

Discovering God's Wisdom

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Lesson 17 1 Corinthians 14:1-19

Searching the Scriptures for hidden treasure

"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure." Psalm 119:162

In the midst of Paul's instruction to the Corinthians on the gifts of the Spirit, he wrote an entire chapter on *love*. He entered into that chapter with the words, "*But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way*" (1 Corinthians 12:31). He followed the teaching of the chapter devoted to love with these words, which begin our study today: "*Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts...*" Love and a desire for the gifts of the Spirit—in particular the gifts that most edify the body—are the key thoughts on the heart of Paul.

First Day: Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-5

In today's passage, Paul begins to make a distinction in the importance of the gifts as they pertain to the edification of the body of Christ.

1. What does Paul encourage the Corinthians to *pursue*?
 - a. Look up the word *pursue* in your dictionary for the general meaning, and then share just how Paul wants us to approach *love*.

2. What are they to *desire*?
 - a. Look up the word *desire* (NASB says, *earnestly desire*) for its general meaning and then share just how Paul wants us to approach *spiritual gifts*.

3. Paul had said in 12:31, "*Earnestly desire the best gifts.*" What does he see as the best gift here in 14:1?
 - a. Paul sets out to show why prophecy is the greater (NASB) gift in verses 2-5. What does he say in these verses about:
 - *tongues*—v. 2?
 - *prophecy*—v.3?
 - *tongues*—v. 4a?

- *prophecy*—v. 4b?
 - *prophecy*—v. 5?
- b. From these verses, explain in your own words why prophecy is the greater gift.

The Holman New Testament Commentary on I and II Corinthians says, “*The believer who seeks both love and gifts will be especially desirous of the gift of prophecy. The guiding principle...is that the pursuit of spiritual gifts must be joined with a pursuit of love for others.*”

Making It Personal...

4. Are you seeking both *love* and *gifts*? How should you be approaching love? Are you doing this?
- a. How should you be approaching the gifts? Are you doing this?
- b. Which is the priority?

Digging Deeper

- ❖ From the study today, see if you can explain the connection between the superiority of prophecy and love.
- ❖ Do your best to summarize today’s passage in a couple of sentences.

Pearl of Great Price

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” John 13:34 This is your memory verse—begin memorizing it today!

Second Day: Read 1 Corinthians 14:6-12

1. In contrast to speaking to the church in tongues, what kind of messages does Paul say will be profitable to them?
- a. Why would these be more profitable than a message in tongues?

2. Paul gives 2 examples to make his point here—consider each example and share what they convey in your own words:

verse 7

verse 8

3. What is the problem with tongues?

verse 9

verses 10-11

3. Why is it that Paul needs to make this strong emphasis to the Corinthian church?
 - a. The Corinthians were zealous for the gifts—but not necessarily for the right reasons. Why should they seek to excel in the gifts, according to verse 12?

Making It Personal...

- Do you remember what it means to *edify*? (Look it up if you don't remember.)
- Do you remember what it is that *edifies*, according to Paul? (You may see 1 Corinthians 8:1b.)
- Apply these thoughts to Paul's statement in verse 12.
- Are you doing this?

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Why might it be said that tongues (in comparison with prophecy) is a *self-edifying* gift?
- ❖ Why might it be said that prophecy is a *loving* or *giving* gift?
- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

Third Day: Read 1 Corinthians 14:13-19

1. Because of everything he has already said, what does Paul give as the rule for tongues? v. 13

- a. He gives a couple of more rules for the use of tongues later in this chapter. What further information do these verses give:
 - verse 27?*
 - verse 28?*

2. In verse 28 Paul says of the one who speaks in a tongue, “*let him speak to himself and to God.*” Verse 2 gives a similar description of the one who speaks in a tongue—what description does it give?
 - a. In verse 14, Paul describes what happens when a person prays in a tongue. What does it say?

 - b. When considering these facts, what is Paul’s personal conclusion? v. 15

 - c. Why is it important to Paul to *pray with the mind also*? v. 16-17

3. What personal information does Paul give in verse 18?
 - a. While taking this into consideration, what is his *very strong* preference for the church? v. 19

 - b. Why, again, is Paul so strong about his point here?

Making It Personal...

- From the content of our passage, do you have a new appreciation for the gift of tongues? Share what you have learned about *tongues*.

- From the content of our passage, do you have a new appreciation for the gift of prophecy? Share what you have learned about *prophecy*.

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Tie this week’s memory verse (John 13:34) with the heart of what Paul is saying in this chapter as a whole.

Fourth Day:

Deeper Discoveries

This portion of the lesson will take a closer look at some of the words in the chapter. You will need to have your tools—or resources at hand: more than one Bible translation, a dictionary or Bible dictionary, concordance, atlas, and encyclopedia. (If you don't have all of these, simply use what you do have to enrich your learning.)

Using the tools you have at hand, do some digging into the following terms. Start with your dictionary (or Bible dictionary), and then look up the references to add to your understanding. If you have additional resources, you may want to keep digging (making notes in the margins). After you've completed the investigative process, write a definition in your own words. Your investigation in today's lesson will lay the groundwork for tomorrow's study, so be as thorough as you can in your research.

Edification (14:12) *“Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church...”*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? Romans 14:19; 2 Corinthians 12:19; Ephesians 4:11-12, 16

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Excel (Abound) (14:12) *“...Let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel...”*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? 1 Corinthians 15:58; Philippians 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Titus 3:1

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Fifth Day:

Heartsearch

Are you walking worthy of your high calling? Are you applying the wisdom of God to your daily life? Get ready for some self-discovery! This portion of the lesson will give you the opportunity to examine your heart, express your mind, and experience your lesson, by applying what you are learning to everyday circumstances.

Seek To Excel

“So it is with yourselves, since you are so eager and ambitious to possess spiritual endowments and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, concentrate on striving to excel and to abound in them in ways that will build up the church.” 1 Corinthians 14:12 AMP

One fundamental truth of the Christian life remains constant—the Christian that does not build up will tear down, no matter how spiritual they may seem. It isn’t enough to simply acquire knowledge; we must receive it into our hearts and apply it for it to do us any good. When we work at applying God’s Word to our daily lives, striving to make it our own, we are seeking to excel. We are also building up the body of Christ in the process.

1. Before going any further with your lesson today, stop and consider your study habits this past week. Have you spent time alone with the Lord each day this week or are you trying to cram your lesson into one or two sittings? If the latter is true, what difference will this make in your ability to *apply* what you are learning?

The use of the word “excel” in verse 12 actually means *to be more abundant, to have a surplus, or to abound exceedingly*. When we consider the *source*, the *supply*, and the *spiritual purpose* of God’s endowment, it humbles us to think that He wants to use us to build up His kingdom!

2 Corinthians 9:8 says, “*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, having all-sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*”

2. According to the above verse...
 - a. Who is the *source* that enables you to abound?
 - b. In what *measure* does He give to you?
 - c. For what *purpose* is He so gracious?
 - d. What kind of *good work* do you think Paul is referring to here?
3. Look up the references below and note the different ways you, as a Christian, are to be excelling and abounding:
 - a. Romans 15:13

- b. 1 Corinthians 15:58
 - c. 2 Corinthians 1:5
 - d. 2 Corinthians 8:7
 - e. Philippians 1:9
 - f. Philippians 4:17-18
 - g. Colossians 2:7
 - h. 1 Peter 1:5-8
4. Stop and think about whether or not you are allowing God to load *you* with His benefits and blessings.
- In what way did you seek to excel this week personally?
 - In what way did you seek to build up others around you?
 - Can you think of an opportunity that was missed because it was not acted upon?
 - In what way did someone else make an effort to build *you* up this week?

“Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God.”
1 Thessalonians 4:1

Heartsearch: Briefly look back over your *entire lesson* before filling in the following.

❖ *Examine your heart*

What has God put His finger on through your study and brought to light in a new way? (What did you learn about yourself?)

❖ *Express your mind*

What change has this week’s study brought about in your thought process? What difference will this make in how you view your current circumstances?

❖ *Experience your lesson*

What nugget of wisdom from your lesson do you plan to apply to your life?

Sixth Day:

Laying Up Treasure

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6:19-21*

The highest calling of the believer, and the most important way to lay up treasure in heaven, is through intercessory prayer. You will want to give thoughtful consideration to what you record on this page, as it will be the basis for your prayer during group time. The format for this day of your lesson is based upon the ACTS method of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In addition to these four, there is space provided for you to keep track of answered prayers, people and things you want to pray for in the coming week, and also a place to write out this week’s Scripture verse from memory.

Using the lesson as your focal point, write out your prayer for each of the following:

I praise God for (an aspect of His marvelous character) _____

I confess to God that I _____

I thank God for _____

I am asking God _____

Praise for answered prayer: _____

People/things I want to pray for this coming week: _____

Pearl of Great Price: _____

Notes