



In Understanding Be Men

God would never ask us to do something that we couldn't do. God wants us to be "men" in our understanding. He wants us to do things His way always, but especially when dealing with the field of study called the holy spirit field. Unfortunately, referring to speaking in tongues within the Church, a subset in this field, wrong teachings have lead to wrong practices. Generally, speaking in tongues is private prayer; yet if done publically, God expects those "tongues" to be interpreted. Have you ever been to a church where people speak in tongues out loud but don't interpret what they are saying in a tongue? I have. I really hated those experiences.



They shook me up, so to speak. I never knew what to expect next; someone would pop up over there and start speaking in tongues, someone would pop up over here and do the same, worst of all, someone right beside me did that too. *It seemed crazy, disorganized, and unprepared.* Why did it happen this way? Years later, I finally got the answer. Those people were not aware of God's specific instructions on when not to speak in tongues.

God is a "free-will" God. He certainly gave us the ability to speak in tongues, but He also gave us the ability to read His Word.

His Word is where we learn the "how" and "when" of speaking in tongues. I'd like to take

a few moments to review part of 1 Corinthians 14 and show you some of the "how" and "when" of speaking in tongues presented there. Many different aspects of the "holy spirit" field are covered in this chapter, but let's focus on only a couple – the "how" and "when" of speaking in tongues.

(1 Cor 14:1-2) Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that

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speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

1. Verse two gives us several clues about speaking in tongues. It tells us that:

2. The person speaking is the one doing the speaking – not God or some other force. “For he that speaketh...”

3. To the person speaking, a tongue will not be understood. It is unknown to the person speaking in tongues. Can others understand? Possibly, but only if the tongue is known to those listening.

4. Speaking in tongues is prayer to God, not to man.

When a person speaks in tongues, he always and only speaks to God. He is never supposed

to speak in tongues to other men with few exceptions – leading another into tongues and with

the manifestation of speaking in tongues with interpretation.

5. If someone did hear and understand the tongue being spoken, he would not “understand” so to speak. What does this mean?

The answer is in the next part of the sentence – “howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.” If a person did hear, he couldn’t understand because the meaning would be a mystery; only God could understand it. Pretty cool, huh?

(1 Cor 14:3-4) But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. {4} He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

1. When you speak in tongues, you edifieth yourself. This means, “you build yourself up in the spirit.” Speaking in tongues is the only holy spirit manifestation

I know whereby the internal gift of holy spirit is made to grow. It’s like spiritual meat and potatoes. If you want your gift of holy spirit to grow, you must speak in tongues.

2. This growth process, called edification, also takes place in a similar fashion with the manifestation of prophecy. But, this time, the church is edified. The church refers to the body of believers present who hear the manifestation of prophecy. God doesn’t allow the Church to be edified by speaking in tongues – only prophecy and interpretation of tongues.

(1 Cor 14:5) I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

1. God wants all of His people to speak in tongues. This

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should never be a question among believers, but sadly it is. Wrong teachings lead to wrong practices and one wrong teaching present today in the Church is that not everyone can speak in tongues. If God says, “I would that ye ALL spake with tongues,” then everyone can speak in tongues.

2. This growth process called edification mentioned earlier takes place with the manifestation of prophecy and interpretation of tongues – FOR THE CHURCH. It does not happen FOR THE CHURCH when someone speaks in tongues.

3. God places a huge emphasis on edification. He wants His people to give to others in a spiritual way because He wants everyone build up in their minds by what they hear via those two manifestations. In this sense, they are greater than speaking in tongues. But speaking in tongues is also great!

(1 Cor 14:6) Now, brethren,

if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

Let's face it folks, if you can't understand something, you are not going to profit from it.

Oh, you may get some profit in an abstract, round about way, but not according to God's intent. The emphatic message is, “don't speak in tongues in front of others if it isn't going to be interpreted.” The message is, “do speak by revelation, knowledge, prophesying or doctrine (teaching).” Could it become more clear?

(1 Cor 14:7-9) And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? {8}

For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? {9} So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

This says it so beautifully, yet it is understood by so few. ***If others don't understand what you are saying, you are only speaking into the air.*** If you have a problem with this, you may have been taught wrongly. If you have been taught wrongly, why not listen to God's Word and accept what It is saying?

(1 Cor 14:10-11) There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. {11} Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a

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barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

“Barbarian” means, “foreigner.” I’ve been in many foreign (to me) countries, and not understood the language, but the people who lived there DID. It was amazing to me that businesses could thrive in another language, even if I didn’t understand what was being said. Nonetheless, those people were foreigners to me; I did not understand what they were saying. In the Church, God does not want this to happen with the manifestation of speaking in tongues. Why? We learned this earlier. He wants His people edified!

(1 Cor 14:12) Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

I know of nothing more excellent than the gracious act of edifying

the Church. You may want to do all kinds of spiritual things as a Christian, but the one thing that God wants you to put at the top of your “spiritual to-do” list is excel with edifying the church. Can you do this? Yes. But can you do this by speaking in tongues in the church? No. Why? Because no one will understand what you are saying. You will just be speaking into the air. Will it be prayer to God? Yes. But you are supposed to do that privately.

(1 Cor 14:13) Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

How do you change from being one who does not edify the church to one who does? “Pray” that you may interpret. Here’s a freebie. “Pray” means, “believe.” I’m sorry that the translators decided to use the word “pray” here, and I’m especially sorry for how much outrageous confusion it has caused

in the Church for so many hundreds of years. But I am glad to help clear up those wrong teachings for you and others who choose to believe it. *You too can speak in tongues with interpretation.* The words will be there when you believe.

(1 Cor 14:14) For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

Speaking in tongues is prayer to God. Even you will NEVER understand what you are saying when you speak in tongues. Why? Because your spirit is doing the praying and it is NOT of the senses realm. You simply cannot understand what is being said. Call it a mental block. *You will never understand what is being said when you speak in tongues.*

(1 Cor 14:15) What is it

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then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

With speaking in tongues, you now have two unique ways to pray. You can pray with your understanding – the way you always have prayed. You can pray with the spirit because it is the spirit that is praying when you speak in tongues – the preferred way to pray! And, you can sing both ways too. That’s right! You completely control your mouth when you speak in tongues, just like when you speak with your understanding. So too, when you sing. So keep singing with your understanding when you sing Amazing Grace How Sweet the Sound, but try it PRIVATELY with tongues. You’ll experience a new-found amazement for sure.

(1 Cor 14:16) Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit,

how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

When you pray in tongues (speak in tongues) you NEVER say amen – you just speak in tongues. That said, how would someone else know to say amen to your spiritual prayer? He or she wouldn’t. Just another reason why you don’t speak in tongues in front of people. You just don’t do it! He can’t say “amen” if he doesn’t understand a word you are saying.

(1 Cor 14:17) For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Don’t get me wrong. You can’t ruin speaking tongues when you speak in tongues. *But you can ruin the experience of others*, and that is exactly what happens around the world

when unlearned people get up and speaking in tongues in a church meeting, but don’t interpret. No one is edified except the person speaking. No one is giving “thanks well” except the person speaking. Misusing speaking in tongues like this is the height of spiritual selfishness. Seek to excel to the edifying of the church – not just yourself.

(1 Cor 14:18-19) I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: {19} Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

As if we hadn’t already learned this. But, the Corinthian believers were probably much like our mis-instructed Pentecostal-type friends. They spoke in tongues in a meeting, but did not interpret. I guess they didn’t read the Bible? But you

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can. Paul believed God's Word and practiced this. He refused to speak in tongues for others unless it was interpreted. And, speaking more and more in tongues doesn't fix the problem. Five words, ten thousand words – don't do it. No one's going to become edified, built up, if they can't understand the words being spoken.

(1 Cor 14:20-21) Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. {21} In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

It's time to grow up according to God's Word. If you are going to be wrong, you are simply children in your understanding. If you are going to be right, you are "men" in your understanding. In understanding be men! That's the

Word of God. *Fulfill the Old Testament prophecy of being one of those few who speak in tongues and INTERPRET in a believer's meeting.* Don't worry if those listening refuse the words; fulfill the prophecy. In Understanding Be Men!

Much love in Christ,

Jerry D. Brown