

Pursuing Love in the Worship of the Church – Part 5

1 Corinthians 14; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 2-11-2024

- 1. Pursue Love. (1)** Pursue love for God and for others while pursuing other loves (like spiritual gifts). The pursuit of this love is to govern the worship of the Church and Paul tells us what this looks like in 1 Corinthians 14. (Matthew 22:35-40)
- 2. Love seeks to edify. (1-5)** So edification or building up one another is the emphasis in the worship service and in the exercise of spiritual gifts in that context. Seek to build up other believers in faith, hope and love with your spiritual gifts and all the resources you have. (Ephesians 4:14-16)
- 3. Love that edifies is clear. (6-19)** Paul uses some illustrations to make the point that understanding is crucial for speech to be beneficial. Clarity is important in worship. Understanding (engagement of the mind) is vital! (Romans 12:1-2)
- 4. Love that edifies understands purpose. (20-25)**

Love that edifies understands purpose so that we value supernatural things appropriately. To understand and know God is what our salvation is all about. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

- 5. Love that edifies is orderly. (26-40)**

Love that edifies is orderly (according to the Divine Order of Service) so that we see the need for self-control and proper evaluation of all that happens in the worship service.

- The worship of the Corinthians was highly participatory! But this does not mean that everyone did something every service, as Paul's instructions regarding the exercise of tongues and prophecy by two or three makes clear. (26)
- Paul gives specific guidelines for the exercise of the gifts of tongues and prophecy in the public worship of the church. (27-33)
- Paul says that women in the worship service are to 'keep silent.' (34-36) According to the Scriptures, women cannot be elders or exercise that kind of role in the governing and worship of the church. (1 Timothy 2:9-15) Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul emphasizes the headship of the man. (1 Corinthians 11:3-5) Paul applies these principles in Corinth by saying: (1) Women should not evaluate prophecies given in the worship service. (2) Women should not ask questions about the prophecies in the worship service.
- Paul says that if the Corinthians refuse to recognize the Word of God through the Apostle Paul, then God will not recognize them as true prophets or maybe not even true believers in Jesus! (37-38)
- Paul speaks of 'desiring earnestly' to prophesy which speaks of priority but says 'do not forbid' to speak in tongues which speaks of permission. This is a significant difference! The clear Word of God is the priority in the worship service. (39)
- Paul's primary principle in this portion of 1 Corinthians 14 is that love in the worship service has a proper orderliness to it. It should not be unstructured or unintelligible. (40)

Application

1. *Is what is happening today what was happening in the 1st century Corinthian church in regard to prophecy and tongues and other gifts?* Yes and no. God is not gifting believers today to be apostles like Paul nor is He giving fresh revelation that carries the authority of Scripture. But that does not mean that there is no common thread of gifting by the Spirit today that could result in things like prophecy and even tongues being given in a different form. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11; Ephesians 2:20; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:2-4; 2 Peter 1:16-21)
2. *Should we dismiss reports of God's supernatural work in the lives of people around the world?* We should not expect supernatural giftings and experiences as the norm as we see in the 1st century as God was laying the foundation of His Church through the apostles. But that does not mean that God has limited Himself so that He never uses supernatural means to advance His kingdom and accomplish His purposes as needed. (Isaiah 55:8-9)
3. *What is the primary ministry of the Spirit today among believers?* The primary ministry of the Spirit today is the ministry of illumination, not revelation as it was in the 1st century. He is opening our eyes to the truth that has been revealed once and for all in the Scriptures so that unbelievers are saved and so that believers grow in faith and hope and love. (Psalm 119:18; Ephesians 1:15-23; Jude 1:3)
4. *Should we be following Paul's guidelines for worship today as seen in 1 Corinthians 14 regarding tongues and prophecy?* The answer is *yes* in that that it is God's Word and we should apply it appropriately today. But the answer is *no* in that we no longer should expect prophecy and tongues to be a part of our worship services. This is because the rest of the New Testament and the history of the Christian church indicate that, although these were a primary feature and focus of the early Christian church, these were gradually replaced by the priority of the written Word in Christian worship. (1 Timothy 3:14-15; 2 Timothy 4:1-5)
5. *How should we handle subjective experiences?* We should affirm that we all have subjective experiences and that some of these certainly are the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives, but we should also affirm that each of these subjective experiences, however they manifest themselves, should be evaluated in light of what the Scripture says is right and according to wisdom, all things considered. Our goal in decision making is to trust God to lead us to do what is right and wise and good according to His Word as we evaluate our subjective experiences. (Nehemiah 7:5; 2 Corinthians 8:16; John 13:2; Revelation 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Corinthians 7:19, 38, 39; 6:12)
6. *How should we handle imperfect spiritual movements and people in those movements?* They should be evaluated in light of the presence or absence of the marks or evidences of a true work of God's Spirit according to God's Word. The presence of strange or even sinful behaviors by the leaders or by those involved in the movement should not, in themselves, disqualify a movement, as a whole, as a genuine work of the Spirit of God. (1 John 4:1-7)

What is your goal in your life and relationships? Is it love for God and God's love for others? Are you seeking to use your gifts and abilities to build up others in this body? Are you seeking to grow in your understanding of God and His Word? Do you need to be reconciled to God?