



GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved
WORLD!

(#46)
In pursuit of the "greater." (Part 3)

Greatness

A Spirit-led focus on greatness!

In *all* of life, we should have a focus that goes *far beyond* what the sinful world offers us!



Being in pursuit of the ***GREAT*** things...
NOT preoccupied with ***SECONDARY*** things!

PART 3: Primary vs. secondary gifts – a comparison.

>> The issue of "needs" vs. "wants." <<

An illustration based on two of the gifts:
prophecy (= primary) and
tongues (= secondary).

1 CORINTHIAN 14 ILLUSTRATION

- ✓ **SOME GIFTS (SUCH AS PROPHECY) BENEFIT *MANY*.**
>> These are PRIMARY works of the Spirit, and are of ***GREAT*** value.
- ✓ **OTHER GIFTS (SUCH AS TONGUES) BENEFIT *FEW*.**
>> These are SECONDARY works of the Spirit, and are of ***LESSER*** value.

THIS ILLUSTRATION ASSUMES WE ARE REFERRING TO ***GENUINE, SPIRIT-GIVEN GIFTS***.
TODAY, THERE ARE MANY FAKES AND COUNTERFEITS IN THE WORLD.

IN A CHURCH PREOCCUPIED WITH SECONDARY MATTERS,

PAUL WISHED THEY COULD ALL HAVE WHAT THEY ***WANTED***...
BUT HE WISHED ***EVEN MORE*** THAT THEY HAD WHAT THEY ***NEEDED***.

I wish you all had the gift of speaking in tongues, but ***even more*** I wish you were all able to prophesy. For prophecy is a ***greater*** and ***more useful*** gift than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church can get some good out of it.

1 Cor. 14:5 (NLT)

AFTER COMPARING THE TWO, HE WILL TELL THEM:

- ✓ They should actively encourage gifts that have ***primary*** value.
- ✓ They shouldn't suppress gifts that have ***secondary*** value.
- ✓ All gifts need to be expressed in a proper and orderly way.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS MEANT BY "PROPHECY"

THE TIME ELEMENT: "Prophecy" normally refers to truth-telling, not necessarily future-predicting.

It has a greater focus on understanding and applying the Scriptures to ***present*** situations, rather than on predictions about the ***future***.

THEY WEREN'T ASKING JESUS FOR A "PREDICTION"!

The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophecy! Who hit you?"

Luke 22:63-64 (NIV)

(This is also obvious from the ***purpose*** for prophecy. (See next page.)

ITS PURPOSE: To encourage, strengthen, teach, comfort, testify about Jesus, convict of sin, save...

... [two] prophets, said a lot to **encourage** and **strengthen** the brothers.

Acts 15:32b (ISV)

But one who prophesies is helping others **grow in the Lord, encouraging** and **comforting** them.

1 Cor. 14:3 (NLT)

... so that everyone may **learn** and everyone may **be encouraged**.

1 Cor. 14:31b (CSB)

For the **testimony of Jesus** is the spirit of prophecy.

Rev. 19:10b (NASB)

But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be **convinced** by all that he is a sinner and will be **judged** by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare.

So he will **fall down and worship God**, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

1 Cor. 14:24-25 (NIV)

WHAT IT ISN'T: It's not Scripture!

The "prophecy" Paul refers to, in 1 Corinthians 14, is NOT like the prophecy of the prophets and apostles, who gave us God's Word!

THEIR "prophecy" – which is now Scripture – was totally without error.
OUR "prophecy" – which is NOT Scripture – has the potential for error!

OUR "PROPHECY":

- It is (in most cases) an attempt to explain and apply the Bible.
- Though guided by the Holy Spirit, our faulty perceptions influence what we say...
- Because of this... OUR WORDS NEED EVALUATED FOR ACCURACY!!

ITS IMPERFECTION: Our "prophecy" may contain error, and needs evaluated for accuracy!

- What we say needs weighed carefully!

Two or three prophets should speak, and others should **weigh carefully what is said**.

1 Corinthians 14:29 (ESV)

- What we say needs tested, and held on to **only** if it is good!

Do not put out the Spirit's fire. Do not despise prophecies. Instead, **test everything**. Hold on to what is good. Keep away from every kind of evil.

1 Thes. 5:19-22 (ISV)

- What we say needs believed **only** if it is proved to be from the right Spirit!

Dear friends, **do not believe every spirit**, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1 (NIV)

ITS CONTRAST: It's definitely NOT what is done by many of the modern-day FAKES!

SO OFTEN, THE FAKES ARE...

- ✓ **Preoccupied with "future-predicting."**
 - And downplaying their **false** predictions.
- ✓ **Not having the Bible's focus –**
 - Not encouragement, comforting.
 - Not strengthening, promoting spiritual growth.
 - Not teaching, testifying about Jesus.
 - Not convicting of sin, bringing to salvation.
- ✓ **Elevating their words** to the level of Scripture.
 - Not admitting their potential for error.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS MEANT BY "TONGUES"

WHAT IT IS:

- Speech* that is not understandable by the hearer. *It needs interpreted, or it has no value to others.*
- Even in the early church, it was a gift that **not** all people had!

All do not speak with tongues, do they?
[Implied answer: "NO!"]

1 Cor. 12:30b (NASB)

* Paul did not define what type of language or communication it was. His emphasis was this: "It can't be understood... but it needs to be understood"!

WHAT IT ISN'T:

- **NOT:** The "one-time" sign events that were done by the apostles. These were needed in the early church, as signs (to the Jews) that God had begun a new work among his people. They were the "signs of an apostle."

The things that mark an apostle--signs, wonders and miracles--were done among you with great perseverance.

2 Cor. 12:12 (NIV)

[The good news about salvation] was confirmed to us by those who heard him [= Jesus]. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Hebrews 2:3b-4 (NIV)

CONTRASTED TO THE MODERN-DAY FAKES:

- ✓ It is not learned or accomplished the same way.
 - Won't require a "how to" book, for learning to do it.
 - Won't require manipulative techniques, for getting others to do it.
 - Isn't caused by out-of-control emotional ecstasy.
- ✓ It will be done by the Holy Spirit.
 - Won't need to use human effort to "work it up."
- ✓ It can be kept under control by the person doing it.
 - Speakers can take turns, can limit how many speak, and can remain quiet (if there is no interpreter).
- ✓ It is capable of being interpreted.
 - Much modern-day "tongues" is just gibberish, not something to be interpreted!

THE NEED FOR INVOLVING THE MIND.

(At least when it's done in the presence of others.)

- ✓ It has value only if it is fruitful to the mind.
- ✓ The apostle Paul shows us the importance of including the mind in what one says!
- ✓ If there is no interpreter, it is not to be done (except in private).

[without being interpreted] ... my mind is unfruitful.
1 Cor. 14:14b (NASB)

But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.
1 Cor. 14:19 (NIV)

But if there is no interpreter, that person is to keep silent in the church and speak to himself and God.
1 Cor. 14:28 (CSB)

THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT INVOLVING THE MIND.

- ✓ Nobody else can join in or benefit from it.
- ✓ It may even turn people away from God or the Good News!*

* (In the Old Testament, untranslated tongues were a sign of judgment, given when the nation had already turned away from God – 1 Cor. 14:21.)

... how can those who don't understand you praise God along with you? How can they join you in giving thanks when they don't understand what you are saying? ... it doesn't help the other people present.
1 Cor. 14:16b, 17b (NLT)

So if ... some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?
1 Cor. 14:23 (NIV)

CONCLUSION: IF YOU WANT GREATNESS IN YOUR USE OF GIFTS...

BASIC PRINCIPLES:

1. Focus on the PRIMARY.
2. Permit the SECONDARY.
3. Do all in an orderly way!

IN THIS EXAMPLE:

- 1 PROPHECY, the primary gift, DOES use the mind... so use it in a mindful way!

Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop.

For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.
1 Cor. 14:29-32 (NIV)

- 2 TONGUES, the secondary gift, may be used ONLY if the mind can be involved. (What is said must be interpreted.)

If anyone speaks in another tongue, there are to be only two, or at the most three, each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no interpreter, that person is to keep silent in the church and speak to himself and God.
1 Cor. 14:27-28 (CSB)

- 3 ALL must be done in an orderly manner, with a greater focus on gifts that have primary value – the "greater" gifts.

- 1 So, dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues.
- 2
- 3 But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.
1 Cor. 14:39-40 (NLT)

One final issue...

PURSUE GREATNESS ISN'T JUST A MATTER OF:



WE NEED TO KNOW

if we're developing a greatness that is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

IN THE PURSUIT OF "GREATNESS,"
 ⇨ the WORLD pushes a focus on SELF.

Be an achiever! Let nothing get in your way! You deserve it!
Be all that you can be! Success! You're great!
Be a leader, not a follower! Maximize your potential! You can do it! Plan your own destiny!
Be #1! The world owes it to you!

LOOK AT ME, PEOPLE!!

I AM SO-O-O-O GREAT!!! 😊

BUT GENUINE "GREATNESS" COMES FROM
 ⇨ a focus on OTHERS.

✓ **NOT BY FOLLOWING THE WORLD'S EXAMPLE!**

But Jesus called them and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions use their authority over them. It must not be this way among you!"

Matthew 20:25-26a (NET)

✓ **BUT BY FOLLOWING JESUS' EXAMPLE!**

"Instead whoever wants to be **great** among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 20:26b-28 (NET)

Serving... Just like JESUS did!

"... the one who is **greatest** among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the one who serves."

Luke 22:26b (NET)

"For who is **greater**, the one who is seated at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

Luke 22:27 (NET)

• **THE ISSUE** isn't whether or not you develop your skills and abilities... it's what you focus on, as you do it.

"For he who is least among you all—he is the **greatest**."

Luke 9:48b (NIV)

**UNLESS WE THINK WE ARE BETTER THAN
 OUR MASTER —
 THE ONE WHO SENDS US INTO THE WORLD...**

"I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his **master**, nor is a messenger greater than **the one who sent him**."

John 13:16 (NIV)

✦ **Knowing these things will help us prioritize the way we develop our gifts and abilities.** ✦

~~I will make **MYSELF** "all I can be," and will develop **MY** full potential!~~

I will encourage **THEM** to be "all **THEY** can be," and to reach **THEIR** full potential!

✦ **THIS is how we attain Spirit-powered, God-honoring GREATNESS!** ✦

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