

## **Gifts to build up the church 1 Cor 14.1-25**

*Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. (v12)*

### **Tongues and Prophecy – what are they?**

#### **Tongues**

Three verses in this passage that describe tongues.

<sup>2</sup> *For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries with their spirit.*

This is why some people refer to speaking in tongues as a “prayer language.”

<sup>4</sup> *Whoever speaks in a tongue edifies themselves,*

Praying in tongues builds up the person praying.

Praying in tongues, though, is not the be all and end all of spirituality, for, as Paul says, <sup>14</sup> *For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.*

#### **Prophecy**

<sup>3</sup> *But everyone who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.*

<sup>4b</sup> *whoever prophesies edifies the church.*

“Prophecy” is a much wider word than “tongues” that covers a range of ways in which people speak, not to God, but for God.

There is this popular image of the prophet as a kind of wild man or woman; someone who isn't totally in control of themselves. In the Bible though, prophecy is much more mundane, simply someone delivering a message for God. (Ex 7.1-2)

In Acts chapter 2, Peter explains what's happening this way, *...this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy...*

In the New Testament, prophecy is spirit-inspired speech that builds up the church through encouragement and comfort. That means that it is quite possible for someone to say, or pray, something and not be aware that the Holy Spirit is speaking through them, or that someone can get a word for word message from God for someone else, or for a community.

### **These gifts are for everybody**

<sup>5</sup> *I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy.*

### **Irrespective of maturity**

Nowhere does Paul suggest that any one gift is a mark of being more spiritual or more mature than any other. God gives these gifts as he sees fit.

### **For the building up of the church**

We need to be seeking all the gifts that God has for his church if we're going to be all that God has called us to be.