

The Great Debate

Connect Group Guide - 9.20.26

Opening Prayer

Key Scripture

- 1 Corinthians 12:8–11, 29–30
- 1 Corinthians 13
- 1 Corinthians 14:2, 4, 26–28, 32–33, 39–40
- Acts 2
- Acts 10
- Acts 19

Message Recap

This week's message addressed some of the more charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit, focusing especially on the gift of tongues. The pastor walked through what Scripture actually teaches, challenged the group to neither abuse nor ignore what the Bible presents, and offered a framework for how a church can be both Spirit-led and Scripture-governed.

Key Takeaways

- Tongues and other charismatic gifts are biblical and appear throughout the New Testament, including Acts 2, Acts 10, Acts 19, and 1 Corinthians 12 through 14.
- There are two primary theological camps on this topic: cessationists, who believe certain gifts have ended, and continuationists, who believe the gifts continue today. Both positions can be supported with Scripture.
- Tongues are not the only evidence of the Holy Spirit, and no single gift should be used to measure a believer's spiritual standing.
- Paul distinguishes between private and public expressions of tongues and gives clear guidelines for how public expression should function in a gathered church setting, including limits, order, and interpretation.
- The standard for any spiritual gift is whether it builds up the body of Christ.
- Pastor Mike offered five guardrails: Scripture is the authority, Jesus is the focus, love is the motivation, order is biblical, and everyone is welcome without pressure.

Discussion Questions

Opening Questions

1. Before this message, where would you have placed yourself on the spectrum between cessationist and continuationist? Has anything shifted after hearing this message?

Digging Into Scripture

2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 together. What stands out to you about how Paul describes the Spirit distributing gifts? What does it mean that the Spirit distributes "as he wills"?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 12:29-30. Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions expecting the answer "no." How does this passage challenge any idea that one gift is a requirement for all believers?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 14:27-28 and 14:39-40. How do these verses hold two things in tension at the same time? What does that tension teach us about how the church is meant to function?
5. Paul places his discussion of love in 1 Corinthians 13 right in the middle of his teaching on spiritual gifts. Why do you think he structured it that way? What is he communicating?

Reflecting on the Sermon

6. Pastor Mike said: "We will not abuse what the Bible teaches and we will not ignore what the Bible teaches." How have you seen either of those extremes cause harm in a church or in someone's faith?
7. Pastor Mike described himself as "a continuationist with a seatbelt." What do you think that phrase means in practice? Do you think that is a helpful way to approach the charismatic gifts? Why or why not?
8. Pastor Mike said: "A gift may reveal what the Spirit can do through you, but fruit reveals what the Spirit is doing in you." How does that distinction change the way you think about spiritual maturity?
9. Have you ever been in an environment where a spiritual gift was used in a way that felt forced, manipulative, or out of order? How did that experience shape your view of the gifts?

10. Pastor Mike said: "We don't chase manifestations. We pursue Jesus." What is the difference between those two things? How can a person or a church tell when that line is being crossed?

Practical Applications

- **Examine your assumptions.** Before this week is over, spend some time honestly asking yourself whether your view of the charismatic gifts has been shaped more by Scripture or by past experiences, either good or bad. Bring what you find to God in prayer.
- **Read 1 Corinthians 14 on your own.** This chapter is Paul's most detailed instruction on how spiritual gifts function in a gathered church. Read it slowly and note every instruction he gives about order, purpose, and love.
- **Practice the five guardrails.** Take the five guardrails from the message and apply them to your own spiritual life this week. Ask yourself: Is Scripture my authority? Is Jesus my focus? Is love my motivation? Am I operating in order? Am I welcoming others without pressuring them?
- **Have an honest conversation.** If you have a family member, close friend, or fellow group member who holds a different view on the charismatic gifts, consider having a respectful and curious conversation with them. Practice disagreeing without dividing.
- **Ask the right question.** In any spiritual conversation, experience, or decision this week, practice asking Paul's central question: Does this build up the body of Christ?

Prayer Requests & Closing

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to different perspectives on Israel; focus on biblical teaching rather than politics
- Encourage participation from everyone, but don't force anyone to share
- If someone wants to give their life to Christ during discussion, be prepared to pray with them
- Keep the discussion focused on personal application, not just theological debate
- Consider inviting someone knowledgeable about Israel or Jewish culture to a future meeting