

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 30, Response to Spiritual Gifts Questions, 1 Cor. 13-14 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 30, Response to Spiritual Gifts Questions, 1 Cor. 13-14, Biblicalelearning.org

Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture examines 1 Corinthians 13 and 14, focusing on Paul's guidance regarding spiritual gifts within the Corinthian church. The lecture emphasizes that love should be the guiding principle in the exercise of these gifts, particularly in public worship. Meadors highlights that understandable communication aimed at the community's edification is more valuable than outward displays like speaking in tongues without interpretation. He explores the purpose of tongues as a sign for unbelievers, contrasting it with prophecy's role for believers. Finally, the lecture addresses Paul's regulations for orderly worship and briefly touches on the controversial passage regarding women speaking in churches.

2. 23 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 30 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → 1 Corinthians).



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3. Briefing Document: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 30, Response to Spiritual Gifts Questions, 1 Cor. 13-14

Briefing Document: 1 Corinthians 12-14 - Paul's Response to Questions Concerning Spiritual Gifts

Overview: This lecture by Dr. Gary Meadors focuses on Paul's response to the Corinthian church's issues regarding spiritual gifts, specifically addressing chapters 13 and 14 of 1 Corinthians. Meadors emphasizes that these chapters, along with chapter 12, form a cohesive unit addressing division, overemphasis on certain gifts (particularly tongues), disunity, and the need for unity and diversity within the community. He highlights the crucial role of love (1 Corinthians 13) as the guiding principle for the exercise of spiritual gifts in public worship (1 Corinthians 14).

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The Indispensable Role of Love (Chapter 13):

- **Contextual Purpose:** While 1 Corinthians 13 is a universally recognized passage on love, Meadors stresses its original purpose within the Corinthian context: to address the community's lack of integrity, Christian ethics, and proper priorities in public worship and the use of spiritual gifts.
- "It was produced to cause that community to get in touch with their integrity, their Christian ethics, and their priorities in terms of public worship and the exercise of gifts as they heard this read."
- **Love as the "Queen of Ethics":** Meadors positions love as the ultimate ethical principle that governs the relational aspects of the Christian community.
- "Love is the queen of ethics."
- **Love's Priority Over Gifts:** Paul's contrast of love with spectacular gifts like tongues and prophecy is not to diminish the importance of these gifts but to highlight that without love, they are meaningless in the context of community edification.
- "If I speak in the tongues of angels, of men and of angels, but do not have love, I'm a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." (Referring to 1 Cor 13:1)
- "If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and I have a faith that can move mountains, but I don't have love, I'm nothing." (Referring to 1 Cor 13:2)

- **Love as Management of Behavior:** Meadors clarifies that love doesn't dictate what is right but rather regulates how believers act upon the established truth of God.
- "It's not the purpose of love to dictate what you do. It's the purpose of love to regulate what you have decided to do because it's right."
- **Biblical Definition of Love:** Meadors presents a comprehensive definition of love as: "the cognitive adjustment of mind, will, and values to divine revelation in order to fulfill the preceptive will of God." He emphasizes that biblical love is rooted in covenant loyalty and operates based on scriptural truth.
- "Love adjusts the way we think. If you love me, keep my commandments."
- "Love is a servant of the teaching of God. It also manages the content of the teaching within a community."
- **Love's Eternal Nature:** Paul emphasizes that while spiritual gifts like prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will eventually cease, love will endure.
- "Love never fails. Prophecies fail. They'll cease. Where there are tongues, they will be stilled. Where there's knowledge, it'll pass away." (Referring to 1 Cor 13:8)
- **The Triad of Faith, Hope, and Love:** Meadors briefly touches on the significance of this Pauline triad, noting that faith represents theology, love represents ethics (practice), and hope provides future motivation.

2. The Practical Application of Love in Public Worship (Chapter 14):

- **Pursuing Love and Spiritual Gifts:** Paul exhorts the Corinthians to "pursue the way of love" while also being "eager for the gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy" (1 Cor 14:1). This highlights that the exercise of gifts should be motivated and guided by love.
- **Addressing Irresponsible Use of Gifts:** Meadors suggests that the Corinthians were using their gifts in a way that prioritized status and individual expression over community edification, particularly with the gift of tongues.
- "Evidently, the Corinthians were exercising their gifts in some sort of irresponsible manner... Status has probably entered the assembly at every level."
- **Primacy of Understandable Communication:** Paul emphasizes that the primary purpose of public worship is mutual edification through clear and understandable communication.

- "Paul's basic point in chapter 14 is that love is more concerned with understandable communication and community edification than with outward show."
- "Teach so people can understand."
- "But in the church, I would rather speak 5 intelligible words to instruct others than 10,000 words in a tongue." (Referring to 1 Cor 14:19)
- **Relative Value of Tongues and Prophecy:** Paul argues that prophecy, being understandable, is more valuable for the community than tongues, which requires interpretation to be edifying.
- "Prophecy is more desirable... Prophecy is for the community... Tongues is self-serving... Edify... is the key."
- **Nature of Tongues in 1 Corinthians:** Meadors notes the ongoing debate about the exact nature of tongues in this context, mentioning possibilities like angelic speech, miraculous foreign languages (as in Acts), liturgical phrases, or ecstatic speech, possibly influenced by pagan practices in Corinth. He highlights that in the early part of chapter 14, tongues are described as speech to God, requiring interpretation for the congregation's benefit.
- "The only common denominator about tongues in some first Corinthians text is that it was speech to God, not humans in this early part of chapter 14."
- **Tongues as a Sign for Unbelievers:** Drawing from Isaiah 28:11, Paul presents tongues as a sign of judgment for unbelievers, similar to how the foreign language of the Assyrian invaders was a sign to unbelieving Israel. It highlights their lack of understanding of God's message. Prophecy, on the other hand, is a sign for believers as it offers understandable communication.
- "Tongues then are a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers." (1 Cor 14:22)
- "In this illustration, the tongue is a foreign language. And Paul is saying... that tongues are a sign, not for the believers, but for the unbelievers... It was a sign of judgment."
- **Guidelines for Regulating Gifts in the Assembly:** Paul provides practical instructions for orderly worship, including limiting the number of speakers in tongues and requiring interpretation. He emphasizes that everything should be done for the edification of the church.

- "Everything must be done so that the church may be built up." (1 Cor 14:26)
- "If anyone speaks in a tongue, two, or at the most three, should speak, one at a time, and then someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God." (1 Cor 14:27-28)
- "Two or three prophets should speak, and the other should weigh carefully what is said." (1 Cor 14:29)
- **Rejection of Disorderly Worship:** Paul asserts that "God is not a God of disorder, but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33), arguing against uncontrolled ecstatic speech.
- **The Controversial Issue of Women Speaking (1 Cor 14:34-35):** Meadors acknowledges the difficulty of interpreting this passage, presenting several views:
- **Face Value Prohibition:** Naive due to contradiction with 1 Corinthians 11.
- **No Authoritative Teaching in Prophecy:** Limits women's speaking in the context of prophetic pronouncements.
- **Interpolation:** Suggests these verses were added later based on manuscript evidence.
- **Feminist Pauline Patriarchalism:** Claims Paul was anti-women (Meadors notes disagreement with this).
- **Slogan:** The most favored view, suggesting Paul is quoting a Corinthian slogan aimed at silencing women, which he then sarcastically refutes in verse 36.
- "The slogan view sees Paul addressing... a certain group in the congregation that was denying women the opportunity to speak, which Paul had already validated in chapter 11... He didn't give an extended response but sarcastically said, did the word of God originate with you? How can you say they can't speak the word of God? Or are you the only people it has reached?"
- **Paul's Divine Authority:** Meadors emphasizes Paul's assertion of his apostolic authority and that his instructions are the Lord's commands.
- "If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I, Paul, am writing to you is the Lord's command." (1 Cor 14:37)

- **Concluding Exhortation for Orderly Worship:** Paul encourages the Corinthians to be eager to prophesy but not to forbid speaking in tongues, provided everything is done in a fitting and orderly way.
- "Therefore, my brothers and sisters be eager to prophesy. And do not forbid speaking in tongues, but everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." (1 Cor 14:39-40)
- **Importance of Learning and Communication:** Meadors concludes by emphasizing the crucial role of learning and the ability to communicate God's word effectively for Christian leaders and the entire church. He stresses that public worship should be a time of learning and advancing understanding of God.

Significance: This lecture provides valuable insights into the historical context and theological implications of Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14. It highlights the paramount importance of love in the exercise of these gifts for the unity and edification of the church, and offers guidance on interpreting the often debated passages, particularly concerning tongues and the role of women in the church. Meadors encourages further personal study and critical engagement with these complex texts.

4. Study Guide: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 30, Response to Spiritual Gifts Questions, 1 Cor. 13-14

1 Corinthians 13-14 Study Guide

Quiz

1. What is the central theme that connects 1 Corinthians chapters 12 through 14, according to the lecture? How does chapter 13 contribute to understanding the issues within the Corinthian church addressed in these chapters?
2. According to the lecture, what is the primary purpose of love in the context of exercising spiritual gifts within the Christian community? Is love intended to create new rules or to function in another way?
3. Dr. Meadors presents a specific definition of love based on biblical texts. Briefly explain this definition and highlight its key components as presented in the lecture.
4. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul contrasts love with various spiritual gifts. According to the lecture, what is the main point Paul is trying to make with this contrast? Is he suggesting that these gifts are unimportant?
5. Why does Paul begin 1 Corinthians 14 with an exhortation to pursue love? How does chapter 14 demonstrate the practical application of love in the context of spiritual gifts in public worship?
6. According to the lecture, what was the most likely reason for the abuse of the gift of tongues in the Corinthian church? What does Paul emphasize as being more important than outward displays of such gifts?
7. Summarize Paul's argument regarding the relative value of tongues and prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:1-19. What key concept is repeatedly emphasized in relation to determining the value of these gifts?
8. Explain Paul's interpretation of tongues as a "sign" in 1 Corinthians 14:20-25, referencing the Old Testament passage from Isaiah. For whom is tongues intended as a sign, and in what sense?
9. Describe the guidelines Paul provides in 1 Corinthians 14 for regulating the use of spiritual gifts in the church assembly. What is the overarching principle that should guide the exercise of these gifts in public worship?

10. Briefly explain the different views presented in the lecture regarding the controversial verses about women remaining silent in the churches (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Which view does Dr. Meadors find most compelling and why?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The central theme connecting chapters 12-14 is Paul's response to questions concerning spiritual gifts and the need for unity and order in their exercise within the divided Corinthian community. Chapter 13, the classic passage on love, provides the ethical framework and a necessary middle ground for understanding how the gifts should be used in a way that builds up the community rather than fostering division or self-promotion.
2. The primary purpose of love is to regulate the exercise of spiritual gifts within the community, ensuring that they are used ethically and for the edification of others. Love does not create the criteria for right action but rather manages how those already established truths are applied in their relationships and public worship.
3. Dr. Meadors defines love as "the cognitive adjustment of mind, will, and values to divine revelation in order to fulfill the preceptive will of God." Key components include a cognitive element (adjusting our thinking), a volitional aspect (our will), a realignment of values, and its foundation in God's revealed truth, leading to obedience.
4. Paul's main point in contrasting love with spiritual gifts is to emphasize that even the most spectacular gifts are worthless and fail to achieve their intended purpose without love. He is not saying the gifts are unimportant in themselves, but their value is contingent on being exercised in love for the benefit of the community.
5. Paul begins chapter 14 by urging the pursuit of love because it is the loving thing to do to follow the guidelines he lays out for the orderly and edifying use of spiritual gifts in public worship. Chapter 14 practically applies love by prioritizing understandable communication and the building up of the community over individual displays of spiritual prowess.
6. The abuse of tongues was likely due to the Corinthians' desire for status and outward displays of spiritual experience, mirroring the cultural values of Roman Corinth. Paul emphasizes that understandable communication and community edification are more important than seeking personal status through spectacular but incomprehensible expressions.

7. Paul argues that while tongues have a relative value, prophecy is more desirable because it edifies the community through intelligible communication. The key concept repeatedly emphasized is the need for understanding and effective communication for the purpose of building up the church.
8. Paul interprets tongues as a sign for unbelievers, drawing an analogy from Isaiah 28:11 where foreign language was a sign of judgment for unbelieving Israel. In the Corinthian context, tongues can be a sign to outsiders that they do not understand God's message being proclaimed, thus highlighting their unbelief.
9. Paul's guidelines for regulating gifts include limiting the number of tongue speakers, requiring interpretation, prioritizing prophecy, ensuring order and peacefulness, and emphasizing that everything should be done for the edification of the church. The overarching principle is that public worship should be characterized by intelligibility and a focus on building up the entire body of believers.
10. The lecture presents several views, including a face value prohibition, a context-specific restriction on authoritative teaching during prophecy, interpolation, familial codes, and the slogan view. Dr. Meadors finds the slogan view most compelling, suggesting Paul is quoting a group that wanted to silence women and then sarcastically refuting their position in light of his earlier validation of women prophesying in chapter 11.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the significance of 1 Corinthians 13 within the broader context of Paul's teachings on spiritual gifts in chapters 12 and 14. How does the concept of love serve as a corrective to the issues present in the Corinthian church?
2. Analyze Paul's arguments in 1 Corinthians 14 regarding the relative importance of tongues and prophecy in public worship. What criteria does Paul use to evaluate these gifts, and what does this reveal about his priorities for the Christian assembly?
3. Explore the various interpretations of the passage concerning women remaining silent in the churches (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of at least three different views presented in the lecture and discuss which interpretation you find most convincing and why.

4. Drawing from the lecture, discuss the unique challenges and context of the Corinthian church that contributed to the issues surrounding spiritual gifts. How did the social and religious environment of Corinth likely influence the way the believers exercised and viewed these gifts?
5. Reflect on Dr. Meadors' concluding remarks about the importance of learning and communication for those in ministry. How do the principles discussed in 1 Corinthians 12-14 relate to the ongoing need for leaders to be both knowledgeable and effective in conveying God's word?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Spiritual Gifts (Charismata):** Special abilities or endowments given by the Holy Spirit to believers for the purpose of building up the church and ministering to the world.
- **Edification:** The act of building up, strengthening, and encouraging the Christian community in faith and understanding.
- **Tongues (Glossa):** In the context of 1 Corinthians, this term appears to refer to both known human languages (as in Acts) and possibly ecstatic or unknown speech. Its exact nature in Corinth is debated.
- **Love (Agape):** In the biblical sense, particularly as described in 1 Corinthians 13, it is a selfless, active, and unconditional love characterized by patience, kindness, and a focus on the well-being of others, rooted in a cognitive and volitional response to God's revelation.
- **Intelligible Communication:** Speech or expression that is easily understood by the hearers, a key priority for Paul in the context of public worship.
- **Ecstatic Speech:** Speech uttered in a state of religious ecstasy or spiritual rapture, sometimes perceived as unintelligible to those who do not share the experience.
- **Covenant Loyalty:** The steadfast faithfulness and commitment characteristic of the relationship between God and his people in the Old Testament, also applied to relationships within the Christian community.
- **Interpolation:** The act of adding words or passages to a text after its original composition. This is one proposed explanation for the seemingly contradictory verses on women speaking in church.

5. FAQs on Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 30, Response to Spiritual Gifts Questions, 1 Cor. 13-14, BiblicaleLearning.org

Frequently Asked Questions on 1 Corinthians 12-14

1. What is the central theme that connects 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13, and 14?

These three chapters are thematically linked and address the issues of division, the overemphasis of certain spiritual gifts (particularly tongues), disunity, and the crucial need for unity and diversity within the Corinthian church. Chapter 13, the classic passage on love, serves as a central point to understand how the exercise of spiritual gifts in chapters 12 and 14 should be governed.

2. Why does Paul place such a strong emphasis on love in the midst of his discussion on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 13? Paul introduces the concept of love to provide a crucial ethical framework for the use of spiritual gifts. He emphasizes that even the most spectacular gifts are worthless without love. The purpose is to promote unity and healthy relationships within the community, ensuring that the exercise of gifts prioritizes the edification and well-being of others rather than individual status or self-promotion. Love, in this context, regulates how Christians interact and utilize their gifts for the common good.

3. According to the lecture, what is a biblical understanding of love, as opposed to a purely emotional or cultural one? Biblical love, as presented, is not merely a feeling or a motivator but is fundamentally a cognitive adjustment of one's mind, will, and values to divine revelation. It's about aligning oneself with God's preceptive will, leading to responsible action and the pursuit of the greatest possible good for others, as defined by Scripture. Love is a behavior and the management of behavior based on God's revealed truth, not a standalone principle that originates its own criteria.

4. What were some of the apparent issues in the Corinthian church regarding the use of spiritual gifts, particularly tongues? The Corinthians seemed to be using their spiritual gifts in a way that fostered division and prioritized individual status over community edification. The gift of tongues, being a more outwardly demonstrative gift, appears to have been particularly prone to abuse, possibly being used for self-aggrandizement or in a manner that was unintelligible and therefore did not benefit the wider congregation. This created a "people problem" that Paul sought to address.

5. What distinction does Paul draw between the value of tongues and prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14, and what is the key principle he emphasizes? Paul argues that while tongues might have a relative value (potentially as a sign for unbelievers), prophecy is more desirable in the church because it edifies the community through understandable communication. The key principle Paul emphasizes is the importance of intelligibility and effective communication in public worship. He prioritizes speaking in a way that others can understand and be instructed, encouraged, and strengthened.

6. How does the lecture explain Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 14:20-22 that tongues are a sign for unbelievers, while prophecy is for believers? Drawing on Isaiah 28:11, the lecture suggests that tongues, as a foreign or unintelligible language, could serve as a sign of judgment or a reminder of unbelief for those outside the faith who do not understand the message. Just as the Assyrian language was a sign to unbelieving Israel, tongues could highlight the lack of understanding of God's ways for non-believers entering their assembly. Prophecy, being understandable, is for believers as it builds them up in their faith and understanding.

7. What guidelines does Paul provide in 1 Corinthians 14 for regulating the use of spiritual gifts in church gatherings? Paul emphasizes that everything done in the assembly should aim at building up the church (edification). Regarding tongues, he advises that only two or at most three should speak, one at a time, and only if there is an interpreter. If no interpreter is present, the speaker should remain silent in the church and speak to themselves and to God. For prophecy, two or three prophets should speak, and others should carefully evaluate what is said. He stresses orderliness and peace in worship, asserting that God is not a God of disorder.

8. How does the lecture address the controversial passage in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 regarding women remaining silent in churches? The lecture presents several views on this difficult passage, noting the apparent contradiction with 1 Corinthians 11 where women are seen as prophesying. These views include: a face-value interpretation (though deemed naive), the idea that it refers to women not teaching authoritatively in a prophetic context, the suggestion that these verses might be a later interpolation, and the "slogan view." The slogan view, which the lecturer finds attractive, proposes that Paul is quoting a restrictive sentiment held by some in the Corinthian church regarding women's speech and then sarcastically refuting it in the following verses (14:36-38), reinforcing his own apostolic authority and the validity of women speaking (as established in chapter 11) in appropriate ways.