Catherine Hutton

STEP INTO YOUR GIFTS StudyNotes

INTRODUCTION to the series... The Holy Spirit: Step Into Your Gifts!

During the preaching series that accompanies this guide, we will mainly be looking at 1 Corinthians 12 to get a picture of Paul's view of the Gifts of the Spirit and how they are for the good of the Church. We will consider how the Holy Spirit gives gifts to the Church; how we use them in real life and for the good of God's Kingdom.

Here, we will also look at some of the gifts that the church may have neglected, or those in which it has ceased to find value.

There will be opportunity to look closely at these gifts and to develop confidence in stepping into your gifts as God gives them to you. The guiding texts are set out below:

The Same Spirit Many Gifts, Many People Eagerly Desire the Gifts For the Good of the Body Use the Gifts Gifts Announce Salvation Gifts for Church Growth The Spiritual Gift of Love Wisdom & Knowledge Healing: It Might Be Me, But... Tongues & Interpretation Prophecy for Today's Church Spiritual Leadership Distinguishing the Spirits

1 Corinthians 12:1-6 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 Ephesians 4:10-16 Romans 12:13-16 Hebrews 2:1-4 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 Acts 5:1-11 James 5:13-18 1 Corinthians 14:1-6 2 Peter 1:16-21 1 Corinthians 3:5-12 1 John 4:1-3

God continues the mission of Jesus Christ on earth through the Church and has given tools to us - the church - to do this effectively. Jesus brought the Good News of the Kingdom of God to people in order that they might enter in and meet God.

We have a message of God's love to proclaim & this is Good News. That Good News may need to break down some barriers within us as we have taken in some of the culture of the age that has taught us to not expect much from God, ourselves, or God in us.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, his letter was to a church that was rooted in a city of religiosity and cultic practises. There was an enormous disparity between those with wealth and the poor and the wealthy were not gracious in their fine living. Paul will address the 'issues of spiritual ministry' (Barnett p.11) in 1 Corinthians Chapters 12-14. We will join him in that discussion and consider the importance of his teaching, especially his desire to have the Christians in Corinth 'Learn to think in a Christian way'. (Barnett p.15)

We are no longer programmed to 'think in a Christian way'. Much of our Christian learning is tempered by what we understand in the prevailing culture. The more supernatural & unexplainable parts of faith take a back seat to that which is easier to process in the rational part of our brains. But, and keep your mind open for awhile here, what if your hands begin to grow hot as you pray and you become aware in your heart that someone needs God's touch of healing? Do you sit on them or do you offer to pray? Are you reminded of when Jesus was filled with compassion for the man with a leprous skin condition and how he too was compelled to speak God's healing?

What if we as a church have neglected the gifts of the Spirit because they sound strange to 21st Century ears and rationality? And maybe, just maybe, God is reminding his church to step into the gifts he gives by his Spirit as part of evangelism and mission? It's worth considering as we progress though this series of preaching and study.

Love, Catherine

Study 1 The Same Spirit Opening Thoughts

What are your starting views on the Gifts of the Spirit? Draw a ring around any you agree with.

Irrelevant to today.Interesting but died in 1st Century.An exciting idea.Necessary to today's church.Part of my everyday.Necessary to today's church.

Prayer

Thankyou Loving God for the gift of Jesus Christ your Son, who is the Saviour of the world. Thank you for the gifts you give the Church. I pray that I might honour you always through praise and worship, through prayer and by the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-6 Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

When is the last time you were proud of someone for something they could do? How did you show this?

Think about the times when you have been 'consumed with jealousy' because someone was doing something you wish you were able to do?

How did you deal with this complicated emotion?

Why is it that sometimes other peoples' accomplishments lead to a good sense of pride and others lead to jealousy?

Verses 1-3 are reminders that the work of the Holy Spirit brought the Christians away from the idols and lures of the world. It is the Holy Spirit which brings people into a position whereby they might know and experience the saving and transforming love of Jesus. We were all sinners and having received the same prompting to turn from our sins, we have all received the same salvation. No one person's salvation is more important or outstanding than anyone else's.

Remember when you first received Jesus into your heart.

What transformations were made within you?

As Paul writes to the church in Corinth, he is reminding the people there that God is Father, Son and Spirit and that the Church is One. Look again at verses 4-6. The underlining and emphases are mine. The Gifts that are given to the church are distributed for the common good.

4 There are different kinds of **gifts**, but the <u>same Spirit</u> distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of **service**, but the <u>same Lord</u>. 6 There are different kinds of **working**, but in all of them and in everyone it is the <u>same God</u> at work. (NIV™)

The ministry of the kingdom of God is the work of God; Father (God), Son (Lord) and Spirit (of God). They work together. We can have a focus on the Holy Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit which is larger than the focus on Father and Son. Paul is keen for the people to see that the gifts are connected ministries for the single work of God's kingdom.

God has saved you and given you gifts/ministries as a member of his household. What attitude should we have towards the gifts we are given & the gifts of other members of the Church?

Verse 6 can be translated as 'energising'. Find someone to talk to about what it was like when they/you received the Holy Spirit.

Pray for an understanding of the Gifts of the Spirit & that you might 'wake up' and use what God has given you with a willing heart.

Study 2 Many Gifts, Many People Opening Thoughts

Have you ever been really pleased to receive an invitation to something you knew other people were going to? What did you do and who did you tell?

Prayer

I praise you loving God, for your love for the whole of creation - even me! Forgive me when I feel that I'm not good enough as a Christian because in you, I am accepted and invited in. Help me to trust you and to know that you are giving me good things. Amen.

Now Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

Paul takes the gifts, service & energy given by God (4-6) and begins a new piece of teaching.

Look at verse 7 and read it out aloud several times until it gets through to your heart. If you like to draw or do lettering, you could make this into a design to live in your bible or stuck to your fridge.

David Prior points out that; Again & again, Paul is bringing the Corinthians back to the good of the community, not the personal whims of the individual. But the most important truth is that individual Christians are intended to <u>demonstrate</u> that they have the Spirit of God within them. P197

Paul's emphasis on the expression or a demonstration of the Holy Spirit being given to EACH - includes you and I today. Not merely as a 'feel good' token of our acceptance into his kingdom, but as necessary in demonstrating the diversity of God's person alive in the world.

Think about why your contribution matters to the local church in both its mission and witness to God's love.

It is in verses 8-11 that Paul lists the various gifts. As you read them, note the recurring emphasis that it is 'the same Spirit' who brings the gifts as the Spirit determines.

Go through the list of gifts in verses 8-10 and write a comment showing your view of the gift: are they relevant/irrelevant - one you recognise in yourself/someone specific - is it scary or accessible seemingly random or common in your church

- v8 wisdom
- v8 knowledge
- v9 faith
- v9 healing
- v10 miraculous powers
- v10 prophecy
- v10 distinguishing between spirits
- v10 speaking in different kinds of tongues
- v10 the interpretation of tongues

The list above is not the full list of God's gifts by the Spirit; you may want to look at the other 3 of the "four major lists of gifts (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph 4:11, cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3; 14:6, 26), none of which is intended to be comprehensive but representative (1 Cor. 7:7 refers to the gifts of celibacy and singleness, or of being married). One of the main purposes of these lists is to demonstrate the diversity of

gifts available to believers." P181 Warrington

As we have looked at, the gifts of the Spirit are for the 'common good' which is the good of God's purposes exercised through his people, the church. It is important that the gifts are all exercised by each person who is a Christian.

Consider where you have seen the gifts used in the mission & ministry of your local church and also where they could be used.

Think and pray about how you might have confidence to use the gifts God's Spirit has given you. How might your small group or prayer meeting help you?

It is worth thinking about how God gives gifts for the Church in his infinite wisdom and goodness. When we accept that God is good and perfect, then we accept that the gifts he gives us are exactly the right ones for our good and also 'the common good'. Billy Graham writes about this: "If I had the gift of evangelism and failed to use it, it would be a sin for me. If, on the other hand, someone else does not have the gift of evangelism, and yet is disgruntled because he [sic] does not have it, he also is sinning... The gifts you and I have are the ones God has seen fit to give us and use them for His glory." Graham p133

We must guard against both vanity and false modesty - Desiring gifts for our own promotion and not using our gifts because; 'Who? Little old me? Oh! I couldn't possibly...'

The challenge for us today is to think and respond in a Christian mindset: God has gifted the church for salvation through mission & evangelism; what is my part in that?

How can I use the gifts God has given me in pursuit of it?

Pray for a boldness to develop & use your gifts for the common good as a valued part of God's Kingdom Community.

Study 3 **Gifts for Church Growth** Opening Thoughts

Think about when you needed specialist help with something. Who did you go to? What were your feelings as they sorted your issue?

Prayer

I bless you Lord my God! You have made Creation in its infinite detail and it is wonderful! I bless you for the diversity of your people and all the difference you give us as we find our unity in you. We rejoice and suffer, work and serve together for your glory. Amen.

Now Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

In verses 12 & 13, we have a five-fold emphasis on 'one'. Look them up and mark them in your Bible.

The diversity of the gifts in Christ are unified in the body. The next segment of 1 Corinthians 12 goes on to lay proper honour for God's good gifts on the whole body, without overlooking or 'sniffing' at any other part or person's gifted offering.

Is there someone you could phone up or video-chat to say "I see you and you matter" ?

Paul's letter to the Corinthians was most likely addressing questions that they had put to him. To make fullest sense of this portion of 1 Corinthians 12, we are reminded that Corinth was a place where demonstration of supernatural and mystical gifts was highly prized. Paul was dealing with their question about 'speaking in tongues', which he does throughout the letter. He chooses to not let the focus rest on 'tongues speaking' but to enlarge the vision of the people to see the scope of the diversity and richness of God's gifts, lavished upon the church. As we have already looked at, jealousy over gifts and also their non-use will make us answerable to God.

Pause and examine your heart for those points of jealousy and reluctance. Give them to God.

Paul draws the attention back to those who are often overlooked maybe the poor people in their society; 'less honourable parts' and 'unpresentable parts'. There is a deliberate emphasis on the metaphor of the body before talking about the spiritual things. This is to draw the attention to the actual people rather than dwelling too long on spiritual things.

This passage should be nudging us towards a deeper care for those people in our communities (church and society) who are on the edges for various reasons. I'm reminded of Charles Wesley's hymn that says;

He bid us build each other up, and gathered into one To our high calling's glorious hope, we hand in hand go on. The question that we must respond to is; 'who is not being built up'? And: 'How may I help'?

The metaphor of the body is one of dependence and reliance on each other with confidence. During this period of isolation and separation there is a greater need to demonstrate our unity in Jesus. Church growth comes when the body is thoroughly united in love and purpose. Where it is not self serving, but looks to the good of the whole.

Look at and pray through 1 Corinthians 12:25.

The gift which he on one bestows, we all delight to prove; The grace through every vessel flows in purest streams of love.

Study 4 Eagerly Desire the Greater Gifts

Opening Thoughts

You are part of a society that is rich in its diversity and deep in its commitment to its members.

What one thing would you like to say to its founder?

Prayer

Oh Lord, how I love you!

All the words that ever have been are insufficient to tell of your goodness; your greatness; your majesty; your power; your love; your kindness. You receive me and hold me in the palm of your hands and I know that I am forever yours - and you are mine - my Lord! My God! All praise to your Name! Amen.

Now Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

As we enter into the climax of Chapter 12, we see an emphasis on the metaphor of the body. "You are the body of Christ" Paul declares in verse 27 - and every single last one of us is a part of it.

This leads us straight away to think about what Christ as a flesh and blood person actually did on earth...

Which should then lead you to think about how you also are the flesh & blood joiners-in of that Work - or Ministry...

David Prior suggests that; "The body of Christ is placed in the world to serve. Ministry is its daily vocation. As the community is mobilised under the Holy Spirit within the real world its throbbing vitality will be sustained. Gifts are to be used in practical, costly and often very ordinary service." p216 This acknowledgement of our responsibility to the body and our individual part to play within it leads onto the second great list of gifts in Chapter 12. Again, not definitive, and notably different from that in verses 8-10. We will focus on some of these gifts in a later study - for now we will examine the phrase in verse 31: *"Eagerly desire the greater gifts."* Remembering what we have learned about jealousy and false modesty as well as the importance of all the gifts and the need to 'play our part' in the whole mission of the church, we approach this statement with caution...

As we read through the list in 28-30, we see both people in roles and then ministries or works of supernatural origin. They all matter to the growth of God's Kingdom and we should desire to be part of the work of Jesus' ministry. Our 'eagerness' would then be a mark of our willingness to serve as Jesus served in God's ongoing mission in the world.

Are you willing to be part of the work of God's mission on earth, continued by the Holy Spirit? How are you showing this?

Do you readily talk about God's work in terms of miracles, prophecies, tongues and healing or do you shy from such terms?

How could you become more confident or help someone else become confident?

As we desire to be participators in the work of God's kingdom and mission, we are aware that it is a huge privilege to be invited by him; that he gives us gifts to show we are wanted on his team. So then, the 'greater gifts' are most likely ones that display love and service in the mission of the church. Watson comments that; "the essential thing, in Paul's eyes, is that a gift must contribute to the building up of the church. The gifts that the Corinthians should be aspiring to therefore, are those that do that most effectively. At the same time they must remember... that the Gifts are God's to distribute as God wills." P138 It is a complex dynamic: desiring in order that we might participate fully in God's mission and avoiding a jealous covetousness of gifts that are showy for their own sake. My thinking is that the closer we get to God's own heart, the more likely we are to recognise the motives behind our desiring.

What is most important for your in the Church? Rank them or cross them out if not applicable to you.

Leading, belonging, serving, participating, watching, attending, growing, being with others, showing others love, singing, other...

What do you learn from your selection?

Serving God in a time of isolation and distance is unnatural to many of us, we pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance through these unprecedented times.

We pray for those who are 'key workers' in our society; who work for the common good. We ask for God's protection today and always when they are vulnerable.

We pray for children who are disrupted from their routines by sickness in our lands. Give them your perfect peace and make order in their chaos. We pray protection over them in their vulnerability.

We pray for local businesses and business owners. Be their strength in adversity and their rock in the storm. We thank you for the richness they bring to us in the diversity of things they offer. We pray for wisdom and strength.

We pray for those who are lonely. Those for whom isolation is without the connectivity of internet and meeting faces. May they know the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

We pray for parents. We pray for teens & students.

We pray for those who are sick. We pray for our neighbours.

We pray for each other with the love of Father God. Amen.

Study 5 Healing: It Might Be Me, But...

Opening Thoughts

I was a teenaged Christian and had hurt my back a bit while jumping on a trampoline. I was at a Christian Conference and prayed to God for healing. It didn't work. Some years later, several people were healed of back pain at a Confirmation service in my church during the worship. What's that all about? Have a think about your own experiences and non-experiences of God's healing. Note your initial responses. **Prayer**

You, O Lord, are the God of Miracles and Wonders; The God of Healing and Renewal. You are the God who speaks New Life! New Hope! New Strength. Increase our understanding of your Gifts to the Church, Especially the gift of your healing power; To the Praise of Your Holy Name. Amen.

Now Read James 5:13-18

Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

As we read this 'matter of fact' account from James to the Church, we can see his absolute conviction in God's power to heal and that it should be a normal part of Church activity. Alec Motyer advises we can not; "Limit the presence and availability of this ministry to the sick by making it depend on the fact that a person with the gift of healing happens to be present. It is a ministry exercised by those whom James envisaged as always being at the helm of the local church, <u>the elders</u>." P190. The ministry of healing is rooted in the local church for the good of its people and should -to this day - still be exercised by your church's leaders. We each have responsibility for healing ministry to happen; either by our expectation & request, or by being part of the leadership of the local church and doing it! How will you pray for this ministry?

Specific prayer ministry for healing is also a Gift of the Spirit. It is part of Jesus' ministry on earth and so is part of the toolkit he leaves with the Church to continue that ministry.

Some of the healing is <u>spiritual</u> with no physical respite. (Luke 23:39-43) Some healings are <u>physical</u>. *These often have an evangelistic outcome*. (Mark 1:40-45; Mark 7:31-37)

Some are of <u>release</u> from un-Godly spiritual presence. (Mark 5:1-20)

Maybe you have your own stories to tell or remember about any one of these areas. Note them down.

The first thing that I would like to assure you, is that God is always good. His goodness is always revealed in some way during prayer.

The Spiritual gift of healing is something that we may seek in all areas of our life.

We have a responsibility to approach Jesus through the ministry of others or to allow others to bring us to Jesus in prayer.

We have a responsibility to use the gift of healing to bring Jesus' ministry to those who are suffering.

We may 'feel' or 'discern in our spirit' that someone needs prayer. This could be accompanied by heat in our hands. We remember that we are ministering in Jesus' name and not offering counselling and so, after a gentle, short conversation, we pray' "Come, Holy Spirit" and wait for God to either reveal his word, show the source of the sickness or simply to heal. He may give words of instruction to us to speak as we minister - but these will not be lengthy. We see how Jesus spoke minimally as he brings God's healing in the gospels and, following him, we do likewise. **Read Mark 1 to see Jesus in action in speaking healing.**

The ministry of the gift of healing should come under the person who has spiritual authority for the church (usually the minister) and those who are praying for ministry will come under their leadership & be commissioned by them. (Matthew 8:1-13) Gifts are used by the body, for the ministry of the body.

Usual safeguarding rules come into play when praying for healing especially as we think about vulnerable people. It is worth reading up about 'spiritual abuse' in the safeguarding briefings too - it is not helpful for someone to be told 'they have a demon'. Jesus gave his Holy Spirit so that the whole Christian community could minister his gifts, we look after one another as we pray.

We maintain the best health available to us when we maintain our spiritual well-being. Do we have a good attitude to worship, fellowship, studying the Scriptures and prayer? Do we have an unhealthy relationship with our health & well-being and an over-attachment to being unwell?

Peter Lawrence observes of this; "I remember as a child frequently catching cold and going to bed for the day. I had a little bell to ring if I needed anything. I had Lucozade to drink, a comic to read and the radio to play. If I did not have a cold, I had to go to the school I disliked and work hard. I found this to be at the root of many colds I suffered as an adult when the pressure of work became too great. I have needed to repent of a wrong attitude and really desire health and wholeness when cold symptoms come, in order to fight off germs and stay well." P213

Our relationship with our health can inhibit our effectiveness as Christians. A preoccupation with sickness can become a wrong focus that can distract and distance us from Jesus.

The gift of healing may be one which you should step into as part of the church's ministry. It may be one which you should be seeking from the Church for your own healing of body or spirit.

Study 6 Speaking in Tongues & Interpretation

Opening Thoughts

"Do you speak in tongues?" "No... I speak in English and that serves me very well thank you very much... (pause)... and anyway, doesn't the Bible say you shouldn't speak in tongues unless there's an interpretation?" **Are you a 'speaking in tongues sceptic' or open to it and its use?**

Prayer

Loving and gracious God, giver of all good gifts We thank you for the diversity and wealth of gifts of your Spirit with which you bless and equip the Church. We thank you for the gift of speaking in tongues and pray that you will teach our spirits how to use it for the common good and to the Glory of your Name. Amen.

Now Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-6 Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

This section is a little longer than previous ones. This is because while we may have been in healing services and spent time wondering about whether we have the spiritual gift of 'hospitality' or 'helps'; it is far less usual to be taught on the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues. Even the Bible commentators are less helpful on the subject. Here are some common opinions about the Spiritual Gift of Tongues as expressed to me:

Speaking in tongues is divisive within the Church and shouldn't be used.

Speaking in tongues 'shouldn't happen in Church unless there is an interpretation.'

Speaking in tongues is a mark of salvation for every believer.

Speaking in tongues is selfish as it only blesses the user.

Everyone can pray in tongues if they are right with God.

The mixed and often negative teaching - or lack of teaching - about the Spiritual Gift of Tongues has led to it being neglected or only used in private, and not mentioned to other members of the local Church.

We remember that Paul was anxious that the Corinthians not become obsessed with this outward and potentially showy sign of their 'spiritual proficiency.' He has spent much time constructing a teaching that shows a loving and diversely gifted Church which, given the arguments around 'speaking in tongues' today shows much prophetic wisdom.

We note also how he is broadening the 'spiritual things' to get them to value prophecy. This is not the 'Thus saith the Lord' prophecy that 'Mildred or Magnus Boggins' will stand up and give after every hymn - it is the Spirit stirring with the weight of God's word which is for the edification of the people, 14:3.

Paul is attempting to address issues within the church during his later Chapters in 1 Corinthians. It would be wrong to say that 'speaking in tongues is divisive and shouldn't be used'; we see from 14:5 that Paul would love everyone to have and use the gift well. Without love, it becomes divisive and classed as 'showing off'.

What is Interpretation? There can be an anxiety about tongues always requiring an interpretation. Over the years, the church has tied itself in knots over this issue to the point where people feel unable to speak the 'prophetic words in tongues' that God is giving for the Church 'in case' there is no interpretation 14:5b. It has also confused the words for public declaration with words for worship and prayer. Referring back to 1 Corinthians 13, the correct context for all the spiritual gifts to be exercised is in the way of love. If Mildred Boggins, a much loved member

of the church is worshipping her Lord and -in the middle of the congregation singing 'O for 1000 tongues to sing' -her song of praise is to gracefully slip into continuing to worship in tongues among the people; that is her spiritual act of worship, her worship is offered to God within the praises of the congregation. The correct interpretation of the tongue is 'worship'. It would only be a spirit of criticism which had crept into the congregation that would censure her - and other than the people directly around her, who would know?

I took some students along to a Maranatha gathering some years ago now to help them to discern what worship with the gifts of the spirit looked like and to experience them in a safe and loving environment. The meeting opened with a Roman Catholic priest praying in tongues for a good while. There was a stillness over the whole room and then people began to speak their own prayers to God in many languages. There was order: we knew who was leading - but there was also an invitation and expectation to join in as we felt we could. The interpretation in this case was not 'of the speech' but of the intention - which was a time of adoration and worship of God, together and led by the Spirit.

Interpretation for a specific phrase or set of phrases spoken in tongues may happen within a Christian gathering for worship & prayer. Sometimes, two different people have offered interpretations - but only after the words in the Tongue have been said aloud. We can end up in a Catch-22 situation where we stifle the gift God has given, 'in case there is no interpretation'. This is a misreading of the second part of 14:5 which speaks of edification. These are interpretations, as discerned by the prayerful spirit and not usually direct translations of the words, although there are stories of that happening too. We should be clear why God is gifting us with tongues in that moment, for our own spiritual growth and for the 'edification' of the body. "This is worship"; "This is prayer against darkness"; "This is prayer for healing"; "This is prophetic - give me a moment to understand its implications for us." **Maybe you have read something or heard something along these lines?** My experience has been that Tongues 'of men or of angels' 13:1 is of a divinely gifted utterance in either a dialect or language known by someone in the room or in an angelic language. Both have their place in prophecy, worship and prayer. Paul reiterates time and again, the importance of the gift of tongues being exercised in love and not to diminish any one else by its use; 1 Corinthians 13:1; 12:7-11; 14:1-18. Of course it can be faked - corrupt people will fake all kinds of things from healing to salvation.

Did the students find the worship experience strange or alienating, being physicists from a very middle of the road Anglican Church? No - they joined in with what was going on, quietly at first and then we talked about it all on the way home. Exercising discernment (which is different from scepticism) is important in every Spiritual situation. Experience has led me to understand that where I am uncomfortable in worship, I must firstly examine my own spiritual situation and make sure I am right with God. Then, I ask God to show me what is happening in the room.

If you can't speak in tongues, are you not a proper Christian?

One of the first things that Paul speaks of when tackling 'gifts of the spirit' at the start of 1 Corinthians 12 is the 'mark of salvation', being sure you are a 'proper Christian'. The mark of salvation is the gift of the holy spirit's presence by which we say "Jesus is Lord" 12:3. It is simply not true that every believer will have every spiritual gift. Paul has been careful to outline the diversity of the church and the gifts that are dispersed sovereignly by God according to his will. Yes, we should want to receive all that God has to offer, but we should be thankful for and faithful to use whichever gifts he gives to us. So, even if you don't speak in tongues, this might be a 'yet' or it might be that you will be blessed in some other area for your good and the good of the church.

Should people be praying in other tongues if someone else can hear? I love hearing people pray in tongues, it blesses me to know that the Spirit is near and among us as we pray. I also love to hear people offer words of prophecy to build up the church. I do love to see people being healed by God's divine presence. I really love to follow good, spiritual leaders. I am blessed by teachers who exercise their spiritual gift of teaching and so on... I am not jealous, instead, I love how these gifts bless and build up the church for the purpose of mission and evangelism.

Praying in tongues can also be useful in an intercessory capacity. When we don't know how to pray without inadvertently offering counselling (sometimes to God, sometimes to the person being prayed for), praying gently in tongues can be a way of releasing that person to God in prayer. Praying the words in your mind - like you can pray in your own tongue in silence - may also be used in intercession or in adoration. Explaining what is happening is important too - especially if the person isn't expecting your prayer to be in another language.

Speaking in tongues is a gift of the spirit and should not be treated like a poisoned apple or a secret to be kept at all costs.

Should we therefore be able to pray in tongues at church?

Absolutely - so long as the intention is loving and the attitude is gracious. Having said that, we need to remember that it is now a largely neglected gift and one that people are suspicious of, so being prepared to talk about it in a loving and non-defensive way will be important. This is also in keeping with Paul's guidance in 14:6-19.

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Encourage One Another & Build Each Other Up 1 Thessalonians 5:11