

**11/9/25 “Orderly Worship Edifies”
1 Corinthians 14:29–40**

Welcome...

As we return to our study of the book of First Corinthians, we have seen three key principles in chapter 14. The first is the principle of edification. This was one of Paul’s favorite words, borrowed from architecture. To edify means “to build up.”

Ephesians 4:15-16 tell us “but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

So, all the spiritual gifts among believers in the church exist for edification... the development of the church to full maturity in Christ.

The mistake the Corinthians were making was to emphasize their own personal edification to the neglect of the church. They wanted to build themselves up, but they did not want to build up their fellow believers. The key word for them was not edification, but exhibition. A ministry that does not build up will tear down, no matter how “spiritual” it may seem. So, all spiritual gifts are designed by God for the ministry of edification.

The second principle we have seen in our study of 1 Corinthians 14 is the principle of understanding. Pastor Adrian pointed out last week that Paul used the word “understanding” repeatedly in chapter 14. The principle of edification encourages us to major on sharing the Word of God so that the church will be strengthened and grow. The principle of understanding reminds us that the truth from God’s Word that is shared must be understood if it is to do any good.

But a third principle must be applied, and that is the principle of order. Which brings us to our text today.

Let’s read 1 Corinthians 14:29-40...

If you’ve ever been to a wedding rehearsal, you know it’s a mixture of nerves and joy. Everyone gathers the night before—the bride and groom, the wedding party, the family, and the minister—and they walk slowly through what will happen the next day. They practice where to stand, when to walk, how to hold the flowers, what to say, when the music starts.

Is the rehearsal perfect? Hardly. People talk, laugh, forget their cues. But no one is discouraged, because the rehearsal isn’t meant to be flawless. It’s meant to prepare. It’s meant to tune our hearts to what will soon be real.

And then comes the wedding day and everything that was practiced in part becomes joy in full. The bride appears in radiance. The groom’s face shines. The guests rise. What was rehearsal now becomes reality.

Church worship is like that. Every Sunday when we gather—when we sing, when we pray, when we hear God’s Word—we are rehearsing for heaven. We do not worship perfectly. Sometimes we are distracted, tired, or out of tune. Sometimes the “timing” of our hearts is off. But Christ is preparing us. Every week is a small practice, training our souls for the day when the greater Wedding will begin; when the Bridegroom returns for His bride, the church.

In heaven, the worship will be pure, joyful, unbroken. There will be no missed cues, no wandering hearts, no half-hearted singing. We will see the Bridegroom face to face, and all our rehearsals will finally make sense.

So when you come to worship—even on an ordinary Sunday morning—remember: This is the rehearsal for the main event. The main event, the real celebration is coming in the marriage supper of the Lamb.

I would be remiss, if I did not ask you do you know Christ as your Lord and Savior? Have you come to saving faith in Jesus? When Jesus started His ministry Mark 1:15 declares Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.”

Many in Jesus’ audience thought they were already righteous and would gain entrance to the kingdom of God because of their connection to Abraham and Moses and because they were keeping the laws God had given to Israel through Moses.

But Jesus explained to them that righteousness was not possible in themselves. They could try to live as righteous as possible but Romans 3:23 says “We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” Romans 6:23 says...

Everyone needs the Savior. Is He Lord of your life?

Now, if the church worship service is a rehearsal for an eternal worship service in heaven, what should our rehearsals look like here? What should govern a church worship service? Two statements in 1 Corinthians 14 go together: “Let all things be done for edification” (verse 26), and, “All things must be done properly and in an orderly manner” (verse 40).

Main point: 1 Corinthians 14:29-40 provides three ways that order in the church honors God and edifies the church body.

Orderly Evaluation Promotes Edification (vv. 29–33a)

Orderly Submission Reflects Reverence (vv. 33b–36)

Orderly Obedience Honors God (vv. 37–40)

Because God is a God of peace and order, the church must worship in a way that honors God and edifies His people through clarity, submission, and reverence.

My prayer is that we find our greatest satisfaction and joy in looking to Christ and being faithful to use our spiritual gifts to edify His body the church and to do so in an orderly way.

I. Orderly Evaluation Promotes Edification

Look at verse 29...

In the church at Corinth, only two or three should speak, not everyone at once. And what they say must be evaluated.

Why were the messages evaluated? To determine whether the speaker had truly communicated the Word of God through the Holy Spirit.

Paul does not spell out explicit criteria for evaluating prophetic speech in 1 Corinthians 14:29–31, yet his wider teaching in the letter allows us to infer several guiding norms. Here are six questions that I imagined they asked

when evaluating prophetic speech in the Corinthian church, these questions come from instruction in 1 Corinthians:

1. Does it point us to Christ—Does the message agree with the gospel? As Paul said in 1:23, “we preach Christ crucified.”
2. Is it Faithful to Scripture—Does it agree with Scripture rightly understood through the lens of Christ (1:19, 31; 4:6)?
3. Is it Consistent with apostolic instruction—Does it match what the apostle Paul has taught and entrusted to them (2:15; 7:25; 11:2; 15:3)?
4. Is it an Expression of Christlike love—Is it shaped by “agape” sacrificial love for others (13:1–13; 8:1)?
5. Is it truly for the Edification of the church—Does it build up the community and promote its spiritual good (14:3–5, 12, 17, 26; cf. 12:7)?
6. Is it a Witness to unbelievers—Does it help outsiders come to faith by exposing their hearts, convicting them, and revealing God’s presence among His people (14:20–25)?

It was possible for a speaker, under the control of his own emotions, to imagine that God was speaking to him and through him. It was even possible for Satan to counterfeit a prophetic message (2 Cor. 11:13–14). But verse 29 tells us the listeners would test the message and pass judgment. They would test by comparing with what they knew from Old Testament Scriptures, apostolic tradition, and the personal guidance of the Spirit (“discerning of spirits,” 1 Cor. 12:10).

Verses 30-32...

If while a person is speaking, God gives a revelation to another person, the speaker must be silent and defer while the new revelation is shared. Verse 31 tells us everyone has something to learn. But verse 32 tells us nobody was to take over the meeting. Verse 32 tells us the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. Someone might have said, “I can’t help what I say. The Spirit of God is in me and He is speaking through me. Therefore, everything I say is of God. So, don’t stop me from speaking”

Paul says, “No, the fruit of the Spirit is self-control! The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. You can stop—you must stop—and let someone else speak.” As someone has said, there are always two kinds of speakers - those who have something to say, and then there are those who have to say something. God puts limits on the latter.

Another reason nobody is take over the worship meeting is in verse 33: For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. Our worship of God should reflect the character and nature of God. He is the God of peace and harmony, not of strife and confusion.

Paul has been clear that “agape” love of chapter 13 should be the motivator and regulator of the practice of spiritual gifts in the church.

God cannot be honored and the church body will not be edified when there is disharmony and confusion, competition, self-serving and the seeking of self-glory. Chaos and discord in a church meeting is certain proof that the Spirit of God is not in control. Where God’s Spirit rules there is always peace.

But the Corinthians had mistaken freedom for faithfulness. They thought spirituality meant speaking whenever they felt led. But Paul reminds them that true spirituality submits to God’s order. The goal is edification, not entertainment. Instruction, not interruption.

Brothers and sisters, the purpose of our worship service is not to impress one another but to build up one another.

When I flew in the Navy hunting Russian submarines, we would occasionally spot a so-called “fishing boat” sitting right in the middle of our operating area—sometimes a thousand miles from the nearest coastline. But this “fishing boat” didn’t look quite right. Instead of nets and gear, it had antennas sprouting from every corner. It wasn’t there to catch fish. It was there to spy—listening to our transmissions, watching our patterns, and even trying to scoop up the sonobuoys we dropped into the water.

On one mission, we actually heard the “fishermen” speaking Russian as they hauled one of our sonobuoys onto their boat.

How did we know that boat wasn’t what it claimed to be? Because it was out of place. And because we knew what a real fishing boat looked like. The genuine article makes the counterfeit obvious.

In the same way, the more familiar we are with God’s Word—the more deeply we know the real truth—the easier it becomes to recognize when something false, fleshly, or merely emotional tries to pass itself off as spiritual.

The Corinthians needed to evaluate everything by the truth of Scripture. So do we.

And we remember that our worship is not about how expressive we can be but how clearly we can exalt Jesus Christ.

God is a God of peace, not confusion. And that peace should mark everything we do in worship.

Now, Paul turns to way to honor God and edify the church.

II. Orderly Submission Reflects Reverence

Read verses 33b-35...

Bible scholars think that think the NASB translation should have put a period after the word “peace” in verse 33 to begin a new sentence with "As in all the churches of the saints," and to place a comma instead of a period after “saints.”

Notice the command for the women to keep silent in the church in verse 34 is based on “just as the Law also says” This alludes to the scriptural foundation of this ruling about women. “Law” in verse 34 points to the first five Old Testament books instead of the whole Old Testament.

The apparent reference of Paul's statement is to Genesis 2:20-22 which tells us, “The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.”

The creation of male and female as the image of God indicates the equal value of women with men as being fully human, with equal dignity, worth, and importance. Yet, God gave different roles for men and women in marriage and in the church.

We saw in 1 Corinthians 11:3 says, “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.”

Ephesians 5:22-23, “Wives, be subject to our own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”

In marriage: The husband has primary responsibility to lovingly lead, provide, and protect, while the wife supports and respects his leadership. Headship is not about value — Christ submits to the Father, yet Jesus is fully God. It’s about role and order in God’s design.

In His redemptive ministry, the Son was subject to the Father even though He is equal to the Father (John 10:30; 14:28). Jesus has never been—before, during, or after His incarnation—in any way inferior in essence to the Father. But in His incarnation Jesus willingly subordinated Himself to the Father in His role as Savior and Redeemer.

As Christ is submissive to the Father and church is to be submissive to Christ, in the home and in the church, women are to be submissive to men. You cannot reject one part without rejecting the others.

You cannot, for example, reject the principle of woman’s submission to man without also rejecting Christ’s submission to the Father and believers’ submission to Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul is not forbidding women from all speaking in church. So, what does he mean here in verse 34?

The context suggests that during the evaluation of prophetic messages, some women were speaking out—perhaps asking questions or even generating arguments during the process of the evaluation of the prophecy. The result was further disorder and confusion in the church service.

Paul reminded the married women to be submitted to their husbands and to get their questions answered at home. (We assume that the unmarried women could counsel with the elders or with other men in their own families.)

This is not about silencing women; it is about submitting to God’s design for order in worship. God has established the proper order and relationship of male-female roles in the church.

Look with me at 1 Timothy 2:11-13. We read, “A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.

14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.”

Paul’s argument was not based on cultural standards but on two historic and foundational facts: (1) “Adam ... was first created, and then Eve” and (2) “it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman” (vv. 13–14). Men are to lead in love; women are to submit in love. That is God’s design.

There are times in Community Groups and Bible studies where it is entirely proper for men and women to share equally in exchanging questions and insights. But when the church comes together as a body to worship God, the standards are clear: the role of leadership is reserved for men.

So, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:35, “If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.”

Paul’s instruction assumes that:

- the husband is spiritually engaged,

- he listens attentively to the teaching of Scripture,
- he is growing in understanding,
- he wants to lovingly help his wife learn, discuss, and apply the truth.

This does not mean a husband must be a Bible scholar. But it does mean the Christian husband cannot be spiritually passive. When your wife asks you a spiritual question, don't just ignore her or shrug your shoulders. If you don't know the answer, tell her you will do your best find out the answer.

Think of a father trying to help his child with math homework—not because he remembers everything from algebra class, but because he cares enough to learn it again.

Love compels learning. Leadership learns for the sake of others.

So, speaking to all husbands including myself:

- commit yourself to a regular time in Scripture
- take notes during church
- ask your pastors and your church elders questions
- pray daily with your wife
- pursue growth that enables you to lead your marriage and your family.

Men, your family doesn't need you to know everything. They simply need you to care enough to grow spiritually.

For the Corinthian church, there was a proper time and place for discussion—but in the worship gathering, order must prevail.

Imagine an airport without air traffic control. If every pilot decided to land or take off whenever he wanted, no one would get anywhere safely. The air traffic controller isn't there to limit freedom but to ensure safety and order.

In the same way, God's design for order in the church isn't oppressive—it's protective. It ensures that everyone can grow, learn, and worship in peace.

Reverence in worship begins with humility before God. We don't come to church to assert ourselves but to submit ourselves—to God's Word, to His authority, and to His structure.

In verse 36 Paul gives this rebuke, "Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?"

In other words, "Who made you the standard?" The Corinthians needed to remember that worship is about God's glory, not personal preference. So, Orderly Evaluation Promotes Edification and Orderly Submission Reflects Reverence. And third:

III. Orderly Obedience Honors God (vv. 37–40)

Paul closes this section by reaffirming his apostolic authority.

Verse 37 says...

Paul is uncompromisingly dogmatic in declaring that it was the Lord who originated the commandments he had written, not himself. As a divine appointee to the apostolic office, he was absolutely certain that he wrote the words as the mouthpiece of Christ Himself.

As Matt read earlier from 2 Peter 1:20-21, “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

Paul had personal limitations and blind spots, which he freely recognized. But when He spoke for God, his views were not tainted by cultural or personal bias.

The true test of spirituality is not how gifted someone is, but how obedient they are to God’s Word.

Verse 38 is a warning: “But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”

No matter what their position, training, experience, expertise, or talents, Christians who reject Paul’s teaching reject God’s teaching, and are themselves to be rejected as teachers or leaders in His church. Finally, Paul summarizes the entire discussion in verses 39–40...

That’s the heart of the matter: decently and in order.

The church should be marked by both zeal and discipline, freedom and structure, truth and love.

When Paula and I were visiting Victoria, British Columbia we went to a place called Butchart Gardens. Butchart Gardens originated from a limestone quarry used for Robert Butchart's cement business in the early 1900s. His wife Jennie began transforming the exhausted, use quarry into a garden in 1904, and it officially opened to the public in 1921. The gardens have grown to become a National Historic Site of Canada, celebrated for Jennie's vision of beautifying the industrial site and for their various distinct garden areas, including the Sunken Garden, the Japanese Garden, and the Italian Garden.

And if you have ever been to Butchart Gardens immediately you notice the order, symmetry, and care of this huge garden—it is overwhelmingly beautiful.

That’s what Paul wants for the church: a spiritual garden that reflects the beauty and peace of its Gardener—God Himself.

In our text this morning we have seen three ways that order in the church honors God and edifies the church body.

Orderly Evaluation Promotes Edification (vv. 29–33a)

Orderly Submission Reflects Reverence (vv. 33b–36)

Orderly Obedience Honors God (vv. 37–40)

When we follow God’s design, our worship becomes a living testimony to His character. The world is full of noise and confusion—but when they see a church gathered in joyful harmony, humble submission, a love for God’s truth, and love for one another, they see something different. They see the God of peace.

The Corinthians had zeal—but it was unrestrained. They wanted spiritual power, but they lacked spiritual discipline.

Paul reminds them—and us—that worship is not about self-expression, but God-exaltation. When our gatherings reflect His peace, His order, and His holiness, we make Him known to the world.

So let all things be done decently and in order—not to stifle the Spirit, but to show the true Spirit of God, who brings peace out of chaos and harmony out of confusion.

May God make our worship just like that: clear, ordered, reverent, and full of peace—so that when the world sees us, they see the God of order, the God of peace, and the God of grace and truth.

Let's pray...