

1 Corinthians 14:6-12 (NASB)

6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?

If the gathered assembly is to be edified, benefit can only be through one speaking in revelation, or in knowledge, or in prophecy, or in teaching.

7 Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?

Edification it is not only necessary to impart the knowledge, to apply the word by prophecy to the conscience, and to teach the truth, but to do so in “words easy to be understood”.

8 For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

If the sound is “uncertain”, the bugle will produce no effect upon the hearers.

9 So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

Distinctness and clarity, so as to be understood, is the point pressed.

10 There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning.

11 If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.

Every voice in nature has a special significance, and so words have a special meaning.

12 So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

To be understood then is essential to edification.