

# 1 Corinthians 14:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

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**Follow after charity** (διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην, diōkete tēn agapē—"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

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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

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**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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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

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Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ πνευματικά  
**Follow** G3588 **after charity** G26 **desire** G2206 **and** G3588 **spiritual** G4152  
G3123

μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε  
**rather** G3123 **and** G1161 **that** G2443 **ye may prophesy** G4395

## Additional Cross-References

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**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.

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