



A Well-Ordered Church

OPENING COMMENT

Paul's direction to the Corinthian church regarding orderly worship contains some rather controversial verses. The tragedy occurs when we get distracted by these verses and miss the overarching point Paul is driving at. Our tendency is to see Paul's directives through our modern assumptions before understanding what Paul was saying in his cultural moment. Our task is to understand what Paul is concerned with and apply it, as God's truth, to our current culture and worship gatherings.

READ THE TEXT: 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

²⁶What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁷If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, ³²and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. ³³For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵If



there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

³⁶Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?³⁷If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. ³⁸If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰But all things should be done decently and in order.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. What governing principle does Paul apply to the variety of differing aspects to the corporate gathering? (Vs. 26)
2. What are the governing principles Paul outlines for tongues? (Vs. 27, 28)
3. What are the governing principles Paul outlines for prophecy? (Vs. 29-31)
4. Paul's teaching is based on what foundational principle? (Vs. 33)
5. How far reaching is Paul's instruction? (Vs. 33b)
6. Although Paul's instruction can come off as incredibly offensive in our current context, what are the plain instructions he gives to women? (Vs. 34-35)
7. In what way is Paul's instruction to the women similar to those who speak in tongues and prophecy?
8. Paul feels passionately about his teaching here, how does he emphasize its importance? (Vs. 36-37)

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. The contexts of the Corinthian church (Primarily house church/small group sized) and Central Community Church (Multiple large gatherings) are vastly different. How might we apply the instruction Paul gives to those displaying miraculous gifts to our context?
2. In evaluating Central, where are we succeeding at the directives Paul gives in doing things with decency and order? Where do we need to improve on achieving this directive?



3. In light of 1 Corinthians 11 (which implies women were praying and being prophetic in public), how do we apply the teaching Paul gives to women¹ in today's context?
4. How might this orderly conduct be applied to our life group contexts?
5. Paul appeals to his apostolic authority to underscore the importance of this issue. In verse 38 Paul states that if anyone does not recognize what he says as a command from the Lord, then he is not recognized as a part of the body. How might this look today? Where do we compromise or justify ourselves in light of these instructions?

BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Genesis 1-3 – relationship between men and women in light of God's design.
2. 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 – Both men and women participating in prayer and prophecy each in a distinct manner.
3. 1 Corinthians 14:1-25 – Paul's emphasis on gifting being used for building up the church
4. Ephesians 5:22-33 – the profound mystery of marriage and the distinction of roles.
5. 1 Timothy 2:8-15 – Women not teaching in connection with having authority over men.
6. 1 Peter 3:1-4 – adorning with a quiet and gentle spirit is seen as beautiful in the eyes of God.

CONCLUSION

Paul's concern, that the church reflect the character of God, moves beyond personal application and finds a home in the corporate gathering. Since God is a God of order the church should reflect that order in how it gathers to worship. This means having a clear understanding of how to practice the spiritual gifts and when each party should remain silent.

¹ Although there is a lot of discussion around these verses, two interpretations stand above the others. First, it could be understood in Paul limiting women when it comes to *weighing* the prophecy/tongues, which is restricted to those who guard doctrine, namely, Elders. Second, there is evidence that the Graeco-Roman culture frowned upon married women interrogating another woman's husband, which would bring shame on the church. For further reading: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5220f1a3e4b06fb2582d277f/t/56109eabe4b0e1ea752d5676/1443929771755/Soma-Position-Paper-Men-Women-and-Gods-Story-1.pdf>



Paul is advocating that each practice their spiritual gift in order. The tongues speakers should speak when there is an interpreter, otherwise remain silent. The prophets should speak until there is another word and then become silent. This ordering applies regardless of gender, because it is God who gifts through the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12). However, when it comes to guarding the doctrinal door, elders are intended to discern and affirm/deny the word spoken. When this weighing occurs, those non-elder participants should remain silent. Given the Greco-Roman context, Paul has a special word to women to ensure the honor of the church is maintained.

Paul is so concerned with the honor of the church that he throws the full weight of his apostleship behind the teaching. Instead of imploring the Corinthian church, he clearly indicates that each member must be convinced that reflecting the character of an ordered God is of utmost priority. Those that do not agree find them outside of the body.

SHARE & PRAY

LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three-fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

