

The Great Debate

Series: Gifts of the Spirit

Date: September 20, 2026

Message By: Pastor Mike Foster

Key Scriptures

- 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

Spiritual gifts should be welcomed and practiced according to Scripture. As we learn about tongues and the other gifts, our commitment is to keep Jesus at the center, love one another, and strengthen His Church.

Open, but ordered.

Expectant, but biblical.

Spirit-led, but Scripture-governed.

Tongues Have a Place in Scripture

- The gift of tongues appears in Acts and in Paul's teaching to the Corinthians. First Corinthians 12:10 includes different kinds of tongues among the gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit.
- Because Scripture addresses this gift, we should be willing to learn about it. That also means taking seriously everything Scripture says about its purpose and practice.
- Some believers have seen gifts misused. Others have rarely heard them discussed. Whatever our background, God's Word gives us a foundation for understanding and responding faithfully.

"We will not abuse what the Bible teaches, and we will not ignore what the Bible teaches."

No Single Gift Measures Spiritual Maturity

- The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to different people. In 1 Corinthians 12:29–30, Paul asks whether all believers are apostles, prophets, or teachers, and whether all speak in tongues or interpret. His questions make clear that everyone does not receive the same gift.
- No one should feel like a second-class Christian because they do not speak in tongues. Neither should someone view that gift as proof that they are more spiritual than another believer.
- Spiritual maturity also involves the character the Holy Spirit develops within us. Love matters. The way we treat others matters. First Corinthians 13 places love at the heart of Paul's teaching on the gifts.

"A gift may reveal what the Spirit can do through you. Fruit reveals what the Spirit is doing in you."

Personal and Public Expression Have Different Purposes

- 1 Corinthians 14 describes tongues in more than one setting.
- In verses 2 and 4, Paul speaks of an expression directed toward God that builds up the individual. He also addresses the use of tongues when the Church gathers, where others need to understand and benefit from what is spoken.
- For public expression, 1 Corinthians 14:27–28 gives clear instructions:
 - Two, or at most three, should speak.
 - They should speak one at a time.
 - Someone must interpret.
 - If there is no interpreter, the person should remain quiet in the gathering and speak to themselves and to God.
- These instructions provide a way for the gift to operate with order, understanding, and care for the congregation.

The Holy Spirit Leads Us in Order

- Paul teaches that spiritual expression remains subject to self-control. He writes that the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets, then reminds the Church:

"For God is not a God of disorder but of peace." — 1 Corinthians 14:33

- The Holy Spirit's presence does not require confusion or a loss of control. His leading agrees with the Word He inspired.
- Paul's instruction is straightforward: everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Welcome the Gifts Without Pressure

- Paul tells the Church to eagerly desire prophecy and not to forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39). He immediately follows that instruction with the call to order.
- The misuse of a gift does not cancel its biblical place. At the same time, welcoming a gift never requires pressuring people to demonstrate it or manufacturing an experience.
- The message offered a practical reminder:
- **Don't forbid it. Don't force it. Don't fake it. Don't fear it. Don't flaunt it.**
- Teach it, test it, and submit it to Scripture.

The Purpose Is to Build Up the Church

- Spiritual gifts become unhealthy when attention shifts toward the person using them. Their purpose is to serve others and honor God.
- "Everything must be done so that the church may be built up." — 1 Corinthians 14:26*
- The measure is more than whether something was emotional, unusual, or memorable. We should ask whether it strengthened the Body of Christ.
 - Love keeps our attention on the people we are called to serve.

Our Commitments at Seekers Point

- Scripture is our authority. Every experience is measured against God's Word.
- Jesus is our focus. No gift becomes more important than the Giver.
- Love is our motivation. We use our gifts to strengthen others.
- Order is biblical. We follow Scripture's instructions as we welcome the Holy Spirit's work.
- Everyone is welcome, and no one is pressured. We make room for people to learn, ask questions, and grow.

Key Statements

- Open, but ordered. Expectant, but biblical. Spirit-led, but Scripture-governed.
- A gift may reveal what the Spirit can do through you. Fruit reveals what the Spirit is doing in you.
- If something is truly led by the Holy Spirit, it will never require us to disobey the Word inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- Everyone is welcome, and no one is pressured.

Reflection and Application

Read 1 Corinthians 12–14, giving attention to how Paul connects gifts, love, and order.

As you read, consider:

- What assumptions or past experiences do I need to bring honestly before God?
- Am I measuring spiritual maturity by a particular gift or looking for Christlike character?
- Does the way I use my gifts strengthen others and point them toward Jesus?
- How can I remain open to the Holy Spirit while grounded in Scripture?

Bring your questions to God in prayer. Seek understanding, make love your motivation, and look for one practical way to strengthen someone else this week.