

THE BIG IDEA: Be clear in public by being near in private.

The Take-Off

Having been on 3 long trips to destinations on the other side of the globe, let me tell you one of the most exciting and unnerving times of the flight comes when they tell you to secure your trays and return your seats to their upright positions.

That one announcement means that the plane is getting ready to land, and that means it's time to get off the flight and get to work.

I remember my first mission trip - all the plans and dreams of what it might be like - and then the pangs of fear as I suddenly realized that the plane was landing and I was going to actually need to get off the plane and go do what I'd spent the flight thinking about.

Well, we've got 2 weeks to land this plane called "The Helper" that we've been flying for a couple of months.

On the one hand, it'd be nice to just keep circling the runway and having weekly messages about what we think life with the Helper could or should look like. It's safer up in the plane, it's theoretical up in the plane.

But the landing gear is lowering, and you and I are going to need to get off the plane and get busy working out what it looks like to live on the ground in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, as you start getting your trays and seats secured, let's spend one last Sunday in 1 Corinthians 14 and then next Sunday, Phil will taxi us to the gate with some final instructions about the most important characteristics of people whose lives are full of the Helper's power.

For now, let's prepare for our descent by talking about what we shouldn't be, what we should be, and what makes all the difference...

1. What we shouldn't be

- a. It's funny, because the one thing we shouldn't be is actually what caused me the most angst this week as I prepared because I also don't want to be this one thing today
- b. We shouldn't be confusing
- c. Now, that doesn't mean that the gifts of the Spirit operating in our church won't be challenging; they will!
- d. But it does mean that we don't want them to be confusing
- e. The letter of 1 Corinthians was written because the gifts are challenging, but listen to how committed Paul was to making sure that they weren't confusing
 - a. 14:5 - prophecy is greater because it's understood
 - b. 14:9 - a confusing message is like speaking into the air
 - c. 14:18-19 - being confusing is so bad, that a lot less understood words are a lot better!
- f. Now, we'll talk some more in a bit about the answer to this, but for now, understand that most people aren't confused by the gift as much as they are by the one using the gift
- g. In fact, it's the lack of consistency between the public use of the gift and the private life of the gifted that causes most of us to have this reaction when someone brings up the gifts
- h. [PICTURE OF SCARED CAT]
- i. As we've learned over this series, the Helper is our friend, and so there's no way he wants us to be freaked out over good gifts that he gives us for our edification
- j. So if we shouldn't be confusing, what should we be?

2. What we should be

- a. We should be clear. As we progress as a church in the exploration of the gifts and the power of the Helper, we've got to have an over the top commitment to clarity.
- b. Look at Paul's commitment to it in the Corinthian church:
 - a. 14:8 - we're getting ready for a fight, so let's make sure the instructions can be understood
 - b. 14:19 - the more public, the more committed we've got to be to clarity
 - c. 14:26 - gifts MUST be used to strengthen the church (a CLEAR purpose statement for the gifts)
 - d. 14:28 - being clear is more important than using your gifts, so don't if it can't be interpreted
 - e. 14:27,29 - to keep things clear, Paul had the nerve to place limits on this out of control body
 - f. 14:33 - chaos confuses, but clarity brings peace
- c. How can we make sure that we're clear and not confusing? Let's talk through what makes the difference...

3. What makes the difference

- a. The short answer is that what makes the difference between confusing and clear is you (and me)!
- b. Next week, Phil's going to wrap this series up talking about how important the fruit of the Spirit is, but for today, let me explain it like this: gifts are given, but fruit is cultivated.
- c. If you and I don't commit ourselves to cultivating the fruit of the Spirit personally and privately, then anytime we use gifts publicly, it's going to be confusing.
- d. That's why you and I have both seen people be used by God that didn't even seem to be godly!
- e. And while that doesn't invalidate the gift, it definitely changes the effectiveness of it!
- f. Let me give you the Big Idea, show you an amazing verse and then close with some examples of why this is so critical for us going forward.
- g. The Big Idea simply says **be clear in public by being near in private.**
- h. Turn quickly to 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 and let me show you this plays out with the gifts.
- i. The more God trusts us with "mysteries" (or "secret things" in the NIV), the more important it is that we are seen by men as servants and as faithful
- j. Think about those 2 qualities: serving and faithfulness
- k. Serving:
 - a. 1 Peter 4:10 - we're gifted to serve others
 - b. The Corinthians weren't serving, but instead were using their gifts to one-up each other
 - c. Having the heart of a servant allows the communication of the message to be more important than the celebration of the messenger
- l. Faithfulness
 - a. Faithfulness is the difference between being a vessel and being a jerk
 - b. God is looking for faithfulness in the smaller, private things so that he can promote us to bigger
 - c. Matthew 25:23

The Landing

Why it matters: because if we aren't near God in private, we'll never be clear to man in public.

Let me close this morning with 2 stories: one is from Kyle, a former Pfeiffer student who sent me a fantastic testimony of being faithful in what some would consider a small thing - following the leading of the Helper to interact with someone on social media.

The second story is a great example of how the Helper takes our faithfulness and willingness to be a servant and moves us out with those gifts into a culture desperate for hope.

My prayer for each of you is that you would make the private pursuit of a nearness to God your goal for the next 14 days. That from now until Easter you wouldn't worry about the worship or my preaching or anything else that has to do with our public service on Sunday.

Let's take the seeking of the gifts into our closets and see how the private, passionate pursuit of God impacts the public worship of God.

My guess is that being clear to men in public will be the result of us being near to God in private.

Let's pray.