

09/12/10

Communicating Truth Clearly -- 1 Corinthians 14:1-25

- How many of you would say that it's possible to like a particular song either because it has a catchy tune, or some words that are helpful...but its easy to listen to the song and not be as discerning as we perhaps should be...
- so you're singing along and then you say...now wait a minute--is that right? Is that the best way to say that?...could that be out of balance?...
- please listen to this one and then we'll talk about it...It may be a style that's not your preference... that's ok, focus on the words...
- [play -- More Like Falling in Love....]
- OK -- let's talk about that....
 - what would be right about what we've just heard?....
 - Christianity is a personal relationship...and one of the most important words to define that relationship is love...
 - we spent last week thinking about the many ways that is true...
- **Matthew 22:37-40 - And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."**
- so there's no question that loving the Lord is central to what it means to be a follower of Christ...
- but would the phrase "falling in love" be a good way to describe the decision to trust Christ?...
 - is it in any way something you fall into? (before, apart from, what you choose to believe?)
 - and doesn't "falling in" give the impression that this transaction is primarily an emotional...Does that mean that what you believe is not as important as how you feel?... thing, as opposed to a rational thing?...[more like falling in love, than something I believe in...]
- think about the gospel that Jesus presented in His public ministry...
 - He didn't call upon people to feel a particular way, or to trust solely in their experience...even something they experienced with Him...
 - He called upon them to make a decision to repent...to believe...to search the Scriptures to see whether He met the qualifications of the promised Messiah...and if He did, to leave all and follow Him...to place their faith, their trust....their very eternal destiny in what He was planning to do on the cross...
- It was more like something to believe in that resulted in a decision to love God... this artist has the process backwards... your mind trumps your feelings...
- now, bring that around to today...we are suffering today in many ways from sensuous Christianity...a approach to God that is based more on emotions and less on truth...
- and perhaps that is an overcorrection...
 - some of us grew up around a Christianity that was extremely cerebral...focused on teaching and rules and duty...at least it seemed that way...
 - and many have reacted to that and said, wait a minute---what is the appropriate place of the emotions in our worship, and in our daily life...
 - where does personal experience fit in the mix?....

- I don't believe the answer is -- it's more like falling in love... regardless of what you believe...
- but it also has to be something other than cerebral duty... This is where the artist is exactly right...
- the interesting thing is -- the Church at Corinth was struggling with this exact same issue...
- so Paul gives them what in our English Bibles is a chapter of information that emphasizes the importance of **Communicating Truth Clearly**...that's what we're going to focus on today...
- with that in mind, please open your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 14...
 - we're doing a verse by verse study of the book of I Cor. entitled Taking the Next Step...with Joy....
- and we've pointed out that chapters 12, 13, and 14 are all about spiritual gifts...
- There are different ways to define spiritual gifts---here's a helpful way--"**divine enablements given to each person in the body of Christ for ministry and service**"
- chapter 12 told us that the many diverse spiritual gifts were to be used in a way that brought unity to the body.
 - if the church isn't unified, and the church isn't edified with the way a person is using his/her spiritual gifts, then there's something wrong with the way that person is viewing/using his/her gift
- chapter 13 told us that the gifts of the Spirit must be controlled and characterized by the fruit of the Spirit
 - And Paul said in that chapter that the fruit of the Spirit that ought to especially characterize our gifts is the spiritual fruit of love...
 - without love, we are nothing, we're becoming nothing, and we'll accomplish nothing.
- now in chapter 14, Paul is going to push this subject one step further, and in so doing--will be instructing us on the importance of Communicating Truth Clearly...
- now, let me just give you a bit of warning...we're going to cover a lot of material this morning...
 - but, every person here can get this...and every person here can find find practical applications from this...

- read 1 Corinthians 14:1-40

- so, we're talking about Communicating Truth Clearly, and with the time we have remaining, let's look for 3 principles to help us avoid the trap of sensuous Christianity.

I. Value Ministry that Focuses on the Mind - vv. 1-19

- now, let's break this down... I understand that many folks here will have a lot of questions about what we just read...let me see how many of those questions I can anticipate and try to answer...
- You could look at verse one as the topic sentence. Paul is tying in chapters 12 and 13 and telling us what's coming in the next verses.
- so he says to pursue love. Of course that ties it back to chap. 13 together...pursue it - "hunt it, chase it with intensity"
- so the gifts of the Spirit must be controlled and characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.
- but then - desire the gifts. There's nothing wrong with spiritual ambition. If it's motivated by love for God and love for others--go after those gifts.

- the "zinger" comes at the end of the verse -- Paul says - "desire especially that you prophesy"
- what does that mean?...it's very important that you recognize that there were...

A. Two kinds of prophecy in the Bible - v. 1

1) foretelling - receiving a revelation from God whereby that person could accurately predict the future.

- we believe foretelling ended after the Bible was completed.
 - but before the completion of the Scriptures, God had prophets who could "foretell" the future.
 - you may want to jot down Isaiah 53 as a beautiful example of how God allowed Isaiah to predict exact details about the death of Christ 700 years before they happened.
 - that's one of literally hundreds of examples of foretelling, or predictive prophecy.
- but the primary kind of prophecy in the Bible was:
- #### **2) forthtelling - Communicating God's already revealed Word to man in a way that results in understanding and repentance.**
- now, we saw a couple of weeks ago that according to 1 Cor. 13:8 -- prophecy would be done away...[go back and read 13:8]
 - we believe that was talking about "foretelling" -- because again the need was no longer there after the Scriptures were completed...
 - but the "forthtelling" aspect of prophecy is still an important part of life in the church...Some people in the church are especially gifted in this area
 - But all of us have to be growing in our ability to communicate truth to others if we're going to be effective in carrying out the great commission of making disciples
 - that's the point of verse 1 -- everyone should want to prophesy in the sense that you are telling others about the Scripture...

- now, that gets us out of one frying pan and into another....what are we going to do with verse 2?...[read]...
- there too, you have to understand that there were...

B. Two kinds of tongues in the Bible - v. 2

1. the right use of tongues

- the right use of tongues involved a known language that the Speaker had not studied before
- but God allowed him to speak so that those present could hear God's Word in their native language (even though the Speaker had never studied it)
- a very important interpretive key to these verses is this--every time Paul is talking about the right use of tongues--he speaks of it in the plural

2. the wrong use of tongues

- this was the counterfeit gift--this was the gibberish
 - this was people trying to fake the real gift of tongues
 - every time Paul is talking about that--he speaks of it in the singular
- so Paul has a lot to say in this chapter about the wrong use of tongues.
 - the Corinthians, with their Pagan backgrounds loved the ecstatic
 - the pagans would often dance and drink themselves into frenzies until they went into semi-consciousness
 - they viewed that as the highest communion with their gods, where their spirits left their bodies--bypassed their minds, and communed directly with the gods

- the Corinthians had tried to bring those same ideas right into the church -- and they were using gibberish/ the counterfeit of the spiritual gifts of tongues/ as a means of bringing that sensuous, feeling oriented worship right into the church.

- another question you may have about verse 2 is...

C. Speaks unto "God"? - v. 2

- you may want to jot down in your Bibles that that phrase is probably best understood as "unto a god" (with a small "g")
- there's never an example in Scripture of a person communicating with God in anything other than clear discernable languages
- there's no such thing in the Bible as a prayer tongue or some sort of heavenly language.
- even when our Lord was speaking to the father in the high priestly prayer in John 17, He spoke words that were clear and discernable.
- no special heavenly language - even in that blessed heavenly scene.

D. Why did Paul wish everyone spoke in tongues? - v. 5

- and maybe we need to ask -- what kind of tongues?...
- obviously, the right use...he would never wish they exercised the wrong use...
- well talk about this more in a minute -- but that's because of what he says later in the chapter...that tongues is a sign of judgment on unbelieving Israel...
- remember that Paul was a Jewish man, and he would have done anything to see his fellow countrymen come to Christ...
- and the reason he wanted everyone in that church to continue exercising the right use of the gift of tongues is because he knew that when the gift died out (as he clearly said it would), that would be a sign that the judgment of God's chosen nation was complete for that period of time...

- now, what's the...

E. The main point.

- Paul is talking to a group of people who love the supernatural...
- they love the showy gifts...
- they love experience and sensuality...
- and Paul says -- what good is that?...
- if it doesn't include clearly communicated truth to the mind, then what good is the experience?...
- [tie to our philosophy of worship -- read the docs -- we want worship that is passionate, appeals to all aspects of the inner and outer man, but that is controlled by a biblically informed mind...]
- because worship like that can edify, build up, the body...
- **1 Corinthians 14:4 - One who ^aspeaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.**
- Gibberish is not effective because no one understands it. (it doesn't minister to the mind)

- another way of saying this is...

F. The best gifts are those that build others up in a simple and understandable way so that change occurs from the inside out.

- see, experience alone changes nothing long term...

- [review the argument of verses 6-12]...
- **Ephesians 4:22-24** - that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.
- [develop why the ministries of Doc Smith and Pastor Goode were so effective... keep the fruit on the low branches... contrast to the seminary dean's statement -- we are training preachers to be profound in the pulpit....]
- now, how does the second half of this passage fit into this discussion?...
- and there's a lot we could say about this -- and I certainly want to be charitable to our brothers and sisters in Christ who are of a more charismatic position in our town....but this is exactly why we are not a charismatic church....

- [could develop the difference between "biblical charismatics" and "unbiblical charismatics..."

II. Understand the Instructions for the Corinthian Church - vv. 20-40

- if they were going to be a body of believers who communicated truth clearly, even while the gift of tongues was still present...what would that look like?....

A. Recognize the tongues are a sign for unbelieving Israel.

1 Corinthians 14:20-22 - Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. In the Law it is written, "BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME," says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers...

- this wasn't something that should be exercised simply to arouse someone's senses...this was a very sober thing...

B. Follow the regulations for tongues until they die out.

1. No more than three persons speaking - v. 27

v. 27 - If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three...

2. Only one at a time - v. 27

v. 27 - and each in turn

3. Must be an interpreter present - v. 27

- v. 27 - and one must interpret

4. The gift could only be exercised by men - v. 34

- v. 34 - the women are to keep silent in the churches

- now again, we are not here to criticize some other church or denomination, but many of you have seen, or heard about, or even experienced charismatic gatherings where each one of the these principles were clearly violated...
- and maybe the people present did feel like the experience helped them...it was more like falling in love...
- but was it of God?...Is it consistent with what He has told us to believe in?
 - God never contradicts Himself....
- experience is a terrible arbiter of truth

C. Principle -- ministry should be done in a way that emphasizes the mind over experience, and in an orderly way.

- now, where does that leave us?...
- we're not here simply to talk about the 1st century church....
- nor are we here to judge someone else inside or outside the body of Christ...
- so how does a passage like 1 Cor. 14 help and guide us?....

III. Discern the Applications for People Like You and Me Today.

A. Be careful about the kind of persons you allow to influence your mind.

Psalm 1:1-3 - How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.

B. Give careful attention to what you allow into your mind.

Proverbs 23:7 - For as he thinks within himself, so he is.

C. Develop the habit of asking what you were thinking in given situations, and test your thoughts against the filter of God's Word.

Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

D. Prepare in advance to use your mind to please the Lord.

1 Peter 1:13-16 - Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be

holy yourselves also ^cin all *your* behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”