



5. In the quote from Isaiah in verse 21, tongues are a “sign”, but not a good one. God indicated that in a rebellious state Israel wouldn’t listen to Him even when he spoke to them through foreigners in different languages. In the same way, Paul indicates that tongues can be a sign for people who don’t believe in God today — when they hear people speaking in strange languages without any kind of explanation, they are more likely to think that they are mad (verse 23) than be drawn to God. On the other hand, prophecy can convict people of sin and the presence of God in a church (verses 24-25). How does this reinforce his teaching about tongues and prophecy earlier in the chapter?
6. What principle is Paul highlighting in verses 26-40?
7. There are two possible interpretations of verses 33b-35. Paul could be saying that women should never speak in church at all, or he could be giving a specific instruction to the Corinthian church, given the problems they were facing. Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 seems to assume women would pray and prophesy in the church (i.e. that they were permitted to speak), pushing us towards the sense that he’s seeking to address a specific issue here. From the wider context of this chapter and 1 Corinthians in general, what do you think the problem might have been, and what’s the heart desire behind this passage?

## Application

If someone in your life group does have the gift of speaking in tongues, and they or someone else has the gift of interpreting, don’t hesitate to invite them to share in this way during your time of prayer or worship. Ask God for wisdom to give you discernment about an interpretation, as you seek His will and draw on the rich counsel he provides in the Bible, while remembering Paul’s instruction to do everything in love, in a way that builds each other up. At the same time, invite those who have the other spiritual gifts to exercise them in order to build one another up — don’t be fearful of the good gifts God has given us! Paul starts and finishes 1 Corinthians 14 by encouraging us to “eagerly” pursue spiritual gifts, just to do everything “in a fitting and orderly way”.