

Pursuing Love in the Worship of the Church

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

1 Corinthians 14

- Pursue love. (1)
- Love seeks to edify. (1-5)
- Love that edifies is clear. (6-19)
- Love that edifies understands purpose. (20-25)
- Love that edifies is orderly. (26-40)

1. Pursue love. (1)

- ‘pursue’ = to pursue, persecute (Matthew 5:10-12; 1 Timothy 6:11)
- ‘love’ = ‘agape’ love defined by God, the cross and the Word: to lay down our lives to please God and do good to others according to God’s Word. (1 John 3:13-22)

The one love that should rule all other loves is love for God that causes us to love others like God loves us. One way to think about love for God is that love for God is being pleased with God above all and living to please God above all. (Matthew 6:9-10)

According to 1 Corinthians 14, love is to rule in the public worship of the Church. And Paul tells us what public worship looks like when love is ruling (in light of the abuse and use of the gifts of tongues and prophecy)!

2. Love seeks to edify. (1-5)

- Pursuing love does not mean *not* valuing or exercising spiritual gifts.
- But some gifts are more important than others in the worship of the Church.
- Paul contrasts the gift of tongues (which the Corinthians elevated to the most important position) and the gift of prophecy.
- Paul indicates that there is a way of exercising the gift of tongues that makes it a private affair that does nothing for the church (which is what the spiritual gifts are actually for – the building up of others).
- Paul doesn’t say that tongues are of no value but that prophecy is more important.
- Paul says the only way tongues can edify others is if they are interpreted.
- So, edification is the emphasis:

“edification” or “edify” (3, 4, 5) = build up (ESV – ‘upbuilding’ or ‘builds up’) (Romans 15:2; Ephesians 4:29)

There are a number of different positions that one could take on gifts like tongues and prophecy in this chapter:

- Cessationist*: the extraordinary gifts like tongues and prophecy and the ability to heal others have ceased.
- Non-Cessationist*: the extraordinary gifts like tongues and prophecy and the ability to heal others have *not* ceased.
- Open but Cautious*: this is a non-cessationist position that is careful to be discerning and does not affirm everything that claims to be from the Spirit but does not want to ‘quench the Spirit’ either.
- Closed and Resistant*: this is a cessationist position that rejects the idea of being ‘open but cautious’ and takes a more dogmatic stand against anything that claims to be from the Spirit in these areas.
- Situationalist*: this is a position that believes that the NT form of tongues and prophecy and the ability to heal are not normally given to believers today but is open to the possibility that God might do unique things in certain situations and with certain individuals that are contrary to what all believers should expect.

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. (6)
- The Music Illustration (7)
- The Military Illustration (8)
- Clarity is important in worship. (9)
- Language is meant to be understood. (10-11)
- Edification of others requires clarity and understanding of speech. (12)
- Tongues cannot be edifying unless interpreted and therefore, they should pray to understand what is being said in tongues. (13-17)
- Paul spoke in tongues but recognized the greater importance of understanding and communicating truth in the worship service. (18-19)
- The emphasis is on clarity and benefit to others in the exercise of spiritual gifts.

Questions

- What will you do with what you’ve just heard?
- Do you believe it is God’s Word for you?
- Does your love for God rule your love for family and friends and others?
- Are you pursuing love?
- Are you pursuing love in the worship of the Church?
- Do you seek to ‘build up’ others in the Church?
- Do you see the need for a clear Word from God for the sake of love?
- Is Jesus your Lord and Savior?
- Are you willing to turn from sin and give your life to Jesus and trust Him to apply His atoning sacrifice to you and to give His resurrected life to you?