

Studies in 1 Corinthians

Lesson XXXXIII: Order and Awe in Worship

Text: 1 Cor. 14:26-40

26 What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. **27** If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. **28** If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.

29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. **30** And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. **31** For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. **32** The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. **33** For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

As in all the congregations of the saints, **34** women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. **35** If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

36 Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? **37** If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. **38** If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

39 Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. **40** But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Discussion Questions

1. Based on your reading of the passage, what problems were likely arising in the worship and ministry of the church? (cf. vv. 26, 28, 32-34)
2. What is Paul's remedy to this situation? Make a list of his specific instructions (cf. vv. 26-30, 32, 34, 37-40). Should contemporary Christians make a distinction between Paul's temporary, situational prescriptions to the Corinthian problem and the underlying principles these instructions are based on?
3. Verses 33-35 are variously interpreted to mean that women cannot participate in public roles of worship and service in the general assembly of the church (i.e. song leading, passing the communion trays, prayers, or even asking questions in Bible class). How does the historical and cultural context of Paul's time help us to arrive at a proper interpretation of the passage? Do Paul's specific instructions to women here apply to the church of the 21st century? If so, how? If not, why not? Identify your assumptions.
4. What is intended here by doing "everything" in a "fitting and orderly way"?