



## 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 Order in the Church

August 17, 2014

**Text: 1 Cor 14:26-40**

**Question: Can we just skip this section?** ☺ ☺ ☺

*First Thoughts:*

- Last week, we made this statement in all sincerity: *“We certainly don’t expect every member to agree 100% with every position, but we sincerely pray that all can see a sincere, rigorous, and love-based attempt to be faithful to Scripture and that we’d all extend grace to one another as we continue to learn about our great God and Savior, and how to properly worship Him in His Church.”*
- This remains true today. Today’s text is difficult. Not because it’s hard to understand, but because parts of it aren’t accepted today.
- We ask for your grace and mercy in the hearing of it...

*“No matter where we go or what we do in life, there is always order. In fact, the concept of order is inescapable. Personal order in your home declares that your children will NOT speak back to an adult or there will be consequences! Civil order tells us that we are subject to the authority of law enforcement officials as we interact day-to-day. Employment order shows us that we yield to our superiors (Supervisors, Managers, Directors, Vice-Presidents, etc.) as we participate in daily meetings and conduct business. Judicial order is made quite clear when a judge declares, “order” and upholds court room protocol. It would be wise NOT to approach the bench just because you feel like it! God blessed us with the gift of order “in the beginning” and man has duplicated it ever since. Should church order be any different? Although Christian culture has moved away from solid church order, that doesn’t mean that God never set a standard for orderly worship and conduct.”—Pastor Wilson*

### Order in the Church

*(1Co 14:26 ESV) What 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.*

- Now that the Holy Spirit, through Paul, has set certain teachings in place, He brings it all together and describes an amazing worship service unto our Lord.
- Note the “corporate” aspects of the service. **Everyone** was involved. Each had a hymn, a teaching, etc. And the point of gifts is again stressed: *“Let all things be done for building up.”*
- Due to the nature of our modern gatherings, many churches have struggled with how this “each one” command might be implemented, including CRCC.
- What I mean is there was likely much more interaction between the saints. It was probably smaller, more intimate, and less focused on what’s happening on a stage.
- Most churches have tried to implement the worship practices according to the spirit of this verse by implementing corporate prayer, corporate singing, and times where the congregation can speak to and encourage one another in their liturgies.
- I know of one church that has an “open mic” time, vetted through the Elders, in a heartfelt attempt to obey the Spirit’s instructions where members can speak, sing, or prophesy for a minute or two.
- But one thing is for sure...every member was important!

*(1Co 14:27 ESV) If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let*

someone interpret.

- Even in the exercising of gifts, it wasn't a free for all! ☺ Limits were given on public tongues (when all can hear the speaker) and there needed to be an interpretation.

*(1Co 14:28 ESV) But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.*

- This would have been a critical verse to the Corinthians, who struggled with "out of order" issues.
- Those with the gift of tongues would need to "keep it to themselves and to God" unless there was someone who could interpret.

*(1Co 14:29 ESV) Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.*

- Again, another critical verse to the Corinthian church. Only two or three prophets could speak, and their words were not to be blindly accepted but tested.
- Regardless of where you come down on gifts, consider verses 28 and 29 carefully. I don't know many people on the charismatic side of things that are willing to be so publically scrutinized!
- This might be a reason why many of us fall back on the safe and secure preaching of Scripture as a default part of a godly liturgy. We know that God IS talking! ☺
- Yet, as we said last week, we must still be mindful of the commands, "Do not quench the Spirit. (20) Do not despise prophecies, (21) but test everything; hold fast what is good." (1Th 5:19-21 ESV) and "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1Jn 4:1 ESV)
- I believe these "interpretation/testing" commands were meant as a **safeguard** against false prophets, false "words" and false teachings. At a minimum, they would separate pure motives from impure in the speaker. Few insincere people would dare to speak in such a discerning environment, and that was a good thing!

*(1Co 14:30-32 ESV) If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.*

- Again, this is a command to have **order**. The church wasn't to be out of control. The saints of God were to be passionate in worship AND disciplined.
- Mathew Henry wrote, "...the spiritual gifts they have leave them still possessed of their reason, and capable of using their own judgment in the exercise of them. Divine inspirations are not, like the diabolical possessions of heathen priests, violent and ungovernable, and prompting them to act as if they were beside themselves; but are sober and calm, and capable of regular conduct. The man inspired by the Spirit of God may still act the man, and observe the rules of natural order and decency in delivering his revelations. His spiritual gift is thus far subject to his pleasure, and to be managed by his discretion.

*(1Co 14:33 ESV) For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,*

- God is not a God of disorder but order! He desires peace...a sense of order and **propriety** in His worship.
- It seems clear then, that even in New Testament worship, "It is a dangerous thing, in the service of God, to decline from his institutions; we have to do with a God, who is wise to prescribe his own worship - just to require what he has prescribed - and powerful to avenge what he has not prescribed." - Bp. Hall

- Terry Johnson wrote, “Sincerity, then, is an important issue of motive and heart, but earnestness does not substitute for inattention to form, something that very much matters to God. Worshiping God in truth means worshiping God according to Scripture. The advantage the Jews had over the Samaritans was the Bible which instructed them in the acceptable way of approaching God. John Calvin says that lawful worship is only that which God has established by Himself. The Westminster Confession of Faith says, ‘The acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself and so limited by his own revealed will that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations or devices of men or the suggestions of Satan under any visible representation or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.’”

*(1Co 14:34 ESV) the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says.*

- In context, the prophesying, judging of prophecy, teaching, and in general the leading going on in the Church was to be led by men (1 Tim 3).
- There are certainly other times where women could prophesy (Acts 2:18; 21:9); however the corporate gathering apparently wasn’t one of them.
- This wasn’t just a prohibition in Corinth, but in “all the churches of the saints.” For example, in Ephesus: *“Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” (1Ti 2:11-14 ESV)*
- The word “speak” in v34 gives the sense of authoritative speaking, as does the context. The prohibition doesn’t seem to be against private prayer in the gathering, corporate singing, and general greetings, but rather against that which places her in **authority** over the congregation and out of her submissive role and calling.
- The “Law” reference by Paul could be many Old Testament verses that teach submission: Gen 2:20-24, 3:16, Numbers 30, etc.)

*(1Co 14:35 ESV) If 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.*

- Although our focus while reading this verse tends to be on the woman’s prohibition, one can also see the high calling and **responsibility** of a godly husband, who must be prepared to answer questions as he loves and disciplines his wife. Many of our men are just coming to understand the discipline this takes.
- The word here, *shameful*, is the same word in Greek Paul uses in 1 Cor 11:6, where ESV translates it, *disgraceful* if a wife/woman shaves her head (a reason Paul uses to exhort her to cover her head).
- I humbly point this out only to ask some questions. Yes these verses are hot topics of debate, battle lines, and a source of anger for many. Some totally ignore them or attribute them to a “gloss” or a later addition by overzealous scribes, and basically scratch them out of their Bibles. Others to a cultural mandate long passed away, even though there is nothing cultural about the language.
- But given the certainty of the command and the distaste of this sort of disorder embedded in the language, shouldn’t we consider them from God’s perspective, considering He put them there?
- In other words, why would we ever want to get close to or play around with something our Lord might consider shameful in His own worship?

*\*A special note to the precious ladies of CRCC...\**

*Both here in Chapter 14 and back in Chapter 11, we've tried to be faithful to the text and heart of Christ. We totally get some of your discomfort due to these difficult passages in our day. That is not the intent. Please know how much you are loved, valued, honored, and appreciated, first by Christ our LORD, and most certainly by this church. In our imperfection, we also ask for your grace and understanding.*

*(1Co 14:36 ESV) Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?*

- It seems that maybe these verses were difficult 2000 years ago as well.
- Paul essentially invokes his apostolic authority as an author of inspired Scripture and the testimony of the rest of the church ("as in all the churches of the saints") that have been called to obey these same commands.

*(1Co 14:37 ESV) If 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.*

- Since there were so many people wanting to prophesy in Corinth, Paul appeals to that supposed spirituality. Essentially, "Ok prophets, I'm testing you. Here is a true Word."
- Contrary to accusations that the apostle was a chauvinist or somehow hated women, Paul declares he was simply communicating Christ's commands.

*(1Co 14:38 ESV) If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.*

- This is pretty serious. Here is why...
- *"If he will not own what I deliver on this head to be the will of Christ, he himself never had the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of Christ can never contradict itself; if it speak in me, and in them, it must speak the same things in both. If their revelations contradict mine, they do not come from the same Spirit; either I or they must be false prophets. By this therefore you may know them. If they say that my directions in this matter are no divine commandments, you may depend upon it they are not divinely inspired. But if any continue after all, through prejudice or obstinacy, uncertain or ignorant whether they or I speak by the Spirit of God, they must be left under the power of this ignorance. If their pretences to inspiration can stand in competition with the apostolical character and powers which I have, I have lost all my authority and influence; and the persons who allow of this competition against me are out of the reach of conviction, and must be left to themselves." –Mathew Henry*
- To not be recognized in this context was to be branded a false prophet; to go against the teachings of Scripture (which Paul was communicating) was to put forward ungodly, uninspired revelations, be disorderly, and hurt the church.

*(1Co 14:39-40 ESV) So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But all things should be done decently and in order.*

- As we've said, "We believe that when everything is tested by the Word of God by a strong eldership and a discerning congregation, there IS a way God's precious gifts can be used "for building up." (1 Cor 14:26)
- May we always do all things "decently and in order," tested by the Word of God, and honoring to Him who is above all things, even Christ.

Amen.