

Caring

- Chapters 12-14 speak about sensitive topics in the life of PCBC (e.g. brothers and sisters have had big fights about spiritual gifts in the past, and even our pastoral team have slightly different views on the roles of men and women in the life of the church and home). (I'm also aware that a man preaching about women being silent in church will likely come across as an imbalanced dynamic in our culture and context)! Please don't be afraid to suggest ways for our tone and posture during this series to be as Christ-like as possible as we engage with the whole counsel of God.
- Please look out for visitors (Christian and non-Christian). We will try share the gospel from every sermon and invite people to repent and believe in Jesus, and speak about non-Christians respectfully (assume they're always present with us!)

1 Corinthians 12-14: Supernatural Church Sermon Series Q&A

Just to be as upfront as possible, below I (Ps William) have laid my cards out concerning what I personally believe and how I plan to preach regarding some of the commonly asked questions and controversies about 1 Cor 12-14. Please feel ask directly if you have any other questions, or use the Q&A board (<https://bit.ly/PCBCquestions>) for an anonymous comment or query!

- 1. Spiritual gifts are NOT of first importance.** Paul says he doesn't want us to be "uninformed" (1 Cor 12) about spiritual gifts (or people). However, with the gospel, he declares it is "of first importance" (1 Cor 15:1-4). So we need to keep everything in perspective: spiritual gifts are of *secondary* importance. The goal of this preaching series will be to explain what the Bible says and doesn't say, and invite brothers and sisters to weigh and test it with the inerrant, infallible words of the Holy Spirit in Scripture (cf 1 Tim 3:16). We'll present what members of our church ought to affirm about the person and work of the Holy Spirit (as per our [Statement of Faith](#)) as primary issues ("God says..."), and present what each preacher is personally convinced from the Scriptures as secondary issues ("I think what's meant here is..."). While PCBC members have (and still!) debate the topic of spiritual gifts, because our church does not hold to a formal position on the miraculous or sign gifts, we won't require people to take a particular position on spiritual gifts to be welcomed as part of the PCBC family. This series is a good opportunity for us to model how to engage with a heated, controversial topic with grace and humility.
- 2. Spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14 have not yet ceased.** Regarding miraculous spiritual gifts, I will preach from a cautious but "continuationist" position (and not a "cessationist" position, e.g. [TMS Doctrinal Statement, paragraph 5 under "The Church"](#)). I personally believe that while 1 Cor 13:8-12 refers to tongues, prophecies and other miraculous gifts ceasing, but this happens when "the fullness comes"

(13:10), which I understand as Jesus's return or when we see Him "face to face" (v12), rather than the end of the apostolic era or NT canon (the context of 1 Cor 13:8-12 seems to fit Christ's return being in view, e.g. 1 Cor 15:52). Therefore, I think that Christians can still pray for and expect gifts listed in 1 Cor 12 such as healing, "works of power", prophecy, and languages to be present and active in the life of our church until Jesus returns.

I personally see and hear of these miraculous gifts being authentic and present in particular contexts (e.g. among unreached people groups who have no other way of encountering Jesus personally; cultures where magic and power are more prevalent such as Latin America, Africa, Asia; spaces where the Holy Spirit's God-breathed Scriptures have not yet been translated into their heart language; extreme situations of life and death). When they appear, God will never use them to contradict His Word or give glory to anyone other than Himself.

I'm also aware that spiritual gifts are frequently misused, or often taken to the extreme in some Christian circles (e.g. "straightening someone's leg" counts as healing, faking cases of healing to solicit tithes). I love many of my Pentecostal and Charismatic brothers and sisters in Christ, but I can't support a whole bunch of other practices that are frequently taught and encouraged among these circles that seem spiritual on the surface, yet fail to point to Jesus Christ as Lord. Examples of unbiblical practices include, but aren't limited to, [the use of "manifesting" language](#), the practice of being "slain in the spirit", "territorial combat", [the 7 Mountain Mandate](#), [divine health](#). I don't see these as genuine spiritual gifts or marks of a spiritual person. I won't advocate for them as I don't see them commanded in Scripture for us to believe or practice today for the good of God's gathered church.

However, I do think it's possible to be both Charismatic in belief and practice and gospel-centred (e.g. [Sam Storms](#), [Andrew Wilson](#), [Bob Kauflin and Sovereign Grace Music](#)).

- 3. "Languages" / "tongues" are a spiritual gift** – My (William's) personal position is that the gift of tongues or "languages" is the gift of speaking to others in different known languages (like what Acts 2 describes; cf. 方言 in Chinese). I see the "tongues of angels" in 13:1 as Paul speaking in hyperbole in an argument about love (or the Corinthians' lack of it!) so he may not have been referring to a specific "angelic tongue" but a hypothetical one. I actually see bilingual / trilingual people (e.g. Paul himself, many of our brothers and sisters at PCBC) as practising the gift of tongues much more authentically than a person who repeats syllables over and over again without anyone understanding or being encouraged by them (the modern practice of "tongues"-speaking in Charismatic and Pentecostal circles we seen on TV and experience in other circles, e.g., RICE Movement). I appreciate that other brothers and sisters at PCBC hold different views (even among our pastors, deacons and ministry leaders). For example, Pastor Albert believes that Paul is speaking of a real, angelic language. On this issue, as with others, I encourage people to be convinced in their own mind (cf Romans 14:4) and to search through the Scriptures with the same heart as the noble Bereans did (cf Acts 17:11), and to speak and discuss them with

charity, humility and the love of Christ (1 Cor 13:1-13).

- 4. Tongues are NOT a salvation gift** – More crucially, I believe the Bible never teaches that the gift and practice of “tongues” is required for salvation, necessary for acceptance into God’s family, or marks someone as truly spiritual (e.g. “Second Blessing”) or confers a second baptism of the Holy Spirit. As we discussed in the book of Acts in 2022, We shouldn’t take what is described in the narratives of Acts and use it to prescribe it as evidence that someone is truly spiritual (the mistake the Corinthians were making). Note too how Paul deliberately puts the gift of tongues gift last when he lists them (e.g. 1 Cor 12:10, 30; “tongues” are not mentioned in other spiritual gift lists in Romans 12, Eph 4). He seems to emphasise they are not as important or useful as some Christians were making them out to be, and to encourage the church to be zealous for the greater gifts (like prophecy, helping and administration!). It means that untranslated tongues don’t belong in our worship gatherings, because they can’t build people up intelligibly. Paul doesn’t forbid the use of different languages in church (1 Cor 14:39), but counsels us to ensure they’re orderly, interpreted and not excessive so that people are built up (e.g. our members meetings!)
- 5. The gift of prophecy (not Prophecy) should be earnestly desired and practiced** – Rather, Paul urges Christians to practice the gift of prophecy when we gather. Based on his descriptions in 1 Cor 12-14, prophecy is not equivalent to the Old Testament “Prophecy” that is typically treated as the Word of the LORD (e.g. Balaam’s oracles in Numbers 23-25 or anything that begins with “thus says the LORD”). The prophecy in Corinth is “revelation” (14:6, 26, 30) that can convict unbelievers and lay bare their secrets (14:24), reveal the presence of God among His people (v25), build up the church (v26), must be weighed by others (v29), can be spontaneous or not (v30), and is actually something every believer can and should pursue (14:1, 39). I think biblical New Testament prophecy is probably more like some of the wonderful insights we hear from our MCs when they prepare and share (e.g. [Venus sharing how we can glorify God](#)), interviewees (e.g. [Debbie once sharing off the cuff how second generation Chinese are uniquely prepared for God’s mission](#)), [baptism testimonies](#), [church safety videos](#), mission updates, and so on -- whether spontaneous or prepared, they are all supernaturally given by the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12-14 teaches that this kind of prophecy blesses the gathered church, and should be encouraged and elevated over uninterpreted languages/tongues that don’t benefit anyone.
- 6. Wives are instructed to be silent in church, not everywhere** – Some have argued that 1 Cor 14:34-35 were added to the Bible later, but I don’t see good text-critical evidence for this. So how do we interpret these puzzling words? A blanket ban on women speaking in church would contradict what Paul has already asked for in 1 Corinthians 11 – for women to speak (pray and prophesy) in church in an honouring way. Also, I don’t think Paul is trying to answer the question of “can women preach a sermon” here (that is addressed in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, and is again a secondary issue not a primary one). So from 1 Cor 12-14, we should encourage both men and women to contribute to our church gatherings in biblically appropriate ways that edify the body of Christ. Regarding how to interpret 1 Cor 14:34-35, my personal take is that

when Paul says: “It is shameful for a woman to speak in public” (14:35), Paul is asking wives (γυναῖκες can be translated either “women” or “wives”) to stop interrupting their own husband while he is prophesying or sharing in the worship service (τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας is better read “their own husbands” rather than “their own men”).

Some modern examples to what I think Paul means to correct in 1 Cor 14:34-35 are: 1) When I’m sharing my testimony, my wife shouldn’t keep interrupting my every sentence and correcting me (even though she probably is right), as it shows disrespect; 2) mums with babies in the church nursery should refrain from chatting loudly over the live feed of the sermon and interrupt the preaching and hearing of God’s Word for other mums there; 3) screen-addicted young adults need to put away their phones and listen to the proclamation of God’s Word and people’s testimonies; 4) hangry people still need to refrain from interrupting someone trying to make a point in a QMM! In all these examples, the point is that as we worship, the goal is to do all things decently, in order, so that “Jesus is Lord” is proclaimed and cherished in our church gatherings.

- 7. A supernatural church is promised when we build up the body of Christ in public worship with all the spiritual gifts, especially prophecy.** As Baptists who are convinced about the “priesthood of all believers”, we should be the first to promote lots of voices participating in the worship service! Let’s boldly encourage brothers and sisters to build each other up with their spiritual gifts. Church is far richer when we each proclaim “Jesus is Lord” in comprehensive, edifying ways. Rightly understood and practiced, Paul’s instructions can bring unity through our diverse gifts and gracious witness. Practiced well, prophecy and intelligibly using different languages will offer a compelling display of God’s supernatural church to the watching world, and magnify Christ amid chaos.