

# 1 Corinthians 14:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

## Analysis

---

**Follow after charity** (διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην, diōkete tēn agapēn—"pursue love")—Paul transitions from chapter 13's love hymn by making agapē the primary spiritual pursuit. **Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy** contrasts zēloō ("be zealous for") with mallon ("more, rather")—not forbidding tongues, but establishing a hierarchy based on edification.

The imperative "pursue" (present active, continuous action) frames the entire chapter: love governs all spiritual expression. Prophēteuō (προφητεύω, "prophesy") here means Spirit-inspired, intelligible speech that builds up the church—not merely foretelling, but "forth-telling" God's truth. This sets up the chapter's central argument: intelligibility serves love.

## Historical Context

---

Written to Corinth circa AD 55, where ecstatic worship (influenced by pagan mystery religions with glossolalia) had created chaos. Paul addresses a church prizing showy gifts over edifying ones, needing to learn that love determines a gift's value.

## Related Passages

---

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

---

1. How does 'pursuing love' (v. 1) practically govern your use of spiritual gifts?
2. Why does Paul prioritize prophecy over tongues if both are Spirit-given?
3. In what ways might modern worship prioritize the spectacular over the edifying?

## Interlinear Text

---

Διώκετε	τὴν	ἀγάπην	ζηλοῦτε	δὲ	τὰ	πνευματικά
Follow	G3588	after charity	desire	and	G3588	spiritual
G1377		G26	G2206	G1161		G4152
μᾶλλον	δὲ	ἵνα	προφητεύητε			
rather	and	that	ye may prophesy			
G3123	G1161	G2443	G4395			

## Additional Cross-References

---

**1 Corinthians 14:39** (Prophecy): Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

**Hebrews 12:14** (Parallel theme): Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

**1 Timothy 4:14** (Prophecy): Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

**1 Corinthians 12:1** (Spirit): Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

**1 Corinthians 16:14** (Love): Let all your things be done with charity.

**1 Corinthians 13:13** (Love): And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

**1 Thessalonians 5:20** (Prophecy): Despise not prophesyings.

**Isaiah 51:1** (Parallel theme): Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

**Proverbs 15:9** (Love): The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

**1 Corinthians 14:37** (Spirit): If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

---

From KJV Study • [kjvstudy.org](http://kjvstudy.org)