

# Strengthen • Encourage • Comfort

## 1 Corinthians 14

Pastor Guy Gray

### Jesus and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

There is no doubt about it—Easter is the most important day in the life of the Christian Community! Jesus conquered death. Jesus is the risen Lord. But what now? How in the world is the Christian believer supposed to live the life of faith in this broken world? The answer is Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit into the lives of his followers. After Easter, the Community of Christ waited for Pentecost, when Christ poured out His Spirit on His church. The ministry of the Holy Spirit has many dimensions in our lives. 1 Corinthians 14 focuses on one dimension in particular—the “Gifts” of the Spirit through which we are able to minister to one another in the Body of Christ.

### Charismatic Weirdness?

There is every indication that the Corinthians were practicing patterns of “ministry” and “worship” in their services that were out of line. In fact, what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14 is written specifically to correct them on these issues. Evidently they had elevated the gift of “tongues” to a place of special prominence and “spirituality.” Paul writes to tell them that they are totally off base about this. Truth is, they were engaging in what might be labeled “charismatic weirdness.” This is something that has been present in the church from the earliest days of the Christian faith and it is still with us even today! Before we use this as an excuse to show no interest in “charismatic” gifts of the Spirit (or worse yet to disdain them) we need to pay close attention to what Paul teaches in this chapter. Nowhere does Paul say that these gifts have ceased or that they are not real or valid. What he does do is put them into proper perspective for us. For example, he tells us that we should not “forbid” people from speaking in tongues, but that we should be more eager to use the gift of prophecy in the church, and that all things should be done in a fitting and orderly way (see 1 Corinthians 14:39-40).

### Words that Strengthen, Encourage, and Comfort

The key to understanding chapter 14 (as well as the gifts of tongues and prophecy) is in verses 3-4. Paul's primary concern is that the community of faith will be strengthened, encouraged and comforted. This is the greatest need. Because this is the greatest need, the gifts that serve this purpose are to be most valued in the Community of Faith. Prophecy is the gift of the Spirit that most directly and consistently does these things. But the gift of tongues is primarily used for personal experience in worship. That's why Paul wants them to focus on Prophecy more than tongues. In the course of this discussion we learn lots of important things about Spiritual gifts.

### Important Things Every Christian Should Know about Spiritual Gifts

- Every Christian should desire Spiritual Gifts. (12: 7; 14:1)
- God gives the gifts according to His own sovereign will and purpose. (12:11)
- Every gift is important and has its place, even tongues. (12:7-11; 14:4&39)
- The timing, use and expression of Spiritual Gifts is at the discretion of the individual—it's never about “loosing control” because you are under the power of the Spirit. (14:26-32)
- Our use of the gifts is “imperfect” and therefore we need to be careful, “critical” and discerning in our reception and response when on the receiving end of someone's use of their “gift”. (14:29)
- The strengthening, encouragement and comfort of other believers is the ultimate goal. (14:3)
- All things must be done in a fitting and orderly way! (14:39-40)

May the Lord bless each of our lives with the Gifts of His Spirit in such a way that we are able to strengthen, encourage and comfort one another in our Christian life and faith! All to His Glory!

**Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

This week, read through 1 Corinthians 14 each day.

How is the Lord working in your heart and life through this passage?

What are some areas of growth for you in regards to Spiritual Gifts?

How can you practically strengthen, encourage or comfort someone in the body of Christ through your gifts?

**Coming up:**

**Tonight: No Jr. High Youth Group**

**Wednesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> • Parent Prayer Group 7:00-8:00 @ RW**

Join parents of Jr. High and High School students to pray for our children and the student ministry leaders. For more information contact Cynthia Weston @515-1464 or cwweston@juno.com

**Thursday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> & April 10<sup>th</sup> • Foundations: Sharing Your Faith in Real Life 7-8:30pm @ RW**

Learn how to share your faith with friends, family and others you might meet along the way as part of your everyday life. Presented by Daniel Harkavy & Brad Pease

**RWXC • River West X Country**

Meets on Saturday mornings @ 8am at RW Parking Lot

This is an energetic group of people is focused on Jesus, praying and moving together! RWXC is open to people of all ages interested running. This is a way to get connected, spend time with God while running an opportunity to invite friends. Check out the information table in the Fellowship Hall today or contact Scott Thompson @ 635.9574 or Kara Bigelow @ 407.0224

**Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup> • Baptism Service, 7pm @ RW**

Baptism is an exciting and important step in the lives of believers. Come join us as people make this outward display of the inward change that has taken place in their hearts. If you are interested in Baptism or have questions about what Baptism is contact Adam at 699.2226 or adam@riverwest.org.