

Ministry 401

Lesson Eight

Decently and in Order

This lesson belongs to _____

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Decently and in Order

Key Verse: *“Let all things be done decently and in order.” 1 Corinthians 14:40 (NKJV)*

Purpose: The purpose of this lesson is to help the disciple understand the nature and model of Christian ministry that is appropriate and orderly.

1. God is not the author of _____ but of _____.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 14:33 (NKJV) *“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”*
 - b. The Greek word for “confusion” can also be translated “disorder”. God is not the God of disorder.
 - c. Where God’s order is established, His peace will reign.
 - d. The churches where God’s Spirit is in control will not be characterized by chaos and disorder. Rather, they will be characterized by peace.
 - e. God’s peace rests upon His order. Chaos and confusion rests upon disorder.

2. Every expression of ministry in the church must be done _____ and in _____.
 - a. The Greek word for “decently” refers to a manner that is “proper” or “pleasing”.
 - b. The Greek word for “order” refers to the right “arrangement” of affairs.

What is meant by “Decently and in Order”?

We must distinguish between man's idea of "decently and in order" and God's meaning. The religious leaders in Christ's day felt Jesus was indecent and out of order on many occasions, especially in the synagogues and on the Sabbath day. It was their own religious traditions that were out of order. Jesus was not hindered in doing the will of God because of their objections. So, what does Paul mean by "let all things be done decently and in order"? The meaning is found in the context of Paul's entire discourse on the operation of spiritual things in the church as found in chapters 12-14. The presence and operation of spiritual things in the church is by nature *subjective* rather than *objective*. The operation of spiritual things is subjective because it is subject to an individual's personal perception of what God is doing at any given time. If everyone was allowed to do whatever they “felt” was of God without any accountability, the unity and good will of the meeting would be soon overtaken by chaos and confusion.

Freedom of the Spirit?

Some have the mistaken idea that “freedom of the Spirit” in the church meeting means that anything should be allowed to manifest if individuals claim to be “led by the Spirit”. Paul rejects this kind of self-determined and untethered activity (1 Corinthians 14:27-32). God’s peace requires everything to be done in a decent and orderly way. The Holy Spirit is not schizophrenic. He did not inspire the order of spiritual things in the church gathering as outlined in Scripture only to disregard it in a so-called “move of the Spirit”. The subjective nature of spiritual things must be accountable to the objective guidelines of Scripture, the purpose of edification of the body, and the motivation of love. Otherwise, God’s order will be overtaken by spiritual disorder and the blessing and peace intended for the church gathering will be replaced by chaos and confusion. The church gathering is bigger and more important than any single individual or faction. Church leadership must ensure that church meetings follow the order of Scripture and are not hijacked by independent and unruly people. The objective of the church gathering is the edification of the church in love (Ephesians 4:12; 1 Corinthians 14:26). Whatever hinders this objective is to be regarded as indecent and out of order.

Throughout 1 Corinthians 14 Paul gives us clear details on what is meant by “decently and in order.” We will now consider the guiding principles of what is decent and in order.

3. Everything must be done with the motivation of _____.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 16:14 (NKJV) *“Let all that you do be done with love.”*
 - b. 1 Corinthians 13:1–3 (NKJV) *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ² And though I have the gift of prophecy,*

and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”

4. Speaking in a known _____.
- a. 1 Corinthians 14:5–19 (NKJV) *“I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification. ⁶ But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? ⁷ Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? ⁸ For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? ⁹ So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. ¹¹ Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. ¹² Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. ¹³ Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. ¹⁶ Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? ¹⁷ For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. ¹⁸ I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; ¹⁹ yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”*
 - b. 1 Corinthians 14:27–28 (NKJV) *“If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.”*
5. Simple _____.
- a. Education is important. Mastery of the language is important in communication. However, we are not to seek to impress others with our education or spiritual knowledge. Such is rooted in spiritual pride. Humility and love for the people will motivate us to communicate with people in words and concepts that the listeners can understand. The rule applied to speaking in a language the people can understand might also be applied to speaking words that the listener can understand.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 14:11 (NKJV) *“So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me.”*
 - c. Charles Spurgeon: “Christ said, ‘Feed my sheep...feed my lambs.’ Some preachers, however, put the food so high that neither lambs nor sheep can reach it. They seem to have read the text [as], ‘Feed my giraffes.’”⁴
6. _____ of what is legitimate but unclear.
- a. Spiritual things can be confusing or misunderstood. We should seek to give interpretation and understanding to the spiritual things taking place within the service for the sake of those who need answers. This includes the manifestation of the interpretation of tongues. It could also include the interpretation of obscure prophetic acts, explanation of various kinds of spiritual activity occurring in the church whether they be holy, fleshly, or demonic, or explanation of corrective measures by leadership.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 14:13 (NKJV) *“Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.”*
 - c. Acts 2:12–16 (NKJV) *“So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ ¹³ Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine.’ ¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵ For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.”*

⁴ Charles Spurgeon, “Feed My Sheep” Sermon #3211, p. 6.

7. _____ toward fellow believers.
- Believers are to be courteous and not pushy or hoggish in their participation and contribution to the meeting. Believers should show respect to one another, allow opportunity for others to participate, and consider the benefit of others above their own.
 - 1 Corinthians 12:23–25 (NKJV) *“And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, ²⁴ but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, ²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.”*
 - 1 Corinthians 14:27–32 (NKJV) *“If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. ²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. ³⁰ But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. ³² And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”*
8. _____ of unbelievers and unlearned.
- While believers who have experienced a freedom in spiritual things may feel restricted by boundaries, we are nevertheless instructed restrain our liberty in consideration of how it might negatively affect unbelievers and the unlearned (ungifted) in the meeting who do not understand.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:20–25 (NKJV) *“Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature. ²¹ In the law it is written: ‘With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,’ says the Lord. ²² Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. ²³ Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? ²⁴ But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. ²⁵ And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.”*
9. The _____ of the church.
- Just because people feel they have something important to share does not mean they are to share it. We must seek the welfare of the church above our own desire to contribute. Not only this but we should make sure that what we contribute is edifying rather than self-willed, negative, critical and filled with unbelief.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:5 (NKJV) *“I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.”*
 - 1 Corinthians 14:12 (NKJV) *“Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.”*
 - 1 Corinthians 14:26 (NKJV) *“How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”*
10. Mutual _____.
- Personal revelations are subjective and are not to be viewed as authoritative and infallible. Nothing believed to be spoken or done by the Spirit is on the same level as Scripture. Neither the prophet nor his prophecy is self-authenticating. All prophetic ministry or revelational teaching is to be accountable to the evaluation, judgment, or correction of legitimate church authority.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:29 (NKJV) *“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”*
11. _____ - _____.
- Believers should exercise self-control in their conduct and participation in the corporate gatherings. The work of the Spirit does not undermine or negate a person’s self-control or ability to submit to God’s order in the church meeting.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:29–33 (NKJV) *“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. ³⁰ But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. ³² And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. ³³ For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”*

12. _____ and _____.
- God is not the author of confusion but of peace. Peace is evidence of the establishment of Christ's kingdom government in our midst. God's divine peace rests upon His divine order. Joy follows divine peace. Chaos and confusion exist when His government is absent and His divine order violated. Believers should be watchful to recognize and establish Christ's rule in the church and to follow His order so that His kingdom peace and blessing may rest upon it.
 - Isaiah 9:6–7 (NKJV) *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."*
 - Romans 14:16–17 (NKJV) *"Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."*
 - 1 Corinthians 14:33 (NKJV) *"For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."*
13. The principle of _____ and _____.
- God has established the principle of headship and submission within the Godhead and in the home.
 - 1 Corinthians 11:3 (NKJV) *"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."*
 - Headship does not imply superiority any more than submission implies inferiority. Headship and submission define and establish God's authority and order in creation and in the home. The divine principles of headship and submission are not to be ignored in the church gathering but upheld and reflected. Men are to recognize and reflect the Headship of Christ over their lives and women are to recognize and reflect the man's headship in the home and in the church. (1 Corinthians 11:4-10; 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; Titus 2:3-5)
 - In the church, God's principle of headship is to be reflected through establishing male leadership in the roles of pastors and elders (1 Timothy 2:11-15). Women are free to operate in spiritual gifts, prayer, in some teaching roles, and even as prophetesses under the headship covering of their fathers, husbands, and church leadership (see Acts 1:14; 2:17-18; 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:3-16; Titus 2:3-5). Submissive and godly unmarried women may operate in spiritual things under the covering of the authority of their pastor and elders like any other man. Women who disregard God's principle of male headship in creation and in the home bring shame upon themselves and are not allowed to speak in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Even the angels will not honor wives who disregard the principle of divine covering (1 Corinthians 11:10).
14. The authority of _____.
- Spiritual things are subjective in nature. The word of God is absolute in its authority. Authority flows from God through His word. Nothing subjective is to be regarded as "decent and in order" if its message, motivation, presentation, and results are contrary to Scripture. Those who reject or ignore the authority of Scripture are themselves out of order.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:29 (NKJV) *"Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge."*
 - 1 Corinthians 14:36–37 (NKJV) *"Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? ³⁷ If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord."*
 - Isaiah 8:20 (NKJV) *"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."*
15. The _____ of pastors and/or elders.
- Pastors and elders are responsible to oversee the church and its operation. They have the authority to recognize or not to recognize those who seek to minister in the church. Recognition infers credibility. Giving credibility through recognition to those who are out of order damages the standard of decency and order in the house and can lead to confusion among those who have striven to walk in true order and submission.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:38 (NASB) *"But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized."*
 - Acts 20:28–30 (NKJV) (Paul to pastors / elders) *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."*

- d. Hebrews 13:17 (NKJV) *“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”*
16. _____ the manifestation of spiritual things within the boundaries of what is decent and in order.
- While there are dangers and abuses that come with allowing spiritual gifts to operate in the church, the benefits far outweigh the dangers if there are proper safeguards and boundaries.
 - The proper biblical response toward spiritual gifts is to encourage their operation in the church within proper boundaries.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:39–40 (NKJV) *“Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. ⁴⁰ Let all things be done decently and in order.”*
 - Anyone who claims to be spiritual and a spokesman of God but does not recognize, submit to, and follow Scripture or apostolic teaching are themselves not to be recognized as a true minister of Christ.
17. The Holy Spirit works in the church for the _____ of all.
- 1 Corinthians 12:7 (NKJV) *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.”*
 - The Greek word translated into English as “profit” is *symphero* which means “to bear or bring together at the same time”. Like a symphony, the Holy Spirit is the divine Conductor, and the individual members of the body of Christ are like individual musicians in the orchestra. Each has been given their inspired part to contribute as the Holy Spirit wills to bring forth a combined beautiful harmony of grace. The gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit are only valid when controlled and orchestrated by the fruit of the Spirit, specifically love. (1 Corinthians 13; Ga 5:22-23) When there is no corporate benefit, i.e., “profit of all” or fruitful purpose, then the manifestation is to be limited to private rather than public use. (1 Corinthians 14:18-19, 28)
18. The Holy Spirit works in the church to establish the _____ of Jesus Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 12:3 (NKJV) *“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”*
 - Anything that undermines the Lordship of Christ in the church is not inspired by the Holy Spirit and is out of order.