

Introduction

As a former professional golfer, I tried to focus on the things that would help me be successful. David Pelz, a former research scientist at NASA became very interested in golf and turned his analytical skills and research to golf. Out of his findings, he wrote several books, including, *Putt Like the Pros*, a book that has helped me and many other golfers around the world. He gave a breakdown of the parts of the game that contribute to scoring. He said that 43% of scoring can be attributed to putting. The second largest contributor to scoring was driving, which accounted for 25%. A golfer's wedge play came in third at 11%. Nearly 80% of a person's ability to score depends on these three clubs, and the greatest of these three is putting. After recognizing the importance of putting, I prioritized my practice time and spent a minimum of one hour a day just on putting. Pelz's research showed that most three-putts come from poor distance control, and he gave drills to work on distance control. He said the most common putt length for professionals was twenty feet, and he encouraged golfers to be really good at twenty-foot putts. He said that the three and four-foot putts are critical, and he recommended a draw-back game to help with these putts. Even though I focused a lot of attention on these important areas, I did not neglect the other areas of the game. I practiced driving, hitting fairway woods, long-irons, mid-irons, short-irons, flop shots, pitches, and bunker shots. I recognized the priority of putting and prioritized it, but I wanted to do excel at all areas of the game. When I had a seven-iron into a green, that shot was the most important shot at the moment and I needed to have confidence that I could execute the shot well.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul began to address spiritual gifts, speaking of gifts, ministries, and manifestations. All of these came from the same Spirit. He spoke about the individual members of the body and how important all of them are. All the members and various gifts are needed. At the end of 1 Corinthians 12, he exhorted them to earnestly desire the greater gifts. Then he said, "And I show you a more excellent way." That excellent way was love. In 1 Corinthians 13, he wrote about the surpassing value of love. A person could have the gift of prophecy, but without love, it was nothing. A person could have the gift of tongues, but without love it was just a noisy gong or cymbal. Then, Paul defined love for the Corinthians. He gave fifteen different statements about love. He told them what love is and what it is not. He told them what love does and what it does not do. He wanted the Corinthians to have a good understanding of agape love, or God's perfect love.

(1 Co 12:31) "But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way."

Next, Paul taught about the duration of love. The gifts were temporal and partial, and they will cease and be done away with when the perfect comes. When we have full knowledge, we will not need gifts of knowledge or prophecy. Love is different than the gifts; love is eternal. Love will never cease. Of faith, hope, and love, the greatest is love.

(1 Co 13:13) "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love."

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul begins by saying to pursue love, yet earnestly desire spiritual gifts. We must prioritize love. Love needs to be the motivation and goal of everything we do. Love is like putting; it is the most important club in the bag, and we need to master it. But we cannot neglect the other clubs in the bag. We need to pursue love, yet earnestly desire spiritual gifts. The earnest desire is zeloo (Strong's G2206), and it comes from the root word, zeo (Strong's G2204), which means to be hot, to boil (liquids), to glow (solids), or be fervent. We need to be passionate and

zealous for spiritual gifts. God does not want us to be apathetic or ho-hum about spiritual gifts. He wants us to be on fire and zealous for spiritual gifts. We are to pursue love, but we are to be passionate in our desire for spiritual gifts, especially prophecy.

In 1 Corinthians 12:31, God tells us to earnestly desire the greater gifts. In 1 Corinthians 14:5, He tells us that greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in a tongue. In our passage today, Paul is going to help us understand how to value gifts. He is going to tell us the criteria that is used to evaluate which gifts are greater. Our text deals with the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy, but the principle that is taught applies to all gifts.

(1 Co 14:5) “Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but *even* more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.”

The Greek word that is used for greater is megas (Strong’s G3173), which means big, exceeding great or loud. It is used 195 times in the New Testament and translated as “great” 150 times. Our prefix mega comes from this Greek word. A megawatt is one million watts. A megahertz is one million hertz, or one million cycles per second. A megabyte is one million bytes or 1024 kilobytes. A megaton is one million tons, and if dealing with explosives, it is equal to one million tons of TNT. A megaphone is a funnel-shaped instrument to amplify a voice to make it greater. These examples show that megas refers to something exceedingly great or large. Our passage is about what makes a spiritual gift exceeding greater than the others.

In order to properly value something, it is important to know about it. If you are appraising a business, you have to know and understand the business. You need to know their product and services, their market share, their cash flow, their profitability, their people, and their assets. The same is true with the valuation of spiritual gifts. Therefore, Paul gives us an overview of the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy so that we can properly value them. He tells us the purpose of the gift, how it benefits, and who it benefits. These are all important in determining the value of the gift. The second thing that Paul addresses is the criteria used for edification. Third, Paul gives the practical application from this valuation.

Valuation of Gifts (Which is greater)

1. Understanding the gifts of prophecy and tongues (1 Cor 14:1-5)
2. Criteria for edification (1 Cor 14:6-14)
3. Practical Application (1 Cor 14:15-19)

(1 Co 14:1-5) “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. {2} For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. {3} But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. {4} One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. {5} Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.”

(1 Cor 14:6-14) “But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching? {7} Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? {8} For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for

battle? {9} So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. {10} There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. {11} If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. {12} So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. {13} Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. {14} For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.”

(1 Cor 14:15-19) “What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. {16} Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? {17} For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified. {18} I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; {19} however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

1. Understanding the gifts of prophecy and tongues (1 Cor 14:1-5)

Paul begins by encouraging the Corinthians to pursue love, yet to desire earnestly, or passionately seek after spiritual gifts, but especially prophecy. He has placed a greater value on prophecy than the other gifts. Now he is going to qualify that statement.

(1 Co 14:1) “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”

When someone speaks in a tongue, he is not speaking to men, but to God. It is not a corporate activity, but a private activity. It is a private conversation with God, and only God understands. Men do not understand the mysteries that he is speaking. This is an important point because when we assemble together, it is about corporate edification, not personal edification. There are many today that go to church for what they can get out of it. If it is just the message from the preacher, then they can stay home and watch it online, or just listen to it online. But our assembling together is far more than personal edification; it is about corporate edification, and the use of tongues is not a corporate activity.

(1 Cor 14:2) “For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.”

Prophecy is quite different; it is a corporate activity. One who prophesies speaks to men for edification, exhortation, and consolation. It is a word from God to other people, a corporate conversation, rather than a personal one. Paul gives three purposes of prophecy here. The first is edification. Edification means to build up or to edify. The Greek word is oikodome (Strong’s G3619), which is a combination of oikos (Strong’s G3624), a house, and doma (Strong’s G1430), to build. It literally means to build a house. The English word for edify comes from the Latin verb aedificare, meaning to instruct or improve spiritually. The root word is aedes, which means temple. Prophecy is to build up the house of God, which is the church, the assembly of saints, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Prophecy is to build up those who hear it. Much of the improper use of prophecy could be prevented if the church understood that prophecy is first and foremost to edify and build up others. It is not to tear down, expose others, or to confront. Earlier, Paul discussed gifts, ministries, and manifestations. One who has been called to be a

prophet to the nations, like Jeremiah, often gives words that bring correction or judgment, but on the gift level, it is to edify others. (See Jeremiah 1:5-10.)

(1 Cor 14:3) “But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.”

The second purpose of prophecy at the gift level is exhortation. The Greek word is *paraklesis* (Strong’s G3874), which means imploration, hortation, comfort. To implore means to make an earnest request to someone, or to request in a sincere or urgent manner. Hortation means to urge. An exhortation is a strong encouragement or urging for someone to take action. My wife is an exhorter, and there is an urgency in her voice when she asks someone to do something. Paul told Timothy to give attention to the public reading of Scripture, teaching and exhortation. It is not enough to become aware of God’s principles and ways by reading the word. It is not enough to have teaching and understand those principles. The body of Christ needs exhortation. We need to be doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves. I am a teacher, and my gifting is to give understanding to people. I have to intentionally think of applications, and I have to work at exhortation. We need to prophetic gifting in the church so that people are exhorted.

(1 Ti 4:13) “Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.”

(Jas 1:22) “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

The third purpose of prophecy is consolation. The Greek word is *paramythia* (Strong’s G3889), which means to comfort. The Word Study of the New Testament says that it is to speak kindly, soothingly, to comfort or to pacify. There are lots of hurting people in the church. There are people who lost a loved one. There are people in church that lost their job or are struggling financially. There are people that have been physically, or emotionally abused, and are hurting. There are lots of people in the church that need to be edified, exhorted, and comforted.

The purpose of the one who speaks in tongues is to edify himself. In contrast, the one who prophesies edifies the church. The reason that prophecy is a greater gift is because it edifies the church; it is a corporate activity.

(1 Cor 14:4) “One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.”

Paul does not diminish the value or importance of tongues. He said that he wished that they all spoke in tongues. If tongues were something evil or bad, he would not want everyone to speak in tongues. In verse eighteen, Paul said, “I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all.” The Corinthians loved the gift of tongues and were using it in their corporate services. Paul told them that he used the gift more than they did. Paul does not discount or devalue the gift. He is trying to make a point that when saints assemble together to worship, it is a corporate event, and prophecy is a greater gift than tongues because it edifies the church, not just the individual speaking in tongues.

(1 Cor 14:5) “Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.”

(1 Co 14:18) “I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all;”

Notice the exception that Paul gives. He said that one who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying. The point is edification of the church, and if someone has a word in tongues, and there is an interpretation, it is no longer just between the individual and God; the whole church can hear, understand, and be edified.

2. **Criteria for edification** (1 Cor 14:6-12)

The first criterion for edification is that the content of what is being shared needs to build up, encourage, exhort, or console those in the church. I have had numerous prophetic words given to me that were pathetic words, not prophetic words. The words spoken were demeaning, discouraging, and shameful.

The second criterion for the church to be edified is understanding. The church must understand what is being spoken. Paul said, “What will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?” If he came speaking in a tongue and nobody could understand what he was saying, they would not be edified, and it would not be profitable. The greater gifts are those that the body can understand.

(1 Cor 14:6) “But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?”

Paul gives several examples to drive home this point. The first illustration is of a flute or harp being played. Unless it is played so that there is a distinction of tones, nobody will know what is being played. If the audience does not know what is being played, they won't be blessed by it. The second illustration is that of a bugle. “For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare for battle?” A bugle or trumpet was used to assemble soldiers for war. In Numbers 10, the Lord gave instructions to Moses about the blowing of trumpets. There were different sounds and combinations that were used for different orders. The use of trumpets in war was not unique to Israel, so the Corinthians understood the illustration of the bugle. These two illustrations were to show that unless someone utters by the tongue speech that is clear, no one will know what is being spoken. A word in tongues is like speaking into the air, and the church will not understand, and will not be edified.

(1 Cor 14:7-9) “Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? {8} For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? {9} So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.”

Paul said that there are a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. Before the tower of Babel in Genesis 11, the whole earth used the same language. They were attempting to build something against God's will, and so he confused their language and they all went separate directions. There are a great many languages and linguists have grouped many of them into three or four language groups, which happen to be named after the sons of Noah. The major language groups are Japhetic, Shemetic, and Hametic. All of the languages have meaning to those that speak that language. If someone does not know that particular

language, he will be like a barbarian. A barbarian is not some terrifying person, but is simply a foreigner. The Greek word is barbaros, which means a foreigner.

(1 Cor 14:10-11) “There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. {11} If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.”

Paul tells them that since they are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. He has told them to pursue love and to earnestly desire spiritual gifts. Here, he acknowledges their zealousness for spiritual gifts, but tells them to focus on the edification of the church. The greater gifts edify the church. The greater gifts minister to the whole body, not just an individual in the church. Therefore, Paul is again encouraging them to focus especially prophecy and the other gifts that will edify the entire body.

(1 Cor 14:12) “So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.”

If someone speaks in a tongue, he needs to pray that he may interpret. Otherwise, he is only praying in the spirit, and his mind is not engaged and unfruitful. We need to worship the Lord with our spirits and with our minds. In verse five Paul wrote that if someone speaks in tongues, then an interpretation needs to be given so that the church can be edified. Now, because they understand why the message in tongues needs to be interpreted, he says, “Therefore, let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. This is so the whole church can have understanding and be edified.

(1 Cor 14:13-14) “Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. {14} For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.”

(1 Co 14:5) “Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but *even* more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.”

Let’s take a quick look at this phrase. Paul said, “If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.” The context is speaking in tongues. If a person speaks or prays in tongues, his spirit is praying, but his mind is unfruitful. There are some teachers today, non-charismatic or ungifted, that interpret praying in the spirit as the Holy Spirit praying and interceding for us behind the scenes, or praying according to the will of God. In Romans 8, we see that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of God. They do not believe that the Holy Spirit is praying for us through speaking in tongues. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul is clearly writing about praying in tongues, and what he is saying is a mystery. It is not understood by him or anyone else, unless an interpretation is given. In Jude 20, we are encouraged to build ourselves up on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. Praying in the Holy Spirit is praying in tongues. Paul said that he wished all of them spoke in tongues. What is so special about speaking or praying in tongues? The individual believer is edified and built up in his most holy faith. The gift of tongues is a wonderful gift to believers.

(Jud 20) “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,”

(Ro 8:26–27) “In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; {27} and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.”

3. **Practical Application** (1 Cor 14:15-17)

Paul has given an understanding of tongues and prophecy so that we would understand why prophecy is greater. It is greater because the church can understand what is being said, and the whole church can be edified. In our assembling together, the goal is to edify the whole body, not an individual. In verses fifteen through nineteen, Paul gives the practical application. He wrote, “What is the outcome then?” The outcome or the application is that we should pray with the spirit and we should pray with the mind. We should sing with the spirit and we should sing with the mind also. If we only bless in the spirit, the ungifted will not be able to participate. They will not be able to say “Amen” at our giving of thanks, since he does not know what we are saying. We may be in the heavens with our worship in the spirit, but others are not edified.

(1 Cor 14:15-17) “What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. {16} Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? {17} For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.”

Conclusion and Applications (1 Cor 14:18-19)

Paul has a great appreciation for the gift of tongues. He spoke more in tongues than the Corinthians. He has not devalued the gift of tongues. He just placed a higher value on prophecy in a corporate setting because everyone gets edified rather than just the individual. He said he would rather speak five words with his mind so that he could instruct others rather than ten thousand words in a tongue. His desire was for the Corinthians to walk in love. Love edifies, and love considers what is best for others. Love is not selfish, but considers how to edify others. He wanted the Corinthians to be mature in their thinking, and to have this same attitude, that they would rather speak five words in an assembly than ten thousand words in a tongue when others will not be edified. Prophecy is a greater, an exceedingly greater, a megatimes greater gift in corporate assembly than tongues because the whole church is edified.

(1 Cor 14:18-19) “I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; {19} however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

(1 Co 8:1) “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.”

Five Applications

1. Ask God to give you more desire and passion for spiritual gifts, especially prophecy.
2. Ask God to give you more understanding of spiritual gifts.
3. Ask God for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit.
4. Seek the Lord for prophetic words for others. (prayer and word)
5. Step out in faith.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for spiritual gifts. You have given us everything pertaining to life and godliness, and You have given these gifts until the perfect comes, when we will not need them any longer. Help us to pursue love, but earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. Help us to understand the gifts, and especially prophecy. Holy Spirit, we ask You for more prophetic utterances. Lord, we want to use these gifts properly. We want to use them profitably. In our assemblies, help us to prioritize the use of the greater gifts, the ones that edify the body. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Valuation of Gifts

Introduction (1 Co 12:31, 13:13, 14:1-19)

1. **Understanding the gifts of prophecy and tongues** (1 Cor 14:1-5, 1 Ti 4:13, Jas 1:22, 1 Co 14:18)
2. **Criteria for edification** (1 Cor 14:5-14, Jude 20, Ro 8:26–27)
3. **Practical Application** (1 Cor 14:13-19)

Conclusion and Applications (1 Cor 14:18-19, 1 Co 8:1)