

Series: What the World Needs Now: Holdin' Out For a Hero. Scripture and Background Information for May 30-June 05.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

This week, we finish up our series, "*What the World Needs Now.*" With this series we looked at how God placed the church in a crazy world to make a difference. Through the empowerment of His Spirit, God wants to use His church to build His kingdom. Today, we will look at **1 Corinthians 14:20-25** and talk about "*Clarity.*"

Background for 1 Corinthians 14:20-25

Paul addresses different problems in the Corinthian Church. In chapter 11, he started to address issues related to the Church gatherings. In 1 Corinthians 12-14, he talks about one topic, spiritual gifts. These three chapters deal with the better way of serving each other and living for each other. Remember, chapter divisions were given in the 12th century. Paul is introducing spiritual gifts in chapter 12 and continues until chapter 14. In 12, he described the church as the Body of Christ, whom Christ empowers to serve each other and build each other up. In 13, he shows us that love is the Christian virtue through which the gifts are to be practiced. Apart from love, all Christian living and doing is in vain. In chapter 14, Paul continues the same argument about love. Note how Paul introduces this chapter with the first imperative; "pursue love!" Paul now shows how much is at stake when love does not abide in us. In 14:20-25, Paul argues from the Old Testament pattern. The people of Israel did not believe the clear teaching; thus, God sent judgment. Now, if the church is not clear in its communication, the unclearness is like a judgment to unbelievers. Paul sees unclearness as selfish, immature behavior, obscuring the church's clear message (John 3:16). Love should motivate us to communicate clearly so that people see God's dwelling in us (John 13:35).

Marks and questions to engage with the text:

1. Looking from the first command of our text today (14:1), how does that command direct the meaning of the whole text? What is the driving force for the following instructions?
2. When reading the text, look for "cause and reason" markers! Why is Paul arguing the way he does? What is the reason for the gifts?
3. How does verse 20 fit into our text? How does lovelessness contradict our faith and mission of Christ? What is the difference between love-focused service vs. self-focused service? What is mature serving?

Note: Paul reinforces the Christian virtue of love. He wants the church to consider their behavior, their giftedness, and their ministry as a place to build each other up. Through love, the church communicates something that the world needs right now, Christ's love.