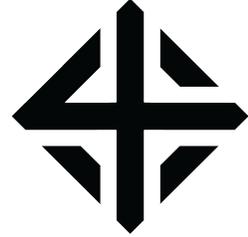


Week of April 20th

1 Corinthians 14



THE CHURCH AT
4POINTS

Prayer Guide

This prayer guide is meant to help you facilitate a guided prayer time based on the discussion of the Word. You can be flexible in how this is used but we do want to pray in response to God's Word and collectively as a church for certain request. Remember, in communal prayer we are not a bunch of individuals having individual conversations with God and only taking turns doing so. We are having a communal conversation with God. Help remind people to "share the time" by being mindful of the length of prayers while also reminding them to pray as many times as they would like.

Facilitate through the following prayer topics:

- Praise God for his abundant grace and desire to give each of His children gifts for the upbuilding of the body
- Ask God to give us gifts that we use to build one another up and bring glory to His name
- Ask God to protect us from prideful and selfish attitudes when it comes to gifting
- Thank God for his promise of being in control of His church

Collective prayer request this week: (this will feature a request for our church, city, or world that our whole church will be praying over. Encourage everyone to write this down somewhere or make a note and continue to pray for it each day)

-Ask God to show you whether you are using the gifts He has given you well. Pray for at least one other person in your missional family this week to realize the grace God has given them for service to the body.

Discover

Imagine this: You are sitting with a group of people you have known for years. Each of you have shown in various ways your willingness to sacrificially love one another: meals have been cooked, kids have been babysat, prayers have been prayed at midnight, houses have been cleaned, and encouraging text messages have been sent. Now imagine this: as a group you discover there are even more ways, ways that have often been neglected, in which you can love and serve one another. You learn that God desires you to ask Him for gifts, not ones you use for yourself but for the spiritual benefit of others.

Would you desire these gifts? How might this benefit the ability of the group to love and serve each other?

Paul's writing to the church in Corinth is very personal. This is a church he had personally planted and spent his life sharing the gospel and helping to establish. In the first several chapters, Paul lays the foundation for some of the problems facing this particular church. They have given in to the surrounding culture's value on "worldly wisdom" and prideful skill in gifts and gifted speaking. This influence of Hellenistic culture is one in which self and skill were seen as most important. The desire was for prominence and esteem. Sound familiar? This mindset had even made its way into the manner in which this church was coming together to use the gifts God had given them in His grace. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul re-directs by teaching the pursuit of love (14:1). In other words, do not pursue esteem, value, or self-identity. Pursue loving one another and do so by desiring to have gifts given to you from God so that you may do so in even greater ways. Many of us today need to hear this Word from 1 Corinthians 14.

Not only is it not about us, but it is also about loving others through the “earnest desire” of spiritual gifts, such as prophecy.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14

Discuss

1. *In verse one, what are the two commands?*
2. *Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. In light of the picture of love, how would we begin to obey the command to “pursue love?”*

When we think about Paul’s description of love, we come to the realization that it is not our nature to be loving - that is, we are not naturally patient, kind, not arrogant, not resentful, etc. We need God’s supernatural help. Paul writes elsewhere that love is a fruit of the Spirit. We are dependent on God for supernatural love in the same way that we are dependent on God for supernatural prophecy or other “extraordinary” gifts of the Spirit. This should cause us to humbly depend on God in prayer for His supernatural supply of love in our hearts through His Spirit. Paul is clear - we should pursue both love and spiritual gifts. This protects us from diminishing spiritual gifts as we often do, minimizing them to an individualistic checklist we can fill out in order to better know ourselves. The pursuit of love that should accompany a desire for spiritual gifts will keep God’s design for spiritual gifts - the “building up” of other believers - in focus.

3. *In what ways have we/you desired spiritual gifts, but not pursued love? EX: I’ve taken a spiritual gift survey online to figure out what my spiritual gifting is, but I’ve never thought to try and utilize that gift for the good of others with whom I’m in close community.*
4. *Let’s think through the opposite error - in what ways have we/you pursued love, but not earnestly desired spiritual gifts? EX: I’m open to serve and give, but I don’t feel I have anything to offer when it comes to sharing the gospel, giving spiritual counsel or direction to others because I don’t believe I’m naturally gifted in those areas, forgetting that God supernaturally gifts people in those ways.*

Paul says that we should earnestly desire spiritual gifts. But at the end of that sentence, he tacks on an incredible phrase: “especially that you may prophesy.” This requires us to carefully think through what Paul means by the term “prophesy.” This chapter gives us some insight into his use of the term.

5. *What does Paul say that prophecy is used for in verse 3? *Have people share the different words in this verse that different translations may use, it could help give a picture of the term’s meaning*

According to Paul, prophecy involves speaking to people for their up building, encouragement, and consolation. The Greek terms used here all involve the following: promoting another’s growth in wisdom, happiness, and holiness / earnestly encouraging / persuading or comforting.

But isn’t this what we do when we preach or teach? How is prophecy different from the ordinary yet supernatural act of comforting or encouraging other believers with truths from scripture? The answer arises from how Paul further describes prophecy later in the chapter. *Have someone read 1 Corinthians 14:30. Verse 30 gives us insight into the nature of biblical prophecy: it’s revelatory. In other words, this verse shows us that people are receiving revelation “on the spot.” When considering everything the New Testament tells us about prophecy (the NT does not give us a specific definition!), New Testament prophecy can be defined like this “Prophecy is the human report of divine revelation.” (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology).

New Testament prophecy involves a specific revelation from God that is not necessarily found in scripture. The key as we will see, is that prophecy of this nature does not possess the same authority of

an Old Testament prophet or of Scripture in general. Paul gives us guardrails to protect us from thinking that we will ever receive a “word from God” that contradicts or goes beyond anything found in scripture.

6. Have someone read verse 29. What does Paul expect to happen after someone shares what they believe to be prophecy?

7. Have someone read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21. How does Paul tell us to receive prophecy here?

After a prophecy is shared, God commands that what is said should be weighed and tested. The implication is that we should weigh “prophecy” by the standard of God’s Word contained in scripture.

7. Have you ever experienced the gift of prophecy as we have outlined here, whether it was your speaking to someone for their benefit, or someone speaking to you for your benefit?

8. Have you ever sought this gift in prayer? Why or why not?

It’s possible that we don’t seek this gift for a variety of reasons. There are two specific reasons on two different ends of the spectrum. In one case, it may be that we are so overly confident in our knowledge of the scriptures, or our way with words, that we do not feel the need to seek supernatural power from God. On the other hand, it may be that we feel so inadequate to be used by God in these ways, that we don’t seek His supernatural gifting, but prefer to stick with what we naturally do best - like serving in more tangible ways.

Paul’s teaching on prophecy in this chapter is set within the context of a church who was seemingly more concerned with the individualistic gift of speaking in tongues, and not properly concerned with the gifts that would serve to build the church.

9. As you look back over this chapter, how does Paul compare (list the similarities) and contrast (list the differences) tongues and prophecy?

Paul’s aim is certainly not to forbid speaking in tongues. He literally says so in verse 39 - “do not forbid speaking in tongues.” His problem is that the Corinthians have their priorities out of order. They are not focused on the good of others, but are seeking special gifting for their individual selves for their own up building and potential exaltation at the expense of the community. Surely in our culture we are often guilty of not properly prioritizing God’s spiritual gifts. Answer the following question in light of Paul’s evaluation of a spiritual gift- its capacity to edify others.

10. What are some ways you feel we do not properly prioritize spiritual gifts? In other words, what are some gifts that we maybe over exalt, and what are some gifts that we probably are not properly seeking and utilizing?

11. What is the importance of each of us asking God for a gift of His grace for the benefit of others in our spiritual community?

12. Think back to the scenario from the beginning of our time together. As a missional family, what are some ways we are currently using our gifts to build each other up that we need to continue? On the other hand, in what ways does this discussion challenge us to pursue spiritual gifts that we are we not currently using to build each other up?

Hopefully you are now more confident in your understanding of New Testament prophecy. As you move forward, realize that the missional family or the DNA group is the structure in our church in which the gift could be utilized. Pray for this gift for the good of others, and prioritize ultimately your pursuit of love. Let Paul’s words in Corinthians have the last word in our discussion: “Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.”

Do

Let's spend time this week pursuing love and desiring spiritual gifts by praying that God would give you gifts that would build up our body as.