

1 Corinthians 14: 26-40

The need for church worship to be orderly is described in vv. 26-40 What is the purpose of the different elements of the worship service (v. 26)? The strengthening/edifying of the church.

What are the guidelines Paul gives for the use of tongues in public worship (vv. 27-28)? First, in any one meeting no more than two or three may speak in tongues. There was to be no such thing as a meeting where several people would stand up and speak to show their proficiency in foreign languages.

Second, the two or three who were permitted to speak in tongues in any one meeting must do so in turn. That means that they must not speak at the same time, but one after the other. This would avoid the bedlam and disorder of several speaking at once.

Third, the Christians should not allow tongues without interpretation in the church services; there must be an interpreter. If a man got up to speak in a foreign language, he must first determine that there was someone present to interpret what he was about to say. If there was no interpreter present, then he must keep silent in church. He could sit there and speak silently to himself and to God in this foreign language, but he was not permitted to do so publicly.¹

How should those who prophecy conduct themselves (v. 29)? Likewise, the "prophets" should minister in an orderly fashion, and limit themselves to "two or three" messages at a service. The others in the congregation (not just other prophets) should pay attention to what they say. evaluate it carefully and, if need be, to reject it if the prophecy was not in harmony with the Word of God.

What are the specific guidelines Paul gives for prophesying in church (vv. 30-31)? A prophet might experience a revelation during the worship service. If that happened, a prophet in the midst of speaking should draw his message to a close to let the other gifted member speak.² The prophets should be given the opportunity to speak one by one. No one prophet should take all the time. In that way, the greatest benefit would result to the church—all would be able to learn and all would be exhorted or encouraged.³

What is the overriding theme for conducting these activities in the church (vv. 32-33)? Prophecy (and tongues as well) was not to be associated with an uncontrollable emotional ecstasy or frenzy. Paul gave the prophets an instruction that was similar to what he gave the tongues-speakers (v. 28). Don't allow your spiritual gift to get out of control. You can determine when or how long you should speak. Paul insists that these gifts should be controlled by the recipients themselves.

The bottom line is that confusion and disorder in church services are not in keeping with the character of God, and such conditions dishonor Him.

What is the public role of women to be in the church (v. 34)? The uniform testimony of the New Testament is that while women have many valuable ministries, a woman is not allowed to have a public ministry to the whole church. They are entrusted with the unspeakably important and most noble work of the home and of raising children. But they are not allowed to speak authoritatively to a mixed gender audience in the church. Theirs is to be a place of submission to the man.⁴

What were the women instructed to do (v. 35)? In context, Paul is discussing primarily the disruption of worship by women who become involved in noisy discussions surrounding tongues-speaking and prophecy. Instead of publicly clamoring for explanations, the wives were to discuss matters with their husbands at home. Again, Paul's concern is order, not chaos, and a worship service that honors and glorifies God.

¹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1801). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Lowery, D. K. (1985). *1 Corinthians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 540). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1801). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ Ibid. p. 1802

What was Paul's point in asking these sarcastic, rhetorical questions? (vv. 36-37)? Apparently, the Apostle Paul realized that his teaching here would cause considerable arguing. How right he was!

By asking: *"Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached,"* Paul was in other words asking.....if the Corinthians claimed to know more about these church worship matters than Paul himself, then he would ask them if the Word of God originated with them, or if they were the only ones who had received it. By their prideful attitude, they seemed to be setting themselves up as an official authority on these matters. But the facts are that no church originated the word of God, and no church has exclusive rights to it.⁵

Paul reminded the Corinthians that they did not set the standard for how the church meetings should proceed. Their arrogance evidently drew this warning. The Corinthian church was not the mother church, nor was it the only church to which the gospel had come (11:16; 14:33b).⁶

Furthermore, Paul emphasizes that these are not his own ideas or interpretations, but that they are the commandments of the Lord, and any man who is a prophet of the Lord or who is truly spiritual will acknowledge that that is the case.⁷

What is the test of a Corinthian's claim to being "a prophet or spiritually gifted" (v. 37)? In connection with all his previous instructions, Paul here emphasizes that they are not his own ideas or interpretations, but that they are the commandments of the Lord, and any man who is a prophet of the Lord or who is truly spiritual will acknowledge that he is telling the truth. Submission to apostolic authority was the test, not speaking in tongues. Submissiveness to the apostles and their teaching was an expression of submission to the Lord Himself (7:10, 25). It still is.⁸

This verse is a good enough answer to those who insist that some of Paul's teachings, especially those concerning women, reflected his own prejudices. These matters are not Paul's private view; they are the commandments of the Lord.⁹

What would be the consequences of ignoring Paul's advice (v. 38)? Failure to recognize the Lord as the source of Paul's teaching would lead to that person's failure to "be recognized" (i.e. acknowledged with approval) not only by the Corinthian church but ultimately by the Lord Himself (8:2-3). He will be regarded as an unbeliever.

Anyone who ignores the Lord's commands would find himself ... ignored by Him at the last day (Matthew 10:32-33), because his actions would show that he never knew the Lord (1 Corinthians 8:3; Matthew 7:22-23; 1 John 4:6).¹⁰

How does Paul sum up the preceding instructions on the exercise of gifts (v. 39)? Paul now tells the believers to desire earnestly to prophesy, but not to forbid men to speak with tongues. This verse shows the relative importance of these two gifts—one they were to desire earnestly, while the other they were not to ban.¹¹

What are the foundational principles that should underlie what takes place in church meetings (v. 40)? Christians should ensure, that in their worship services, everything should be done in a *"fitting and orderly way."* Everything should be edifying (v. 26), and a spirit of peace should prevail (v. 33).

⁵ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1802). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Corinthians, 2019 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 272

⁷ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1803). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Corinthians, 2019 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 272

⁹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1803). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁰ Lowery, D. K. (1985). 1 Corinthians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 541). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹¹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1803). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.