

Series: **“Being the Church in a World Gone Wild”**

CDOBC – beginning on 1/28/18

Today’s Title: **“Order in the Church”** *Conversation sermon w/Libby Willett*

October 28, 2018 - 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Objective: To help people realize our public worship should be an orderly and organized gathering to avoid confusion and nonsensical things.

Cheesecake Factory.

I enjoy going out to eat at the Cheesecake Factory.

Why? Cheesecake!

Also...the scatter-brained mix of different interior design palates - and the huge portions.

But what I don’t like: The novel-like menus!

I get confused every time I’m ordering...because there are so many choices! It’s hard to choose from 20 pages of entrees!

On the other extreme - there is In-N-Out. Is there a simpler menu in the Restaurant world?

For some people, going to church can be like ordering from the Cheesecake Factory menu...it’s confusing and it doesn’t make sense to them - they’re not sure what to do - how to react (*or if they should react*) - stand or sit? - raise their hands - sing or not sing - what about the offering - the time of greeting can be stressful for introverts - the songs are new.

Turn / tap in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 14:26

Opening Prayer

If you’re new to CDOBC, this year we’ve been walking through Paul’s first letter to the church in Corinth - and today

we'll finish **chapter 14**. As we've seen over the past several weeks, the Corinthian church was in disarray - there was confusion and conflicts in the church - among other problems. In **chapters 12-14**, the Apostle is addressing their confusion and disarray in regard to their public worship services - specifically how they were allowing certain spiritual gifts to be elevated above others. They were elevating the gift of *speaking in tongues* above all the other gifts - and throughout this chapter, Paul has corrected this problem - and has told them all the gifts are important and crucial (**chapter 12**), but instead of tongues, prophecy (speaking the truth of God) was preferred because it edified / helped everybody compared to the limited scope which tongues could help (**focus of chapter 14**).

In our passage today (**vs. 26-40**), we will see 1 primary principle which we can apply in our church today:

Public worship should be organized, not chaotic. vs. 26-40

In this section of verses, we will also deal with one of the most difficult and challenging passages in the N.T. - **vs. 34-35** - and for that discussion I will invite Libby Willet to help us work through some of the related issues.

With that intro / summary, ***let's read*** - starting at **vs. 26**.
(***Read 26-40***)

In Corinth, if you wanted to speak in a tongue - but nobody was there to interpret what you would say - then you needed to “keep silent” to avoid the confusion speaking in tongues without interpretation would cause. Paul is limiting their freedom - their use of their gift.

Why would he do that? Isn't that unfair?

No... because the priority is the building up of the church - not the individual's exercise of their gift.

- Ego has no place in ministry.
- Just because you have something to say / do - doesn't mean you always have the green light to say / do it.

You may need to limit your gift for the benefit of the gathered church.

Your spiritual gift - is not for your own enjoyment or satisfaction - it's for building up / strengthening the Body of Christ - the Church!

Vs. 29-32 is a bit confusing to understand exactly what was happening - but it seems that someone in the church would have shared a prophecy (a statement of God's truth), and others - presumably with the gift of prophecy (**vs. 31**) would comment / clarify / modify / correct / add to - what was said. In the specific situation in Corinth, there seems to have been a fluid and spontaneous interaction and discussion centered around the truth of God. In our modern-day setting, we don't do this in our public

worship, but it's often done in our small groups. Someone shares a thought / observation about God's truth - and then there's a discussion which involves those who believe they have something to contribute - something to help clarify / correct / modify - or add to what was first said.

vs. 32 - “the spirits of the prophets are subject to prophets.”

In this verse the Apostle Paul is clearly stating that the exercise of a spiritual gift is always under the control of the person with the gift. Self-control and discernment are necessary aspects of your spiritual gift - especially in the context of a public worship service when the entire church is gathered together.

Everything we do - is done for the benefit of all.

We try to “build up” - to “edify” the entire church - not just part of the church body.

We apply this in our current setting by planning out the worship service.

We don't just decide to meet here on Sunday - do a sound check to make sure the mics are working - and then see how the Holy Spirit leads!

Some think that's a more spiritual position / practice - which is not unlike the attitude in 1st century Corinth.

- *Why do some believe the Holy Spirit works best in the moment?*

- *Why do some believe the Holy Spirit can't work ahead of time - can't / doesn't plan?*
- *Why do some believe the Spirit can't inspire and lead on Wednesday or Thursday - or 3 weeks ahead of a service?*
- I plan about 6 months ahead for the sermons (*Planned through March 31, 2019*).
- Joseph works months ahead to prepare for the Christmas and Easter choir programs.
- Joseph plans the music and order of service about 2-3 weeks ahead
- Joseph and I meet every Tuesday to de-brief the past Sunday, and to discuss the upcoming Sunday.
- Joseph plans a schedule for the band, singers and tech team months ahead.
- Who is doing the offertory prayers - who is serving communion - mission moments - are planned weeks / sometimes months ahead.

The point is this:

Public worship should be organized, not chaotic.

(It is true...there is a danger that when we have a plan - and the Holy Spirit does lead "*in the moment*" - we might be so wedded to our plan that we ignore the Spirit's prompting.)

Now we arrive at **vs. 34-35** - which are some of the most difficult verses in the N.T. to interpret and apply.

Read vs. 34-35

I'm going to invite Libby Willet to come up here and help talk through these 2 verses.

Libby and her husband, Tom, have been members here at CDOBC for 36 years, and they have served with Wycliffe Bible Translators as Bible translators and translation coaches for the past 45 years. They have worked with the Tepehuan people in Durango, Mexico - a people group who had no written language - and of course, no Bible.

They not only created a written language and lexicon for the Tepehuan's, but they have translated the Bible into their language, and they now coach and lead other translation teams in their translation work.

Libby has a master's degree in Linguistics and a PhD in the History and Religion of Ancient Israel, with a focus on women in the Bible.

Regarding **vs. 34-35**, I'm not sure how to handle these verses because there is debate in academic / theological circles as to whether these verses are original with Paul - or if they were a later scribal addition - which if true, would not make them part of the inspired canon of Scripture.

One well-respected commentator said this:

"...from a purely text-critical point of view, the evidence that these verses are original, and in their original

location is substantial.” (Showing the Spirit, A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14, by D.A. Carson, p. 124).

Another well-respected commentator said:

“...the two text-critical criteria of transcriptional and intrinsic probability combine to cast considerable doubt on their authenticity.” - he then goes on for the next 7 pages to give the reasons why he believes this to be the case. (The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, by Gordon D. Fee, p. 699-705)

From Libby’s research on these verses:

“None of the following church fathers: Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr (and others) quoted or mentioned these verses, but their writings encouraged women to teach and prophesy in the church assemblies. Not until Tertullian, writing about 200 AD is there a citation of these verses.” (Notes on 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, by Libby Willet)

Aside from the textual problem, these verses seem to contradict what Paul said earlier in **chapter 11** where he gave instruction for the women in Corinth to cover their heads when they were prophesying or praying in the church (11:1-16). It doesn’t make sense that he would give guidelines for women speaking in the church in **chapter 11**, and then a few chapters later say it’s “shameful for a woman to speak in church.”

But there are many well-respected scholars and theologians who take a different view and they believe Paul is giving

instructions which we should be following today - and there are a number of ways this is interpreted and applied.

Here's the challenge...I'm not nearly as qualified or smart as any of the men and women I just referred to.

So, if they can't find agreement, how am I - how are we to find an answer in which we can have confidence?

Due to the difficulties I just described, I can't take a strong or dogmatic position based on these verses.

Libby - in the Tepehuan translation of the Bible, how did you and Tom handle / translate 1 Cor. 14:34-35?

I believe many churches have made a mistake by lumping together the office of pastor/elder with the spiritual gifts of leadership, teaching, knowledge or wisdom.

Libby - what is your spiritual gift(s)?

Libby - please share about the leadership you and Tom have in the churches in Mexico where you have been serving for so many years - how God has used you specifically throughout the years in those churches.

One of the problems I've observed in churches like ours who hold to male elders / pastors, is they allow their interpretation / understanding of church leadership to influence their view of spiritual gifts. Meaning, they fail to recognize the distribution of spiritual gifts are not gender specific / gender

limited. Some women have the spiritual gift of teaching / leadership / wisdom / knowledge.

However, many churches don't make a distinction between the office of elder / pastor - and women who have the gift of leadership.

The result is they fail to include women in leading ministry.

One of the small, but important changes we recently made was including women in the serving of communion.

Traditionally, men have done this - but there is no biblical reason why this was the case - just tradition.

- So, we made the change to include women.
- We also include women in the offertory prayers.
- We have deaconess here at the church, and we are working to give them leadership roles over various ministries which match up with their gifting, interest and abilities.
- We've had Cathy Wilson, one of our missionaries, visit and take the Sunday morning sermon time.

We hold to male elders/pastors, but we recognize the gifting of women and their capability to serve the church in significant ways under the authority of the elders.

Apply it...

- Use your gift to serve the entire church.

Use your gift to help others, not to satisfy your own desires.

- Both men and women have spiritual gifts - be eager to use them to build up the church.
- Our worship gatherings must be done “decently and in order” (vs. 40).

I didn't have time to get to vs. 36-40, but Paul makes some strong statements there about the authority of his teaching / writing - and he closes this section with a command (present imperative) for each local church. Let us recognize the inspired teaching we have in Scripture - and make sure our services are vibrant - alive - where everything is done properly and in an orderly fashion.

Close in prayer