). There would have been “unlearned” and “ignorant” visitors to the church in Paul’s day who would be offended at seeing women actively using their spiritual gifts (sadly, some still are today, nearly 2000 years later). Paul trusted that if those visitors were saved, Jesus would change their minds about the role of women in the church, just as his mind was changed about Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-22). History has proven this to be true – wherever the Gospel has taken root, the status of women both in and outside of the church has improved.**
33. **Read verses 36-40. As Paul concludes this chapter, he challenges the Corinthians who consider themselves to be or to accept the things that he is writing as the of the . (v. 37) But, if they wish to be , let them be . (v. 38)**
34. **Finally, after restating his preference for the gift of prophecy over that of speaking in unknown tongues, Paul command the church to do all things and in .**

**Summary**

**Having finished giving instruction to the church on the proper use and ultimate purpose of the spiritual gifts, as well as the proper way to conduct their worship services, Paul the Apostle now gives attention to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There were some at Corinth who fully accepted the Gospel without realizing all that it promised to them. They accepted that Jesus Christ arose from the dead but didn’t believe that they would also be resurrected. In Chapter 15, Paul reveals wonderful and glorious truths about our eternal future as believers in Jesus Christ.**