

Philosophy of Foreign Language

Our capacity for language is a gift from God. God gave mankind the responsibility to name parts of His creation using language. God also originated the diversity of language which contributes to separation of peoples and development of distinct cultures. This can also prove a barrier in the communication of the gospel throughout the world as Disciples of Christ. We are not to be exclusive or neglect any people in the proclamation of the gospel, but to understand that God desires a relationship with people from all cultures and languages. Language should not serve to confuse understanding; therefore, we are discouraged from speaking foreign tongues without interpretation, especially in prayer and worship. Language is useless without communicating the love of God. The study of a foreign language is a worthy endeavor and can contribute to our usefulness in God's service.

Instructional Goals and Biblical Truths

1. God gave man a dominant role and responsibility in His creation by giving man the ability to name animals and plants.
“So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of field and every bird of air and brought them to man to see what he would call them, and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name”. Genesis 1:19
2. God created diverse languages, giving rise to many cultures and peoples.
“And the Lord said, Indeed the people are one and they all have one language... ‘let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand on another’s speech’, So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth...” Genesis 11: 1-9
“These were the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations.” Genesis 10: 31
3. As disciples of Christ we are to preach the gospel to people of all languages.
“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”. Mark 16:15
“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,...” Matthew 28:19
4. Learning to speak a language well depends on hearing it spoken consistently.
“In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab; And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. So I contended with them...” Nehemiah 13:23-27
5. The study of a foreign language is a worthy endeavor and can contribute to our usefulness in service to God.
“Then the king instructed ... the master of his eunuchs to bring some of the children of Israel... Young men in whom there was no blemish...gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s

palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.”
Daniel 1:3, 4

6. Language should not serve to confuse, therefore we are discouraged from speaking foreign tongues without interpretation, especially in prayer and worship. “Unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken?...Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret... But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.” 1Corinthians 14:9, 13, 28

7. Language is useless without communicating the love of God. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal...” 1Corinthians 13:1