Seek the Good of Others

Read 1 Corinthians 14:13-26

Key verse: “When you meet together, each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. All these things must be done to build up the church” (1 Corinthians 14:26).

Every Christian has been given gifts and talents that God wants us to use for God’s service. This passage of Scripture speaks to how these spiritual gifts can best be used in the life of the church.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, taught that every spiritual gift should be judged by this pragmatic standard: Does it build up the church? Commenting on this standard, Wesley wrote: “By this alone are we to estimate all our gifts and talents” (from Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament).

Worship in the Corinthian church included expression of the spiritual gifts, including hymn-singing, prophetic proclamation, teaching, and speaking in a “tongue” unknown to the speaker. Paul deals with the gifts of tongues and prophecy by saying: 1. If someone speaks during a worship service in an unknown tongue, that person should “pray for the power to interpret” the tongue (v. 13). 2. Prophetic proclamation is more useful in a worship service than tongues because prophecy can be understood by regular church members and visitors (vv. 14-25).

In the New Testament, many other spiritual gifts are mentioned. And most Bible scholars believe that even the mentioning of all these gifts is not meant to be exhaustive. That is, there are many other spiritual gifts and talents not mentioned specifically in the New Testament. The key point of this Bible passage is summarized in verse 26: “What is the outcome of this, brothers and sisters? When you meet together, each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. All these things must be done to build up the church.”

Whatever gifts and talents God gives us, let us use them for God’s glory, not our own. When we use our spiritual gifts, their use in the church—especially in public worship—should
meet this criterion: Will my use of this gift, at this time and place, serve to build up the church?

In one of his books, Charles Stanley tells a story about a young woman named Sammi. More than one person who knew Sammi said to her, “Sammi, you have a real heart for God. I believe God is raising you up to lead praise and worship at our church.” But there was one problem with this prediction—Sammi wasn’t a good singer. If you have ever watched “American Idol,” you know how dangerous it is to tell a person she’s a gifted singer when she’s not.

When Sammi auditioned for the worship team, her tryout was a disaster. She sang horribly.

When the audition ended, the worship pastor asked Sammi what were some of the things she loved to do. Sammi recalled that, when she was younger, her grandfather had taught her to play the accordion. She loved playing it, but there weren’t many opportunities for her to play this old-fashioned instrument.

“Bring your accordion to church next Sunday and, after the service, play me a song,” said the worship pastor.

Next Sunday, when Sammi played for him, he was blown away. The following week, the worship team added its first accordion to its praise set. The week after that, Charles Stanley writes, “Sammi brought down the house with her rendition of ‘We’re Marching to Zion,’ the classic gospel hymn.”

So, it turned out the folks in the church who made predictions about Sammi’s gifts and talents were not entirely wrong. She may not have been gifted in the ways they thought, but she was gifted. All she needed was to find out how her particular gifts could be used in the right way in the right place at the right time (from How to Reach Your Full Potential for God by Charles Stanley).

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