

Series: On Purpose

February 12, 2017

Title: Building the House

[Slide 1]

Text: 1 Corinthians 14:1-5

Power Tools

A brief history of making holes:

[Slide 2]

People have been trying to make holes in things for a very long time.

The ancient Egyptians drilled holes in wood and granite with a simple hand-powered drill that looked a lot like a bow and arrow. This “pump-drill” was still in use in the Middle Ages.

Over the years the designs changed, but the source of power remained the same: making holes by hand.

[Slide 3]

And then, 101 years ago, a company named Black & Decker Manufacturing Co. filed a patent application for a ½ inch portable drill that one person could operate. It worked on either AC or DC power, and had a pistol-grip with a trigger control. While electric drills had been around long before 1916, this was the first time you could hold an electric drill in your hand and take it to the place where you needed to make a hole.

[Slide 4]

Fast forward to 1961. In that year Black & Decker introduced the first *cordless* electric drill. The company designed cordless tools for NASA, including a cordless rotary hammer drill that went to the moon with the Apollo astronauts and enabled them to extract rock samples in the extreme temperatures and zero-atmosphere of the lunar surface.

[Slide 5]

Today the cordless drill drills holes, tightens nuts, drives in screws on worksites and in factories and home shops all over the world. The cordless

drill has morphed into hundreds of cordless power tools. No tool kit is complete without them.

All to do what people have been doing for a very long time: making holes in things.

God's building project:

Paul's letter to the Christians in Corinth focuses like a laser on the necessity of being part of God's building project: the building of a vibrant community of believers in Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 12 he introduces us to the spiritual gifts that are imparted by the Holy Spirit to all who follow Jesus. These are the power tools that Christians use to build the Church. Instead of being powered by our own limited strength, they are powered by God's Spirit. They are portable and suited to any situation. It is impossible to build God's Church without them.

In 1 Corinthians 13, however, Paul reminds us that the tools are nothing in and of themselves. They must be combined with God's Love. Otherwise, they will do more damage than good. In fact, while the tools are invaluable *during the building process*, they will no longer be needed. When the house is finished, we put the tools away. The house, so lovingly built, becomes a place where Love can dwell forever.

The tools in action:

So what does it actually look like to use these powerful tools – the gifts of the Holy Spirit – in a way that demonstrates God's Love? What does it look like to join God in His building project?

Imagine what would happen if you were doing a home improvement project and your five year old picked up your cordless drill.

"Wow! What power! Holes, holes, I can make holes! Holes in chairs. Holes in the dining room table. Holes in the floor. Holes in the sheetrock. I wonder if it will work on the refrigerator?"

Paul answers this question in 1 Corinthians 14. In this chapter he gives us a glimpse of what church was supposed to look like. He shows us *how* we are to treat each other as we build God's house.

[Slide 2]

Making Sense!

Two different gifts:

If people are going to build something together it is essential that they be able to communicate with each other. No wonder, then, that Paul puts such a high premium on making sure that we *make sense to each other* when we use the gifts of the Spirit:

[Slide 6]

1 Corinthians 14:1-3 NIV

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.

Paul singles out the two most popular and well-known gifts in Corinth: speaking in tongues and prophecy. Both are “power tools” of the Holy Spirit. But the gift of speaking in tongues is unintelligible to others. The gift of prophecy, on the other hand, requires using a shared language so that others can hear and understand what God is saying.

The purpose of prophecy:

Paul explains that this power tool of prophecy has a three-fold purpose:

1 Corinthians 14:3 NIV

But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.

The term “strengthening” is a translation of a word that means “edification,” or “building the house.” In the same way, encouraging and comforting others is all part of building the spiritual house that is God’s church – God’s people – here in this world.

Note: While prophecy does at times include foretelling the future, Paul is telling us that the real purpose of this gift is not to give us a supernatural advantage or edge, but to enable us to *build God’s house*.

This is what it looks like to use the gifts of the Spirit with Love. Every word, every action is measured by whether or not it contributes to building the house.

Making sense!

We can only build up God's house together if we make sense to each other. God's Word must be *intelligible* if it is to be effective. To reinforce this point, Paul asks:

[Slide 7]

1 Corinthians 14:6-9 NIV

Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction?

[Slide 8]

Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes?

[Slide 9]

Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?

So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air.

Paul is not disparaging the gift of tongues. He points out that he speaks in tongues more than anyone else! But when others are present, he realizes that *intelligibility* is more important than personal blessing:

[Slide 10]

1 Corinthians 14:18-19 NIV

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Building the House

Putting the tools to use:

So what does it look like when the power tools of the Holy Spirit are put to proper use? What does it look like to actually build God's house?

Paul writes:

[Slide 11]

1 Corinthians 14:4-5 NIV

Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.

It has been said that when all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. The same can happen when we overvalue one of the gifts of the Spirit and try to make it work in all situations. Receiving the gift of speaking in tongues is one of the most wonderful thing that can happen you as a Christian. My life was radically transformed when the Holy Spirit came in that special way. And every day I "plug in" to His power through this amazing spiritual gift.

But this spiritual gift, no matter how wonderful it is, *doesn't build up others*. That's why Paul prefers that the Christians in Corinth focus on the tools that help everyone build God's house together. If they are going to speak in tongues in a public setting, the message in tongues must be interpreted so that others can be built up in their faith. In other words, the message in tongues must become a prophetic word that builds up, comforts and encourages others.

A rose by any other name...

Shakespeare wrote:

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

The fact that we give things certain names should not blind us to the greater reality behind them. I had this driven home to me in a very powerful and personal way when my Dad was dying of cancer.

I had been brought up to believe that the gifts of the Spirit were not for today; they were only for the time described in the Book of Acts. So when I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the gift of speaking in tongues, I caused quite a stir in my family – to say the least.

Over the years that followed that experience I prayed that my Dad would somehow come to understand and experience the gifts of the Spirit. I wanted to share these blessings with him and have him understand why these gifts were so important to me.

When it became clear that Dad's cancer had spread and that he wouldn't be with us very much longer, we gathered as a family for a special evening. It was just Mom, Dad, and the 5 kids. No spouses or grandkids. We had one of Mom's dinners from the 1950's. We laughed and told stories. It was wonderful.

And then Dad became serious. He began to speak over us – one by one. I grabbed a pen and pad when I realized what was happening. He was *blessing us*. He gave each one of us a personal message, filled with hope and encouragement. It was one of his final gifts.

As I thought and prayed about this amazing evening, I realized that my dream had come true! As a Pentecostal, I had a name for what had happened in my parents' living room. Dad had *prophesied*. He had spoken words through the Holy Spirit that built us up, comforted us in a time of grief and uncertainty, and encouraged us for the journey ahead.

Dad didn't call what he did "prophecy." But a rose by any other name...

Building the house:

God has called us as a church family to build His house. We can only do so through the power tools of the Holy Spirit. We need God's "portable" power. We need God's creative diversity of giftings. No wonder Paul commands us to "eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy."

But these gifts are always part of God's bigger plan: Building God's house. And that means:

- making sure that we “follow the way of love” whenever we use them
- making sure that we use them intelligibly, so that we make sense to each other
- making sure that we use them to build up rather than to tear down, to encourage and comfort, rather than to rebuke and discourage others.

When we do, we build something that will last for eternity: God’s house.

LIFE Group Lesson for “Building the House”

Ice Breaker:

- Did anyone speak a word of encouragement to you that made a big difference in your life? What did they say and how did it change things for you?

Love and the Gifts:

- Paul writes:
 - *1 Corinthians 14:1 NIV*
 - *Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.*
- “Follow the way of love”
 - What does it mean to follow a way or a path?
 - Paul seems to be saying that the path is there in front of us, but it is up to us to choose to follow it.
 - Jesus followed that path, and in His own words, He *is* the path, the way.
 - The word Paul uses means to pursue, or to follow with full commitment.
- “Eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit”
 - To eagerly desire means to be zealous for (this is the word that Paul actually uses).
 - Here Paul is talking about something that may not yet be a reality for us, but which we are to strive for with all our might.
 - This is *not* a wait and see attitude; instead, we are commanded to make these gifts a priority in our lives.
- Love + Gifts = the new life in Christ
 - Love is the path of the New Exodus.
 - The gifts are the supernatural working of God to guide and sustain us on the New Exodus.
 - Both are *essential*. Love alone is not enough; neither are the gifts by themselves enough. It takes the two working together.
 - Think back to what you shared about someone speaking a word of encouragement to you that made a big difference in your life.
 - When we let God speak through us in a loving and caring way, we make that difference in someone else’s life.

The Gifts: Intelligible and Orderly

- Paul stresses two things that must always be present when the gifts of the Spirit are in operation:
 - First, they must be *intelligible*.
 - Second, they must be *done in order*.
 - When God created the world, He made clear distinctions between air, land and sea. He divided day and night. He created distinct creatures. In other words, He made a world that was *intelligible and understandable*.
 - Likewise, God created order and process when He made the world. Creation was, and is, the ordering of chaos.
- As Christians, we are the vanguard of God's New Creation.
 - That means first of all that we reflect God's thoughts and word into His world. That requires intelligible communication.
 - Second, we function in a way that brings order to the world, not more chaos.
 - *1 Corinthians 14:33 NIV*
 - *For God is not a God of disorder but of peace – as in all the congregations of the Lord's people.*
- The Church is the community of New Creation people living in this world.
 - Our mission is to live a different way, the *new Way* of Love, empowered by the gifts of the Spirit.
 - When we do, we will build up each other, comfort and encourage each other for the journey.
 - Love is the path; the gifts are the power.

Application

- Think of one person that God wants you to encourage, comfort, or build up.
 - Ask Him to show you how to make that happen.
 - Take some time to pray for each other.