

Orderly Worship Edifies

1 Corinthians 14:29-40

I. God's Will for Worship

A. The Focus of this Chapter: Corporate Worship

1. Paul is addressing the Corinthians' public worship services
2. The church gathered on the Lord's Day

B. God's Purpose in Worship (and Spiritual Gifts): Edification

1. God's overall purpose is clear: edification

1 Corinthians 14:12 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

2. Edification means the "building up" of the church

Ephesians 2:21-22 In [Christ] the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Edification is done when human beings are converted through faith in Christ and made what Peter calls "living stones" in this spiritual temple; then those stones themselves are continually quarried and shaped and polished toward perfection in Christ – holiness, sanctification, spiritual development every single day of your lives

- a. The church is also portrayed as a living body

Ephesians 4:15-16 speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- b. The basic idea: the church is developing to full maturity in Christ
 - c. All of the ministries of the church are given by the Holy Spirit to achieve the final salvation of all the elect
 - d. We are a work in progress
3. So, all the spiritual gifts exist for edification... the development of the church to full maturity in Christ... to final perfection, conformity to Christ
 4. It is essential for us to realize that our own salvation is not complete yet, and neither is the salvation of any other elect person still alive on planet Earth or any elect person who has yet to be born
 5. Spiritual gifts are a MEANS to the END of the final perfection of the elect in Christ

Romans 8:29-30 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

C. Review: Tongues, Prophecy, and Clarity

1. In this chapter, Paul is specifically zeroing in on tongues and prophecy
2. These are the two “showiest” gifts, the up-front gifts, the ones that the Corinthians most coveted and boasted about
3. They had a basic misconception of these gifts from their experiences in paganism... the ecstatic mindless body-snatching that passed for supernaturalism and an encounter with the deities was NOT a healthy pattern of Christian worship

4. Paul says that with both tongues and prophecy, the use of the gift must be subject to the control of the one doing it... there is no place for a mindless frenzy
5. Also, Paul is zeroing in on the issue of edification, and the consistent point is the CLEAR UNFOLDING of God's word is the primary means of building up the church
6. Truth spoken CLEARLY

1 Corinthians 14:19 in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

This shows how absolutely vital the MIND is in our salvation... God uses reasonable words, concepts, to transform our minds and hearts so that then our lives will follow

The word taught and preached clearly is understood by the minds of the hearers; the heart believes and delights in that word, and the life follows suit...

D. Key Concept: Order

Paul is underscoring a clear ORDERLINESS in all this... including the use of the gift of tongues

He does NOT want chaos, disorder, confusion

Paul gives three clear commands

1. Two or at most three people should speak in tongues... ONE AT A TIME
2. The tongues should always be interpreted
3. If there is no interpreter, the tongues should not be part of the public worship

II. God's Will for Prophets

A. Definition of Prophecy (Again)

1. In the Old Testament, prophecy is the direct communication of words from God to the people of God
2. Essential to that gift is the idea “thus says the Lord”; the prophet hears God’s word directly revealed to his mind and he speaks exactly what God wants him to say

Deuteronomy 18:18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.

Jeremiah 1:9 Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth.

3. All of scripture is prophecy in written form

2 Peter 1:20-21 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit

4. Old Testament prophets were validated by their ability to predict the future

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" ²² If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him

5. Prophecy is different from teaching and preaching, which has more of a logical reasoning based on scripture... it has less certainty to it... more “judgment call”
6. It is hotly debated whether the gift of prophecy still exists
 - a. Charismatic churches like Assembly of God, the Pentecostals, and Sovereign Grace churches believe that prophecy is still at work today
 - b. Wayne Grudem has a novel view of New Testament prophecy, saying it was more like speaking out a sense of what the Holy Spirit may have been saying in his mind... not “thus says the

Lord,” and not necessarily perfect; a more humble “I feel the Lord has shown me ... X”

- c. It is very difficult to see the difference between that type of so-called prophecy and any sound New Testament teaching
 - d. In many of the churches that seek to practice prophecy on Sunday mornings, they have open mikes ready and a leader of the church acting as a filter by the mike; he quietly hears what the prophet is about to say, then determines whether or not to permit it... if the permission is given, the prophet can speak the message into the microphone;
 - e. Though I’ve never seen this done, from reliable testimonies, I am aware that a great deal of the prophecy in the healthiest of these churches is not different at all from simple biblical exhortation... “The Holy Spirit is commanding all the members of FBC to love one another as Christ has loved them; and be certain you are truly forgiving each other.”
7. I believe that there is no good reason to excuse modern prophets from the requirement to prove their status as prophets by making an independently verifiable prediction of the future... for prediction of the future is the crown jewel of genuine prophecy and was required to validate Old Testament prophets, and is on display in the New Testament, with Agabus’s prediction of a famine

Acts 11:28-29 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)²⁹ The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.

B. Weighing of the Prophetic Word

- 1. Back to the Corinthian setting...
- 2. Paul commands that the prophets should weigh the prophecies that were being given out

1 Corinthians 14:29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.

- a. The Greek word is *diakrino*
 - b. To evaluate, discern, judge, assess... make divisions—this from that
3. Keep in mind that the New Testament had not yet been completed; also that there were many false prophets floating around back then
 4. So, the weighing of the prophecy would be after the words had been spoken, then the other prophets would evaluate the prophecy and validate whether it was truly from the Lord or not
 5. Along with that, they were lining the doctrine of the prophecy up with the revealed doctrine of Christ

CSB Romans 12:6 According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the standard of faith

The “analogia” of THE faith... carefully aligned with “THE FAITH” not merely the prophets own trust in Jesus... but “the faith” = the body of doctrines known as Christianity

Acts 6:7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Galatians 1:23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

Jude 3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

6. Several other passages teach this “weighing” process

1 Thessalonians 5:20-22 do not treat prophecies with contempt. ²¹ Test everything. Hold on to the good. ²² Avoid every kind of evil.

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

7. Though this is slightly beside the point, all public ministry of the Word is subject to the constant evaluation of all the church, though quietly and privately

Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

C. Purpose of Prophecy

1. As always, EDIFICATION! The building up of all who hear

1 Corinthians 14:26 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.

2. Paul also adds these words: instruction and encouragement

1 Corinthians 14:31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.

- a. There was a clear instructional aspect to all true prophecy
- b. So also the prophecies were a great source of comfort to the growing church, especially in the face of such opposition and hostility

D. Orderliness in Prophecy

1. Paul also gives instructions about the ORDERLINESS of how prophets should use their gift, as he did with tongues

1 Corinthians 14:29-32 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.

2. There is a limit to the NUMBER of prophets speaking... two or three

3. Then, there is the **WEIGHING** of the words of the prophecy, as we've said
4. Then there are clear instructions about orderliness even during the time of prophecy... if a revelation comes to another prophet while the first one is speaking, the first speaker should concede the floor... like on the floor of the Senate—"I yield the remainder of my time to the distinguished Senator from North Carolina"... decorum, orderliness
5. Not one interrupting the other, shouting the other down
6. And a key insight:

1 Corinthians 14:32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.

- a. No mindless frenzies will come over them, like in paganism
- b. It is not some series of whirling dervishes or people in some hypnotic trance
- c. The Holy Spirit does not violate the mind, heart, will, and body of the Christian like a demon does when it possesses a person
- d. God created the mind and reason of the Christian and works within it in a very healthy way

Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD.

Acts 26:25 "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable.

7. So Paul lays out a very clear pattern for **ORDERLINESS** in the exercise of the gift of prophecy

1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

8. He will conclude the whole section with this

1 Corinthians 14:40 But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

9. We need to stand in awe of the orderliness of God

- a. We see it in the days of creation, how step by step the Lord created the world fit for human habitation
- b. We see it in the amazingly detailed instructions for the animal sacrificial system... the dimensions of the Tabernacle, the order of the Levitical priesthood... who did what; for example, the construction of the breastpiece over the heart of the high priest

Exodus 28:15-20 "Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions-- the work of a skilled craftsman. Make it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. ¹⁶ It is to be square-- a span long and a span wide-- and folded double. ¹⁷ Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; ¹⁸ in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and an emerald; ¹⁹ in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; ²⁰ in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings.

- c. Also the orderliness of the annual calendar of feasts...

Deuteronomy 16:16-17 Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed: ¹⁷ Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

- d. We see it even in the orderliness of the camp of Israel as they moved through the desert: the Tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant in the center; then three tribes to the north, three to the south, three to the east, three to the west

When Israel marched out, they were to do it in a certain order:

Numbers 2:17 Then the Tent of Meeting and the camp of the Levites will set out in the middle of the camps. They will set out in the same order as they encamp, each in his own place under his standard.

- e. We see even an ordering in the gospel ministry

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

E. Orderliness is Universal... not just ONE CHURCH

1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints

III. God's Will for Women

Part of the ordering of the church has to do with the role of women

A. Silent in the Churches

1 Corinthians 14:33-35 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.

B. Submissiveness

1. "They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission"; submission has to do with recognizing and gladly yielding from the heart to God-ordained authority... God-ordained ordering
2. The submissiveness is based on the timeless creation order Paul has already covered in the head coverings passage

1 Corinthians 11:3 Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

3. It is also based on the central human relationship in history and in all of society... the husband/wife relationship; as Paul teaches in Ephesians 5:

Ephesians 5:22-24 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

C. What is the Silence?

1. A great deal of controversy over this
2. There is a basic quietness that has to do with not having a roiling heart of disputation and argument and rebelliousness

1 Timothy 2:11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

3. But does this mean a woman should never say a word in corporate worship?
 - a. Many have pointed to the passage on headcoverings in chapter 11 as clear evidence that women were allowed to both prophesy and pray in church... but they must do so with their head covered in clear submission to male leadership in the church
 - b. 1 Timothy 2, Paul spoke very clearly about gender-based roles in teaching and authority in the local church

1 Timothy 2:12-13 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

There has been so much controversy over this issue recently... with women asserting a right to preach and teach as long as its done under the authority of the elders; others categorically reject any gender-based restrictions whatsoever as obsolete patriarchy and male domination that our modern, feminist, enlightened age has clearly outgrown

But Paul clearly forbids two things in 1 Timothy 2:12 – women teaching men, and women having authority over men; and he links it not to the fall or to culture or any historical thing but to creation itself: **Adam was formed first, then Eve**

- c. So the command in 1 Corinthians 14:34 for women to be “silent in the churches” clearly harmonizes with 1 Timothy 2:12 and the prohibition for women teaching or having authority over men

4. BUT in context, I do not think this is exactly what Paul is forbidding... the silence is not an absolute silence, but silence in regard to the weighing of prophecies...

1 Corinthians 14:29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.

- a. This weighing and giving approval or disapproval has a high level of authority to it
- b. Paul wants men to lead in the church as they do at home; this is part of the wise ordering that God has set up, and it is timeless, rooted in creation; we will never outgrow it, or become so enlightened and evolved as a society to look back on the Bible as archaic and outmoded in having gender-based roles
- c. Paul links the submission of women to the clear teaching of “the Law”... by this, he means Old Testament teaching

1 Corinthians 14:34 They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.

- d. Paul speaks to any questions the women may have in the church assembly

1 Corinthians 14:35 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.

5. What does it mean “disgraceful”?
- a. This is a very strong word; but I think we should hear it as speaking out of order... breaking decorum

Illus. I was once asked to read scripture at a wedding; it was here at FBC, and I was delighted to have that role, but I was not officiating the wedding... another brother was asked to do that by the couple. At the right time in the service, I got up and went to the microphone appointed for me and read the scripture they had chosen. At the end of that passage, I sat down in my seat on the front left pew.

Now if I had taken it upon myself to do anything more or less than that, I would have been disorderly – it would have been a dishonor or a disgrace to me and to my family. For example, if I had given a little impromptu charge to the couple... or had led the congregation in a song, or had read a poem that I thought they might like... however nice that would have been, it would have been DISORDERLY... and God is a God of order

So, in the Holy Spirit's mind, a woman speaking in an authoritative way in church is disgraceful – dishonoring, disorderly.

D. Modern Problems... Yet “Nothing New Under the Sun”

1. In teaching this, I am well aware how much this flies in the face of modern sensibilities
2. When I preached on head coverings, I addressed the origins and development of modern feminism... so I don't want to go back over that again
3. But let me say that God delights in males as males and females as females; he does not think more highly of men than women, for both are equally heirs of heaven through faith in Christ Jesus
4. Women will be richly rewarded for their service to Christ on Judgment Day, and like the widow who put in more than anyone else, some will receive the highest rewards of all
5. But we must accept this teaching of male leadership in the church... as Paul is about to make plain

IV. God's Will for These Instructions

A. Paul Challenges them to Obey

1 Corinthians 14:36-38 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.

1. Paul is humbling the Corinthians, for they are a very proud church

2. He asks if the Word of God originated with them... or if they were the only church in the world... this is HUMBLING!

B. This Word is Not Paul's, But God's

1. Many modern people denigrate Paul as a chauvinist or as somehow different than Jesus, who liberated women
2. But Paul makes it plain that this teaching, like all of his apostolic doctrines, was coming to them from the Lord Jesus himself
3. As a matter of fact, a test of any prophet's calling was the ability to recognize that what Paul was writing was actually coming directly from the Lord Jesus Christ

C. Ignored

1 Corinthians 14:38 If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

D. Final Instructions

1 Corinthians 14:39-40 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

Paul wants the gifts to be exercised in the clear pattern he has laid out. For us at FBC, we will not use these gifts publicly unless they have been proved biblically valid to the elders

V. Applications

A. Come to Christ

B. Purpose of Worship is Edification of the Body of Christ

C. Purpose of All Gifts is Edification of the Body of Christ

1. Discover, Develop, Deploy
2. Do you have a spiritual gift ministry?

D. Embrace Complementarianism

E. Delight in the Orderliness of God