

# Speaking with Clarity

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, church. Let us turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verse 1 to 25, where the Bible verse talks about building up the church through gifts, for this is the way of love.

Starting in verse 1, we read, Pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God, for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the spirit. On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. Now, I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy.

The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets so that the church may be built up. Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?

[ 1 : 21 ] If even lifeless instruments such as flute or the harp do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?

So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air.

There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning. But if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker a foreigner to me.

So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret.

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also.

[ 2 : 30 ] I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say amen to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?

For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking, be mature. If the law is written, by people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to these people, and even then they will not listen to me.

Says the Lord. Thus, tongues are assigned not for believers, but for unbelievers, while prophecy is assigned not for unbelievers, but for believers.

If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?

[ 3 : 50 ] But if in all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider enters, he will be convicted by all. He will be called to account by all.

The secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. This is the word of God.

Great. Thank you, CK. Thank you for not an easy reading, but hey, let's pray, and let's ask God to make his word real and alive and understandable to us.

Father, as we come to your word, we want to know what your word is. We are not interested in the opinions of man. We want to have clarity, God, on what Paul was saying to Corinthians, and

therefore what you are saying to us.

And so help us, God, to understand this. Help me, God, to explain it. God, again, if there's anything that I say that is not of you, may fall in deaf ears, God. We want to, and Lord, if there's anything that I haven't prepared, but you want to say to us, you speak to us, God.

[ 4 : 53 ] The most important thing today is you speak to us. And so let your word come alive in our minds, but also in our hearts, I pray. In your wonderful and great name. Amen. Amen.

Okay, if you are new to Watermark this morning, for the last couple of weeks, we've been working through the final, the end chapters of the book of 1 Corinthians, which is the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthian church.

And we've been looking at these chapters because they're probably the most prolific chapters the New Testament has on spiritual gifts. We as a church want to grow in our understanding, in our knowledge of what the Bible says, and our practice of spiritual gifts.

And so we want to come to God's word, say, what does God have to say? We are not particularly interested in what the church down the road has to say. We want to know what God's word says. And so we've been looking at this.

And so far, we've seen two main things. We've seen one, that God's word says the church is a body. We all have diverse and different gifts, like a physical body, that we all have a role to play.

[ 5 : 55 ] And so nobody in the church can look at somebody else and say, I have no need of you. None of the, we all need each other. And then secondly, we saw the importance of love.

Last week, we looked at probably the most important chapter, probably the most famous chapter in the Bible, maybe one of the most misunderstood. 1 Corinthians 13, love is patient, love is kind, it does not boast, it does not envy.

And we saw that has nothing to do with marriage, or dating relationships per se, even though that is good advice for dating relationships as well. We saw it has to do with the church community.

This is, Paul says, this is the sign of a healthy and a mature church. One where the relationships are marked by patience and kindness. This is what the Corinthians were not. And so Paul writes to us and says, the most important thing in this whole discussion about spiritual gifts is, do we love one another?

It doesn't matter how gifted you are, how miraculous abilities God gives you, how well you can explain the Bible, how much money you put in the offering. The most important mark and sign of a mature and healthy church is, how loving, how gracious, how Christ-like are we?

[ 7 : 05 ] And that's what we've seen so far. Christian maturity is not marked by how long you've been a Christian, how much you know, how much you do, but how much our hearts are like Christ, how much our character is being transformed.

And so that's where we've been so far. Now you'll notice, Paul hasn't answered the Corinthians' questions at all. He's just been giving them foundational principles.

He's wanting to lay the foundations. And today he gets a little bit more into some of the practicalities. He's still not immensely practical, but today a little further.

And so in the passage today, there's two sections. Verses 1 to 19 talk about spiritual gifts and the Christian church. And verses 20 to 25 talk about spiritual gifts and our Christian witness.

Okay, so two sections. Spiritual gifts and the Christian church. Spiritual gifts and our Christian witness. Let's look at those two passages, two sections together. So firstly, spiritual gifts and the Christian church.

[ 8 : 06 ] In this section, 1 to 19, Paul is wanting to compare and contrast two types of spiritual gifts. One is what you could say comprehensible or intelligible spiritual gifts.

Spiritual gifts that utilize our mind and our thinking, our understanding. And here he has mainly in mind things like prophecy, but also things like word of knowledge, a teaching, instruction, maybe a revelation from God, something that makes sense, that you think about, you comprehend, and maybe you share with somebody else.

And he's wanting to compare and contrast that with a different category, a type of spiritual gift, that you could say incomprehensible or unintelligible. That doesn't mean they're bad.

It just means they, they originate from our spirit. So they utilize our spirit more than our minds. And here in particular, he's thinking about the gift of tongues. Okay.

So he, that's what's going on in this passage. He's comparing, contrasting these two types of spiritual gifts. Now let's just define our terms. What is speaking in tongues?

[ 9 : 13 ] Maybe you have experience of that. Maybe you don't, maybe you're new to church, maybe you're not yet a believer this morning, and you've heard about this. What is, what on earth is this spiritual tongue, this talking in tongues thing?

Well, the Bible describes speaking tongues in two different ways. The one is, when maybe empowered by God's grace, God's spirit, somebody has the ability to speak in a language, which is foreign to them.

They don't know how to speak the language, but the people around them do understand it. And this is sometimes given to people for the sake of speaking the gospel in a context that is not your own. So let's say, for instance, I go to Philippines, and I'm in the marketplace, or I'm on a bus, or I'm in a church service, and by God's grace and his spirit, I feel God giving me the ability to speak something that doesn't make sense to me, and I speak it, and it's Tagalog, and the people around me can understand that they might hear about the wonder of Jesus in the gospel.

Okay? And we see something like this in Acts chapter 2. The spirit comes upon the disciples, they're speaking in languages, which are maybe not known to them, but all the people in Jerusalem, the surrounding nations, they hear the gospel in their own language.

[ 10 : 28 ] And they say, God is speaking to us. It's amazing. Okay? So that's type one. Another type of speaking in tongues is probably more common in some ways, and that's when somebody speaks, or maybe more often prays, in a way that doesn't make any logical sense to anybody.

It might sound like gibberish, okay, that nobody's going to understand what's being said, but it's a kind of prayer that is prayed in a way that doesn't engage your mind, but engages your spirit. It's a way of praying to God when you maybe run out of words, you don't know what to say, maybe you're caught up in a difficult situation and your words evade you, but you just know I need God. And it's a way of saying, God, I need you. I don't even know what to say, just but my heart knows I need you. And it's a way of personal prayer to God in a maybe way that doesn't engage the mind. And so actually Paul says this twice in our passage. Look at verse two with me. He says, For one who speaks in a tongue, speaks not to men, but to God.

[ 11 : 33 ] No one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the spirit, okay, or with his spirit. Also verse 15, or verse 14. If I pray with a tongue, my spirit prays, even though my mind is unfruitful, okay.

So does that make sense? These two different ways of what is praying in tongues. Now on the other hand, prophecy, prophecy is when somebody speaks, empowered by God's spirit, in understandable, logical, coherent words, or ideas, and they speak with precise, or specificity, into a precise situation, maybe for an individual, or for a church.

And they say, we feel like God is saying this, for you, or for us as a church, this is what God wants us to know, in this moment. Now sometimes a prophecy, or prophetic word, can be a warning, or a challenge, maybe even a rebuke.

But often it's an encouragement, it's an upbuilding, but the purpose of prophecy, is to help either the individual, or the church, or the group, to hold on to God, with faith, and to live by faith, and obedience, for either the immediate moment, or the season ahead.

Okay. So you're facing a situation, you're not sure how to handle it, and God says, CK, I've got a word for you, you need to know this. And it speaks with specificity, into the situation that you're facing, and you know, God is with me.

[ 12 : 58 ] God knows what's going on. He's told me which way to go. Now, so maybe for instance, you're in a small group, and that happens. Now one thing to be really clear on, when that happens, the speaker, genuinely, well should, believe that God is speaking through them.

Right? But, we need to be very careful, because, that doesn't mean, that it's always infallible, or perfect, and it's certainly not on the same level, as God's word. So nobody should ever say, God has told me, X, Y, Z.

Rather, what you should say is, I feel like God may be, maybe saying this. Right? Sometimes the speaker, misunderstands. Sometimes there's, they can wrongly, interpret.

Sometimes they can wrongly, apply the message. And so the Bible says, we should weigh up, we should test, we should investigate prophecies, and see, does this correspond to God's word? Is this true?

Okay, so, do you know what we're talking about? Yes, okay, three of us, okay. Well, let's see, okay. So, tongues, prophecy. Now, 1 Corinthians 14, the apostle Paul, is not for one, against the other.

[ 14 : 10 ] Both are spiritual gifts, that are given by God, to the church. But what we see in Corinthians, is that he is going to say, when the church gathers, like we have this morning, or maybe on a Thursday night, at prayer meeting, or when your CG gathers, when the church gathers together, one of these spiritual gifts, is preferable to the other.

Okay? Look at what he says here. Look at verse one with me. Paul says, pursue love. Okay, we spoke about that last week. That's the most important thing. Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially, that you may prophesy.

Okay? Now, why does Paul say, especially, that you may prophesy? Well, the immediate situation in Corinth, or as we've heard before, the Corinthians, they were particularly enamored, with speaking tongues.

For them, that was their favorite, of all the spiritual gifts. And they thought, that was the most important one. And the reason was, because of the mystery, that surrounded it, for them, speaking in tongues, was the highest expression, that you were a spiritually mature person, that God was with you, you could kind of communicate with God, in this mysterious unknown language. It was the highest expression, that you were a spiritual person. And so they loved to come to church, and didn't matter if nobody understood them, they would all pray in tongues, and pray very loudly, and try and speak louder, than the person next to them, to kind of show off, how spiritual and mature they were.

[ 15 : 34 ] Okay? So that's the immediate context here. And Paul's point is, what you're doing, is you're thinking about yourself, Corinthians. You don't care about the person next to you, you're just thinking about yourself, you're trying to show off.

But Paul says that actually, when the church gathers together, as a church family, like we have this morning, what should we be seeking to do? Hopefully our goal, our motive, isn't to show off how spiritual we are.

Our motive, our goal, should be to build up the body, to help one another, in our faith, to strengthen the person, that's next to me, to encourage the person, that's behind me, to maybe challenge, or admonish, the person that's being hypocritical, to draw back the person, that's drifting away from Christ.

In other words, when the church family gathers, it's not just me and Jesus, my goal, your goal, is to help the person, on either side of us, in front of us, behind of us, to encourage us, and strengthen our faith.

Right? To build up, encourage, and strengthen each other. But in order to do that, we need to speak, sing, pray, confess, teach, admonish, with words, that are intelligible, and that we understand.

[ 16 : 45 ] So, look at how Paul says this. Look at your bulletin, verses 1 to 5 with me. Read this together. He says here, pursue love, earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

Now he has his reason. For, verse 2, for the one who speaks in a tongue, speaks not to others, but to God. No one understands him, he utters mysteries in the spirit.

But on the other hand, the one who prophesies, speaks to people, for their upbuilding, their encouragement, their consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue, builds up himself, but the one who prophesies, builds up the church.

Now, I want you all, to speak in tongues. Okay? So Paul's not against tongues. But even more than that, I want you to come and prophesy. For the one who prophesies, is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless of course someone interprets, so that the whole church may be built up. Okay? You see Paul's point? He's saying when you come together as a church, the goal is to encourage, to strengthen, to build up. Three times he uses the word build up here.

[ 17 : 53 ] He says, the one who prophesies, builds up the church, encourages them, consoles them. The one who prophesies, builds up the church, so that the church may be built up. This is Paul's goal.

This is his hope for us. We come to church and we say, hey, maybe you've had a rough week. Maybe you've just lost your job. And as you're worshipping, as you're praying, the person next to you, is not just in their moment with God, actually, they are encouraging you. They're edifying you. They're strengthening you. Which sounds, a lot like love. Chapter 13. When you come together, pursue love.

But in order to do that, you've got to understand what the person beside you, is saying. You've got to speak words. So imagine, imagine you come to me and you say, hey Kevin, I'd love to have some time with you.

Can I, can I speak with you? There's some difficult things going in my life. I'd love to, to share my heart with you. I say, sure, we make a time. And, and we sit down and say, hey, what's on your heart? And you, you share what's in your heart.

[18:51] And you, you, you talk. And you say, what should I do? What does the Bible say? And I say, well, let me tell you what the Bible says. And then I speak for 15 minutes.

And we, we look at scripture. And I try and talk to the matters of the heart. Except imagine, all of that is done in Zulu. Or Isitkursa. Or Swahili.

Or something like that. Right? And I share my heart with you. And I pour out everything I know. In, in, in Swahili. And then I slap you on the back and say, all the best. Tell me how it goes.

Right? And hey, I've got an appointment. Sorry, I need to go now. How are you going to feel? Are you going to feel encouraged? Are you going to feel built up? Are you going to feel loved?

No. Well, Paul says here that, that when we come, we, our goal is to build one another up. So look at verse six. Now brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will that benefit you?

[19:46] Unless I bring some revelation, some knowledge, some prophecy, some teaching. I may feel encouraged. I may feel like I've, I've really connected with God. Me and Jesus, we've had a moment. But have I encouraged you?

Have I strengthened your faith? And so verse 12, the, the key verse, look what he says here. So with yourselves, brothers and sisters, since you're eager for manifestations of the spirit, he's talking about spiritual gifts, excel in building up the church, building up one another.

When we gather, we worship God, and we encourage one another. Now, question here. Is Paul against speaking tongues? They say, no, that's bad. We don't do that anymore.

We don't do that in our church. We only do this. No, not at all. Look at verse five. I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more when you gather, to prophesy. Verse 18, I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you, says Paul.

So he's not against it. Nevertheless, when the church gathers, I'd rather speak in five words with my mind, in order to instruct and edify you, than 10,000 words with my tongue.

[20:51] And again, verse 39, he says, So brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, do not forbid speaking in tongues. The Bible's not against it. It says, when we gather though, one of our goals is not just me and Jesus, it's horizontal as well.

So I personally, I pray in tongues. I pray in tongues quite regularly, probably not every day, but a couple of times a week. And for me, the reason I do that is, sometimes I am, maybe on the way to a meeting, and I just feel like, God, I really need your grace here.

This is a difficult meeting. I'm not exactly sure how to handle it. And just, I'm walking to the meeting. I'm just praying under my breath, saying, God, I need your spirit. I'm just drawing on God's strength. Sometimes I'll be in a prayer meeting, and there'll be four or five of us in a circle praying, and someone else is praying.

And rather than me just staying quiet and listening, and my mind drifting somewhere else, I'll just be praying under my breath. Yes, God, God, I agree with this person. I'm just, I'm praying in tongues under my breath. My mind is listening, but my heart is engaged with God.

Well, sometimes I'm in a situation where I feel so desperate. I have no words. I don't know what to say. I say, God, I need you. I'm just, I'm praying in my spirit. My mind is out of words, but God, I need you.

[22:00] And Paul's point is that when the church gathers, it's not just these individual moments, me and God. It's us together, encouraging each other. Now, there's two implications of this, okay?

One theological, one practical. So, the theological one first. Implication one, loving God with your mind is essential to trusting God with your heart.

Okay? Loving God with your mind is very essential to trusting God with your heart. So, the Bible places a lot of emphasis on the centrality of our hearts, right? Love the Lord your God with all your heart.

Above all else, God, your heart. It is the wellspring of life. Our heart is the control center of our lives. But sometimes, Christians, we think, because of the importance of our heart, as long as I love God with my heart, it doesn't really matter what my mind believes.

Okay? Well, sometimes we think, we shouldn't overthink things, just love God with your heart. But actually, some people might say, I'm not really into theology and doctrine.

[ 23 : 00 ] I'm kind of, I'm more of a heart person, I'm not a head person. But actually, all of us are theologians. We all believe something about God. You may be a bad theologian, or a good theologian, but you all have some beliefs about God.

You may be, your theology may correspond to the Bible, or it may correspond to culture, but we all have some beliefs. Okay? But actually, what we notice here, notice the underlying assumption here. In order to grow and mature, and be built up in our faith, in order to have a strong and a robust faith, that can handle the challenges, and the difficulties of life, Paul wants us to know biblical truth. He wants us to know with our minds, what does God say? What does the Bible say? What must we believe? You could call it doctrine. Okay? And that makes sense, because what is a Christian? A Christian is somebody who's learning to love God, trust God, and obey God. Okay? That's a disciple of Jesus. But how do you love a God that you vaguely know?

You don't know Him very well. How do you trust God in the difficulties of life, when you don't really know what God is like? You don't know whether He's trustworthy. How do you obey God in obedience, or walk in obedience, against the grain of popular culture?

[ 24 : 13 ] You choose the narrow road, the difficult road of obedience, rather than the wide road of culture, but when you don't even know what Jesus called us to. So in order to walk, to love God, and trust God, and obey God, and walk in obedience, you actually need to know what God says.

So knowing, loving God with our minds, is a very essential part to trusting God with our hearts. Does that make sense? Okay, implication one. Implication two.

This is more practical. Christians come to church, not only as consumers, but as contributors.

Okay? That's Paul's point here, right? When you gather as a church family, don't just think, I'm going to get a moment with Jesus.

Actually come as a contributor. How can I bless and edify, and encourage one another? So practically, what does that mean? Okay, here's a couple of ideas. Firstly, come to church early. Okay?

I know you've never heard me say that before, but, if you roll into church at 1045, or 1050, or 11, there's no way that you're in a state of mind to really receive something from God that's going to bless the person next to you, encourage the person next to you.

[ 25 : 25 ] As you run into church, your mind is frantic, and you've been fighting with the people in the parking lot, and the bus drivers made you late, and you rushed out the door, you're not in any state of mind to say, hey God, I'm here to serve others.

Right? So come to church early. Secondly, come to church prayed up. Again, if you roll out of church, roll out of bed at 10 past 10, you throw down some coffee, find some clothes somewhere in the corner of your room, throw it on, you rush into church at 1035, what are the chances that you're ready to hear from God, to receive maybe a word of encouragement for the person next to you, or to bring a spiritual gift that's going to edify the person around you.

No, no, come to church prayed up, have a devotion, get into God's word. Come ready to bless those around you. Here's another thing, come ready to strengthen, encourage.

So here's a really practical tip. You know that long corridor all the way down here, okay, that Hayden's about to walk into, walk out of? When you get out the lift, you've got about 25 seconds down the passageway, here's what you do, you pray, you say, God, this morning, I want to meet with you, and I also want to be used by you.

God, may you help me to encourage the person I sit next to, the person I sit behind, or in front of, the person around me, may I be a blessing. Here I am, use me this morning. Come to church ready to strengthen, and come to church ready to receive.

[ 26 : 51 ] The passage, the focus of this passage is ready to give, but come ready to receive as well. Quick story here, about eight years ago, Dan Tellis, right, you guys know Dan, he's sick this morning, he's not here.

That is when, Watermark met in Cyberport down the hill. Dan is, he's moved to Hong Kong about eight months before, and Dan's goal was, he moved from Sydney, he said, I'm going to come to Hong Kong for maybe 12 months, 18 months, then I'm going to move to London, through the company ranks, I'm going to get a promotion, you know, I'm going to move through the ranks, I'm going to move to London.

I'm going to, Hong Kong's going to be just a pit stop, on my way to London. And he's not in a great place spiritually, but God's got a hold of him, God's busy turning his life around, and so he's come to Watermark, and he's been coming for a few months.

And around that time, he gets offered a job offer, with another company, that kind of is going to mess up all his career plans, right? But this company, it's a much bigger company, it's a bigger role, he's a bit scared, he feels like, oh, I don't know if I have what it takes, to be in this company, and God, if I take this job, then all my plans of going to London, are out the window.

And so he comes to church one day, and he's praying, saying, God, what are you saying, what are you saying? And at the end of the service, a lady says, hey, sorry, can I just share something with you? During the service, I just felt God give me a message for you, and see if this makes sense.

[ 28 : 10 ] I felt like God saying, he's opening a new opportunity for you, and that you're a bit nervous about it, because you feel like you don't have what it takes, but God says, this is of God, and he wants you to walk with faith, and courage, trust him, he's opening this door for you.

Dan's like, it's amazing. And so he took that job, and eight years later, he's still here, and he's married to Soda, and two kids, and we're not letting him go anywhere, right? So that wasn't the preaching, it wasn't one of the elders, or anyone on stage, it was just someone sitting in the back row, that was open to God.

God, is there anything you want to, how do you want to use me this morning? And he had the message, and shared it. He said, you weighed up, maybe of God, maybe not, and it's so encouraging to Dan. Okay, so, verses one to 19, Paul's really got one main point.

When you come to church, come as a body to build up, to encourage, to strengthen the body. Look at verses 20 to 25 with me. Spiritual gifts, and our Christian witness.

Now, here Paul gives a second reason, why our gatherings, should be marked with intelligible encouraging, rather than just individual spiritual experiences. And that is for the sake of the spiritual seeker.

[ 29 : 24 ] Okay, look at verses 20 to 22 with me. It says, brothers, sisters, do not be children, do not be childish or immature in your thinking. Okay, we just spoke about that. In regards to evil, okay, be childish, but in your thinking, I want you to be mature.

Verse 21, in the law, in the Old Testament, it says, by people of strange tongues, and by the lips of foreigners, I will speak to this people, but even then, they will not listen to me, says the Lord.

Thus, tongues are a sign, not for unbelievers, sorry, thus, tongues are a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign, not for unbelievers, but for believers.

Okay, what's going on here? At first, this seems like Paul's contradicting himself, because here, later on, he's going to say, actually, tongues is not for unbelievers, it's for believers, okay?

So what's going on here? This is a really difficult passage to understand. Essentially, Paul is quoting Isaiah 28, in the Old Testament. And what is going on there, in the passage in Isaiah, God's people, Israel, they've refused to listen to God.

[ 30 : 31 ] He sent them prophet after prophet, leader after leader, they don't want to listen to God, their heads are hard, their hearts are hard, they're bent on rebellion, going their own way. And because they refuse to love God, or trust Him, or obey Him, or walk in His ways, God is going to bring judgment.

He's been trying to call them back to Himself, saying, come and center your lives with me, they don't want to listen. And so he says, okay, I'm going to bring judgment to you. But how is judgment going to come? The way it's going to come is in the form of the Assyrian army.

The Assyrians are the nation in the north, they are going to invade the north of Israel, they're going to capture them, they're going to burn down their cities, and they're going to march them off to Israel, into Assyria, and take them in exile.

They're going to be slaves in Assyria. But the Assyrians are this foreign army that speak with a strange language, an unusual tongue. And so while they're marching them off to Assyria with sword and spear, and they're shouting these commands in a foreign language that the Israelites don't understand.

You see, these Assyrians, they weren't leading the lost Israelites back to God, or back to repentance. They weren't leading them back to being God's people, under God's rule, in God's place.

[ 31 : 46 ] They were leading them further away from God's place, out of Israel, away from the temple, away from the promised land, away from the priests, and the presence, and God's word,

and God's law.

These Assyrians, with their strange language and tongue, were leading God's people that were lost, and lost their way further away from God, where God's word was not going to be speaking to them. And in fact, actually history tells us, when the Assyrians evaded north of Israel in 720 BC, that was the end of that kingdom.

It never recovered. They went into exile, and they never were reconstituted. It was the end of the north of Israel. Okay? Now, Paul uses this as an analogy.

He says, when people come into our church who are not sure about Jesus or the gospel, the Bible says here, an unbeliever, but the word actually means a spiritual seeker. Okay? Like, a number of us are here today.

A number of you here wouldn't call yourselves Christians. Maybe you think of yourself as a spiritual seeker. The Bible says that when you come into our church gatherings on a Sunday morning, we who are Christians should be mindful of you, and our hope and ambition should be to do everything we can to help you, our guests, those that are spiritual seekers, to help you to come back to know God, to understand His ways, to know who Jesus is, why He died on the cross for you, why you need to follow Him and surrender to Him and bow down to Him and receive Him as your King and your Lord.

[ 33 : 15 ] We don't want to be like the Assyrians that speak in this strange language or an unknown tongue and confuse you even more so that you leave this place saying, wow, those people are weird, I never want to go back there.

Okay? We should do everything we can to help you to come to, to plead with you, to urge with you, to call you to Christ. But if our services, like the Corinthian services were, are not marked with order and coherence, if everyone's just on their own mission with God, we will be to you like the Assyrians with the Israelites, actually leading you further away from God.

And so verse 22 says that in that setting, everyone just speaking on their own, doing their own thing, will be like a signpost driving spiritual seekers in the wrong direction, further away from Christ in the gospel, rather than leading to Christ.

And so look at Paul's big point. He says this in verse 23 to verse 25, he says, If, therefore, the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, outsiders or unbelievers, spiritual seekers will enter, will they not say, you're out of your minds?

But rather, if all prophesy and a spiritual seeker comes in, he may be convinced of all. He may be called to account. The secrets of their heart being disclosed and so falling on their face, they may worship God, declare that God is really with you.

[ 34 : 40 ] Let me tell you one brief story about this. This is a bit of a crazy story. I've never seen this happen in real life, but anyway. There's a guy called John Wimber. He died, I think, in the 1990s.

He kind of started the Vineyard Movement in America in the 1970s. He was really empowered by God and spiritual gifts in an amazing way. One day, he's on the airplane.

He's flying from Chicago to New York and the plane hasn't taken off. He's busy buckling his seat and he looks across the aisle and there's a middle-aged gentleman and he sees written across his face, not in actual letters, but he kind of sees the word adultery and a lady's name underneath.

Let's just say Victoria, right? And he's a bit freaked out and he kind of keeps on looking and he's trying not to pay too much attention but he keeps on looking and the guy looks at him and says, hey, what's your problem?

What are you doing? And what do you want? And John Wimber leans over to him and the guy's wife is on the other side and says, does the name Victoria mean anything to you? And his face goes white and he says, we need to talk.

[ 35 : 44 ] And so, I don't know if it's there and then or when the plane goes up, whatever, they're in the back of their seats and they go to the front and they talk and he says, who told you? How on earth did you know? And John Wimber says, hey, I'm a Christian.

I believe that God spoke to me. This is what happened. This is what I saw and while he's talking, he says, God gives a message that says, if you don't turn and repent from this, I'm going to take your life. And he shares that with the guy and the guy in the middle of the airplane, he breaks down in tears and he says, it's true.

It's true. I've been having an affair with this person and I need God. And he repents and he goes back to his seat and apparently he confesses to his wife and then John Wimber leads both of them

to Christ, right?

Now, I've never seen anything like that but I think that's what Paul's means when he says, the secrets of our hearts are disclosed. Sometimes God has this way where he can speak to us and say, you're going in a dead direction and I want you to change.

Come back to God. One last story and then I'll close. Seven years ago, Claire and I were living in Cape Town and we were in big discussions with Oscar and Ed and Franklin about moving to Hong Kong to come and join the Watermark Church here, right?

[ 37 : 00 ] And we felt like God had been speaking to us. We felt like God was leading us to Hong Kong and to Watermark but it wasn't finalized and one day I was, I remember it was a Thursday afternoon I was on the Watermark website, okay?

It's like every few days I was on the Watermark website and I remember all the photos were up. Henrika was there and Jeremy and Soda and all the staff photos were on the website and I remember thinking, God, there is no ways I can do this.

This is way out of my league. I'm just this like 32 year old idiot that doesn't know anything. There's no ways I can lead Watermark and I was feeling completely just overwhelmed by the idea of coming here.

Anyway, that night we have a leaders meeting with a bunch of elders and pastors from various churches gathered and I was feeling completely overwhelmed. Nobody in the room knew, two people did but they were in another group but pretty much out of 70 people almost nobody knew what was going on in our minds the conversation we're having.

And so I'm in a group with a bunch of people and I say hey guys I would just love some prayer and an older gentleman called Paul Johnson he starts praying for me and he says Kevin, similar to Dan he says Kevin I feel like God's saying there's a new season up ahead for you and you feel overwhelmed you say I can't do it and God says that's right you can't do it in your own strength but he will be with you he will go with you and this is of him trust him and in that moment it was like God turned my heart and I knew I mean Paul had no idea that we were thinking of moving to Hong Kong not a clue and yet God spoke to him it was exactly what I needed to hear and I left that meeting in just a completely different posture this is what God wants to do sometimes sometimes he uses spiritual gifts to speak to us and to encourage us and this is Paul's point here right friends when God gathers us as a church he wants us to build up one another to encourage one another to edify one another maybe you hear this morning you've just lost your job maybe you've lost a loved one or a close family member is sick or you're feeling homesick because you live far away from home and you come to church the church family is meant to be a family that encourages and builds up that one another we can strengthen each other that you can know with specificity

[ 39 : 16 ] God knows your number he knows what you're grappling with and he wants to draw near and speak to you when we come to church we come not just to receive we come to give we come to bless we come to serve one another and in a way that reminds us of Jesus Christ doesn't it right when Jesus when Jesus came how did he come Jesus didn't come to serve his own needs his own desires in fact his whole coming was to lay down his life for one another when God wanted to rescue us and to save us like the story of John Wimbum that guy in the airplane when God wanted to help us he sent what John says is the word of God made flesh God's logos his revelation his message of salvation he came to us but how did he come he didn't send a cryptic message he didn't send a mysterious note he came to us in flesh and blood he came to us in a language that we could see and touch and feel and understand

God came to us to bring God's word to us he sought us out his message of salvation and earlier I spoke about the way that we come to church and that may feel like a burden but you need to remember long before you ever came to church God came to you God came for you he came in flesh and blood he came with a message you could understand he came with a word to call you away from not just exile into Syria but away from hell forever to himself friends Jesus was utterly content in heaven he didn't need anything he didn't need us he didn't need our worship he didn't need our praise he was utterly content in heaven with the father and the son but he came he loved us he loved us enough to come to us and how did he come he came as a servant to lay down his life to pour out his life to bring us not just the message of salvation but the hope of salvation were it not for Jesus coming all of us would be like the

Israelites marched off not to Syria but hell forever and ever but Jesus came to us Jesus came for us that we may know him and be saved and have forgiveness and be rescued and turn to him and live

for him friends why don't we do that now as we pray and then we'll celebrate communion together let's pray together Lord Jesus we hear in your word that when we gather as a church family you want to build us up in our faith God you want to strengthen and encourage us God thank you for that but Jesus that we as Niels and Albert reminded us this morning you always take the first step God before we even come to church you are the one that's moving towards us before we even understand the gospel you are the one that's moving towards us you came to us you came for us you calling us to yourself God maybe some of us here this morning are spiritually dry we feel tired we feel exhausted we feel burnt out we feel empty

God by your spirit won't you speak to us won't you remind us that you know what's going on in our lives in our hearts God want you to remind us that you're the one that knows all things and you're the one that wants to carry and sustain us you don't stand back and wait for us to pick ourselves up and sort ourselves out you don't wait for us to come to you you God come to us in grace and mercy you are holy and above but you're also a good and gracious king God I pray for us as a church I pray that we will be a church that really experiences the power of the living God the spirit of God in our midst God that God each one of us will know that you are real and alive and moving and speaking to us God God God help us to pray help us to be a church that's marked by love building up strengthening consoling and encouraging one another God we pray that you help us to be these things in your gracious and wonderful name amen amen we're gonna close our service by taking communion and then singing a song and communion is this meal that believers go through it's this sacrament it's a tradition it's a holy tradition where we remind one another of the gospel when we take communion we remind ourselves that Jesus in flesh and blood died on the cross for us the bible says in

Hebrews long ago in ancient times God spoke to us through the prophets but these days he's spoken to us through his son his son Jesus came to die on the cross for us communion is a reminder of that communion is for believers to remind us that when our faith is weak and our faith is dry that God by his grace draws near to us and so if you're a Christian this morning I want to invite you to come and grab the elements grab one of these there's some wafer of bread in here remind us of Christ's body that's broken there's some juice remind us of Christ's blood that are shed if you're a follower of Jesus why don't you come get the elements and then come back to your seats and I'll lead us in taking this together let's do that now if you're not a Christian hey I want to encourage you to let this pass you by this is for those of us that are followers of Jesus but why don't you take this moment to think about the gospel think about the cross think about what does it mean that Jesus died for you for your sins but for those of us that are followers of Jesus why don't you come and get this and then I'll lead us in taking communion together let's do that now once with together oh hello here have a let's get and

[ 45 : 23 ] I ■■■ can use Amen. Amen.

Amen. Okay, let's open this up.

Friends, one thing with prophecy is the specificity of it. And God doesn't just say in general terms, you know, I love you. That's good to know, but he knows your specific need, your specific situation. Communion is like that as well. We know God loves us. The Bible tells us. But how do we know it? Well, Jesus says, I died on the cross for you. My body was broken for you.

I shed my blood for you. Friends, if you follow Jesus, I don't know what state of mind you're in this morning. Maybe you feel unworthy. You feel unwelcome. You feel like if God knew or if you, Kevin, if you knew what was going on in my life, maybe you wouldn't welcome me.

[ 47 : 31 ] No, God knows everything about you. In fact, no, God knows you better than you know yourself. God says, you're probably worse than you think you are. But still, I went to the cross for you.

I love you more than you'll ever even comprehend. Friends, as we take this communion, Christ's body was broken, not just for the world in general, for you.

That your sins might be atoned. That your sins might be covered. That you could become a child, a son, a daughter of God. Christ's body broken for you. Let's eat this together. In Christ's blood shed on the cross to make an eternal covenant.

A covenant of peace and grace that will never be broken for all eternity. You will be in Christ with him, loved by him, because he died on the cross for you.

If you're a believer, Christ's blood shed on the cross for you. Let's drink together. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your grace. Thank you for your mercy. We love you. We need you.

[ 48 : 36 ] God, more than anything else, may we be built up around the gospel. May the gospel renew and encourage us. Strengthen us. May we live by faith. This week, may we love you and trust you and obey you.

Because we know you are Christ and King and we are in you. Our life is safe in you. Help us to pray in your wonderful name. Amen.