

“Order in the Church”

(I Corinthians 14:26-40)

Introduction

- As we have seen throughout our study of 1 Corinthians (in many ways, the Corinthian Christians serving as an example of what not to do), Christians are to loving, humble, and unified together in Christ. In other words, Christians are not to be hateful, prideful, or divisive. Christians are to be committed to a local church not primarily to be edified but to edify others – not to be served but to serve. To be sure, every Christian has a right to expect that going to church will be encouraging, enriching, and even convicting. But Christians are not to be selfish, self-centered, or self-serving. Rather, in the humility of Christ, they are to care for and serve one another. The church ought to be a place of unity and harmony, not discord and division.
- ✓ Illust: A surgeon, an engineer, and a politician were debating which of their professions was the best and the discussion turned to which was the oldest. The surgeon said, “Eve was made from Adam’s rib, and that, of course, was a surgical procedure. Obviously, surgery is the oldest profession.” The engineer countered with, “Yes, but before that, order was created out of chaos, and that most certainly was an engineering job.” The politician smiled and said triumphantly, “Aha! And just who do you think created all the chaos?”
- That’s a good question: Where does all the chaos come from? While some may say “politics”, the more general and biblical answer is sin. The point is, the church is not to be a place of chaos – where a bunch of individual Christians come together to express their individuality by doing whatever they want and whatever seems right to them. We are not to come to church to be served by others, but to serve others. We are not to make the church conform to our wishes and preferences, being discordant and divisive, but to selflessly defer for the unity and testimony of the church.

The church is no place for those hyper-individualistic, self-centered, or self-serving. For those are not virtues of Christianity (quite the opposite).

- The Corinthian church was plagued by selfishness and arrogance. It is not surprising, therefore, to hear that the church was also riddled with disorder and discord. After his instruction on Christian unity (ch.12), and Christian love (ch.13), and spiritual gifts (ch.14; specifically, the gift of speaking in tongues), the apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians to conduct their church gatherings in an orderly fashion and for the purpose of edification.

1 Cor 14:26-40 ~ “What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁷If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, ³²and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. ³³For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? ³⁷If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. ³⁸If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰But all things should be done decently and in order.”

- From these verses, we can identify four aspects of orderly worship.

I. The PURPOSE of Orderly Worship (vs.26)

- We see a display of hyper-individualism in the Corinthian church – people doing whatever they want, whenever they want, and wherever they want. Such people are selfish and arrogant. They have little or no regard for church unity or harmony, and no willingness to submit or defer. What they prize most is not the glory of Christ, but their individual wants and their (self-affirming) “right” to express their wants however they want.
- Rebuking this self-serving behavior, the apostle wrote: *“What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation”* (vs.26). It seems just about everyone wanted to participate in the worship service – to have their time in the spotlight – at the same time. While probably not an exhaustive list, Paul identified many of the various expressions that were occurring in the church (*“When you come together”*).
- ♦ *“a hymn”* ~ The word translated *“hymn”* is the Greek word *psalmos*. It can refer to either a Psalm (out of the book of Psalms), a prayer, or a sacred song. Literally, the word means “a song sung to the accompaniment of an instrument.” Therefore, it seems likely that multiple people were singing a solo at the same time. It was like a massive choir singing for special music – only every member in the choir was singing a different song – perhaps not so “special” after all.
 - ♦ *“a lesson”* ~ This *“lesson”* refers to a “word of instruction” (*didachē*; from which our English word didactic is derived). It means instruction, doctrine, or a teaching. This church had a lot of people claiming to have the gift of teaching and they all taught something different at the same time. It’s quite possible that many wanted to be teachers, but few wanted to be learners.
 - ♦ *“a revelation”* ~ A *“revelation”* (*apokalypsis*) simply refers to something that is revealed (uncovered, disclosed). Specifically, this refers to something God has revealed. Apparently, some in the Corinthian church believed they had a revelation from God (“a word from God”) and when that revelation supposedly came to them, they spontaneously announced it out loud to the whole church. To make matters worse, it seems that many of them were announcing different revelations at the same time.
 - ♦ *“a tongue”* ~ Added to the confusion were those who spoke in a (foreign) *“tongue”* (*glōssa*), and apparently there were others who were there to give an interpretation. In the mix with all the songs, teachings, and revelations there were some who were speaking in language that was not their own – most likely claiming to have the gift of tongues.
 - ♦ *“an interpretation”* ~ This is hard for me to imagine. With all the chaos going on in the church there were some there trying to give an *“interpretation”* (*diermēneuō*; to explain or translate) of what they heard (God bless them!). So, not only were they singing, teaching, revelations, and speaking in tongues there were also people speaking an interpretation.
- You can picture the chaotic scene. When someone wanted to sing, they just broke out in song. When someone wanted to teach, they just started teaching. When someone felt that they had a revelation from God, they proclaimed it. When someone wanted to speak in tongues they did so, and other provided the interpretation. This was all going on simultaneously!

It is important to note that none of these expressions are inherently bad, but together – without unity or order – they resulted in chaos and were therefore ineffective and ultimately damaging to the fellowship and testimony of the church.

- This is a main purpose of the church, a command repeated by the apostle multiple times: *“Let all things be done for building up”* (vs.26). Christians are to be *“building up”* (vs.26; *oikodomē*) one another as the church, and specifically when they gather as the church.

1 Cor 3:9 ~ “For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building [*oikodomē*].”

1 Cor 12:7 ~ “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

1 Cor 14:12 ~ “So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up [*oikodomē*] the church.” (see 1Cor.14:3-5)

Rom 14:19 ~ “So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding [*oikodomē*].” (Rom.15:2)

Eph 4:11-12 ~ “And [God] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip [*katartismos*] the saints for the work of ministry, for building up [*oikodomē*] the body of Christ” (Eph.4:16, 29)

1 Thess 5:11 ~ “Therefore encourage [*parakaleō*] one another and build one another up [*oikodomeō*], just as you are doing.”

1 Peter 4:10-11 ~ “As each has received a gift, use it to serve [*diakoneō*] one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

➤ We must note that this is not a suggestion from the apostle Paul, but a command (“*be done*” is an imperative verb).

2. The PRACTICE of Orderly Worship (vs.27-35)

➤ Paul now turns to bring specific order to the church. A true and edifying church worship service is not a mixture of selfish desires or individual spiritual expressions. It is organized in such a way as to reflect the character and nature of God.

1 Cor 14:27-35 ~ “If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, ³²and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. ³³For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

➤ In these verses, we find three specific (but not exclusive) areas in which the church needs to practice orderly worship.

A. Ordering the gift of tongues (vs.27-28)

➤ First, Paul describes how to order the gift of tongues in a way that is pleasing to God and edifying to the church. In verses 27-28, Paul gives four guidelines for ordering the gift of tongues.

1. “*If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three*” (vs.27) ~ The gift of tongues was reserved for a time when God would speak through a believer in a language not naturally known to them to someone who could not understand them in their native tongue. Paul states that when this happens it should only occur to two or three believers at the most in one service.
2. “*and each in turn*” (vs.27) ~ When this does happen, only one of the two or three believers should speak in a tongue at a time. The phrase “*each in turn*” refers to the order or sequence of those speaking in a tongue. In other words, there should never be two people (or more) speaking in a (foreign) tongue at the same time. That only leads to confusion and not edification.
3. “*and let someone interpret*” (vs.27) ~ Also, when anyone speaks in a tongue there must be someone there to interpret. Again, just as one person (at a time) is supposed to speak in a tongue, so only one is supposed to interpret. There are not several interpretation for every spoken tongue. That would only bring confusion and chaos, and the church would be divided rather than unified.

4. *“But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God”* (vs.28) ~ If, however, the one speaking in a tongue found that no one was able to interpret he should stop speaking in a tongue and be quiet in the church. In context, it is quite clear that Paul is not telling the Corinthians to go have an audible “prayer language” in church – that would be contrary to what he had just said. The one who speaks in a tongue and finds that there is no interpreter should *“keep silent in the church”* and sit there meditatively talking to God in silent prayer.

➤The interesting thing is that much of what goes on in churches today – under the title of “speaking in tongues” – does not follow any of these guidelines. Instead, many churches and movements who embrace claim the gift of tongues as a normal part of their worship services are the epitome of an out-of-control, chaotic, and confusing display of unordered worship – e.g., being “slain in the Spirit,” rolling on the ground, laughing hysterically, ecstatic utterances, “spiritual” babbling, and even “holy vomiting.” Clearly, Paul would never endorse such a disorderly expression of the Spirit’s power, and an unedifying use of spiritual gifts.

B. Ordering the gift of prophecy (vs.29-33a)

➤Secondly, Paul turns his attention to ordering the gift of prophecy. One might think that with Paul’s reference for prophecy over the gift of tongues he would not want to regulate its use. However, as we will see, even the gift of prophecy can be misused and abused.

1 Cor 14:29-33 ~ “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, ³²and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. ³³For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. ...”

➤Again, Paul gives us five guidelines concerning using the gift of prophecy in a way that is glorifying to God and edifying to the church.

1. *“Let two or three prophets speak”* (vs.29) ~ Since the revealed Word of God is complete (Jd.3) and there is no further revelation from God (2Tim.3:16-17; 2Pet.1:19-21; Rev.22:18), “prophecy” must be understood as a gift and not an office. The word “prophesy” means to “speak forth or to proclaim.” The word is often used in association with a divinely inspired message. Someone, therefore, with the gift of prophecy is one who speaks the words of God. The gift of prophecy is the Spirit-given ability to proclaim the Word of God correctly and effectively. Even with this gift, however, there should only be two or three prophets speaking in the church and like with the gift of tongues it is clear that they should speak one at a time (see vs.31).
2. *“and let the others weigh what is said”* (vs.29) ~ While one prophet is speaking the other prophets should be listening carefully in order to judge if what was being said is true. In other words, they should be attentively listening in order to accurately discern if the speaker (prophet) is speaking the true words of God. They were to evaluate and judge what was being said. This is what happens every Sunday in this church. The pastors and elders, and church members, are listening to the sermon with biblical discernment – like the Bereans (Acts 17:11) – to ensure that truth is being proclaimed. No one ever has the right to speak or preach their opinions over the truths of God.
3. *“If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent”* (vs.30) ~ If, however, one of the other prophets receive a revelation from God they should step up to speak while the first speaker should stop. A new revelation took precedence over something that has already been taught. This is not as much of an issue for the church today since all prophecy comes through the revealed Word of God – the Bible. Paul’s main point, however, is that no two prophets should be speaking at the same time (and certainly no two prophets should be giving conflicting revelations/prophesies).

4. *“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged”* (vs.31) ~ Each prophet prophesies *“one by one”* so that everybody will receive clear instruction (*“all my learn”*; *manthano*; from *mathetes* “a disciple”) and be *“encouraged”* (*parakaleo*; to call near, be comforted). When more than one prophet is speaking at a time the result is disorderly chaos which prevents the church from being properly instructed or encouraged.
 5. *“and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets”* (vs.32) ~ Not only are the other prophets to sit in judgment concerning what is being proclaimed from God, but the prophet is to be in control of what he says. “With these words Paul lifts Christian ‘inspired speech’ out of the category of ‘ecstasy’ as such and offers it as a radically different thing from the mania of the pagan cults. There is no seizure here, no loss of control; the speaker is neither frenzied nor a babbler” (Gordon Fee; *The First Epistle to the Corinthians [NICNT]14:32*). The prophet is in control of his spirit at all times. There is no revelation given apart from the mind or spirit. Every prophet is fully aware of the message that is coming from his mouth.
- Paul concludes with simple, yet profound statement: *“For God is not a God of confusion but of peace”* (vs.33). This gives tremendous theological justification for ordering the church. The church is not to be ordered simply because it is less chaotic, or potentially divisive. No, the church of God is to be ordered by the people of God because it reveals the character and nature of God! He is not a God of disorder, and therefore His church should not be disorderly. The word *“confusion”* (*akatastasia*) refers to something that is instable, tumultuous, confusing, or disturbing. Since God is none of these things, His church should not participate in such activities.
- Conversely, God is a God of *“peace”* (*eirēnē*) and therefore the His church should reflect that peace. Notice how the opposite of disorder is not order, quietness, or politeness. The peace of God is reflected in His calm assurance, His eternal well-being. When the church reflects the peace of God, they worship in a harmonious union that comes from being under the eternal favor of God.

C. Ordering the roles of men and women (vs.33b-35)

- The third area where Paul instructs the church to have order is in ordering of the roles of men and women. Admittedly, this is a surprising addition to a passage that is mainly concerned with spiritual gifts. However, one does not have to dig too long to find justification for Paul’s assertion of the role of women in the church. Like many churches today, the Corinthian church struggled to understand God’s order and design for men and women.
- The Corinthian church worship service was ineffective and even detrimental: *“when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse”* (11:17). The church was riddled with divisiveness, selfishness, and pride. Obviously, this had a profoundly negative impact on the church’s understanding of God, sin, salvation, worship, spiritual gifts, marriage, singleness, and even their understanding of the equality and responsibility of women in the church.
- As awkward as these verses are, they can be placed in the context of Paul’s teaching on orderly worship (words inspired by the Holy Spirit of God; 2 Tim.3:17-17; 2Pet.1:21). As we are all too aware today, and in America’s history, we have seen an enormous amount of abuse against women – sometimes at the teaching of the church! Therefore, let me be very clear about this: **God made men and women equal, but not the same!** God has created men and women to have equal opportunity to fulfill His plan and purpose, and equal opportunity to glorify His holy name! While God never discriminates, He does differentiate. Men and women are created equal, but different. Among the many differences we see between men and women, we are to understand that they have different God-given roles and responsibilities.
- Scripture reveals this as a universal practice: *“As in all the churches of the saints”* (vs.33), *“in the churches”* (vs.34), and *“as the Law also says”* (vs.34). This is similar to the language he used in 11:16 (cf. 4:17; 7:17) when he discussed the role and responsibility of women in the church (11:3-16).

1 Cor 11:2-3 ~ “Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. ³But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” (see Eph.5:21-27)

➤The divine principle in 1 Corinthians 11:3 is that God has charged husbands to be the spiritual leaders in the home, and men to be the spiritual leaders in the church. They are to obey and represent Christ in their homes and in the church. This “headship” is one of gracious, selfless, and loving spiritual-leadership – doing all things out of love for and reverence to Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, too much attention for this gets placed on women (who serve in leadership positions) and not enough attention goes to the men who are failing to be spiritual leaders (in the home and in the church). Far too many Christian men are more the willing to abdicate their responsibilities before God, to the spiritual leader (while, at the same time, reprimand women for leading in the church). This passage is as much to men as it is to women (maybe even more so). It serves as an exhortation (perhaps even a rebuke) to men to step-up and “be Christ” in their homes and in the church – for God will hold them accountable to their authority and calling.

➤In 1Cor.14:33, Paul is underscoring the universal practice of women being submissive in the church. How are women to be submissive? What does Paul mean when he says, *“the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says”* (vs.34)? Let me first say what it does not mean. It does not mean that women are not allowed to say anything in church (e.g., pray, prophesy, sing, etc.). How do we know this? The Greek word for *“silent”* (*sigāō*) is used three times in this passage (vs.28, 30, 34) – one for each example he gives.

1 Cor 14:28 ~ “But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.”

1 Cor 14:30 ~ “If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent.”

1 Cor 14:34 ~ “the women should keep silent in the churches ...”

➤Obviously, Paul is not saying that the one speaking in a tongue should never talk in church again. Or, that the one who began to prophesy should refrain from speaking in the church anymore. No, the clear point is that they should not be speaking in a disruptive or divisive way. That is to say, Paul’s concern is not with woman talking in church, but being disruptive in church. The Bible records many faithful women who were used as prophetesses and spokeswomen for God. Also, Paul has already addressed the fact that woman can pray and prophesy in the church (11:5). Apparently, however, in Corinth women were adding to the chaos that was already taking place. They were not acting in a submissive nature as God has commanded them to.

➤With that said, we understand that men and women have unique roles and responsibilities before God. In the church, God has called men to be the preachers, teachers, and elders. In other words, men are primarily responsible for the preaching, teaching, and shepherding of the church. Since the institution of the New Testament church and the completion of the Holy Scriptures, **the gift of prophecy was to be primarily exercised by men in the church**. Again, God calling men to be the spiritual leaders in the church (authority and accountability). Conversely, women *“should be in submission”* (vs.34)?

The word *“submission”* needs to be defined – both for what it means and what it does not mean. First, to submit is not to be enslaved or oppressed by someone’s dictatorial or absolute authority. Tragically, this word has been used to (wrongly) support chauvinistic/sexist ideologies which are absolutely unbiblical.

The Greek word translated *“submission”* (*hypotassō*) generally means “a willful surrender of one’s rights.” Christians are called to be submissive to one another (Eph.5:21), to be submissive to church leadership (Heb.13:17), to be submissive to governmental authorities (Rom.13:1; 1Pet.2:13), and to be submissive to God (Jms.4:7) – as the Son of God is submissive to God the Father (1Cor.15:28). Biblically speaking, to be submissive is being willfully selfless and sacrificial, practicing deference.

Eph 5:21-23 ~ “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” [note: vs.22 could literally read, “Wives to your own husbands”]

Surprisingly, the Greek word translated “submit” is not found in verse twenty-two. It is borrowed from the previous verse: “*submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ*” (vs.21). Clearly, this word does not – indeed cannot – refer to an autocratic, authoritarian, or abusive leadership. How could we do that to one another (we couldn’t)? How would that be out of reverence for Christ (it wouldn’t)?

Eph 5:25 ~ “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”

➤ Men are to practice submission just as women are to practice love. It is quite possible that God gave these specific commands, to men and women, because these are the virtues that they most likely to neglect or disobey.

1 Tim 2:11-14 ~ “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”

➤ Look at the end of 1Cor.14:34 - “*as the Law also says*”. Although Paul doesn’t quote the Law he refers to the known principle of God’s law – namely his divine order. As a result of the Fall of mankind, women were to be in submission to their husbands (see Gen.3:16; 1Cor.11:3; Eph.5:22; Col.3:18; 1Pet.3:1-6; Tit.2:4-8). Apparently, this submission was to be reflected in the church (as detailed in ch.11). Although woman may be highly gifted teachers and preacher (prophetesses) they were not to exercise that gift over men in the church. Why? Paul says, “*For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church*” (vs.35; “*shameful*” [aischros] improper, indecent). This, it would seem, is outside of God’s divine order.

➤ Therefore, rather than be disruptive Paul gives them example of how women should seek answers to their questions. The burden of verse 35 is really on the men! “*If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home*” (vs.35). If women are to ask their husbands the questions they have, from the teaching of God’s Word, that explicitly implies that the men of the church must be well educated in the Word of God. The reason why this seems so difficult today is because too many men have no clue what the Bible means by what it says. Too many men are sinfully content to have their wives be the spiritual leader of the home. God has set His pattern for the church, and we should worship Him according to the guidelines He has established.

3. The PRIORITY of Orderly Worship (vs.36-38)

➤ Perhaps, anticipating a Corinthian objection to all this order, Paul challenges them with biting sarcasm. He rhetorically asks, in verse. 36, “*Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?*” The obvious answer is “no.” Paul is effect saying, since God’s Word did not originate with you (nor is it subject to you), you better obey it. The truly spiritual person does not act contrary to God’s will or His Word. True spirituality is not selfishly doing your own thing – no matter how spiritual you may sound or think you are.

➤ Paul soberly warns them against any self-styled worship. “*If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord*” (vs.37). Since they are not the first or only Christians they need to conform to “*all the churches of the saints*” (vs.33). The truly spiritual, or spiritually gifted, person is not divisive in the church or disobedience to the Word of God.

✓ Illust: “If a person claims to be a prophet or to have the gift of tongues or any other spiritual gift, the mark of his true calling and faithful ministry will be his acknowledging that what I teach as an apostle are the truths of God. If a person is truly called or gifted of God and is sincerely trying to follow God, he will submit the exercise of his calling and gift to the principles God has revealed to me as His commandments” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*; 14:33b-38).

➤ Conversely, *“If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized”* (vs.38). His point is clear, anyone who is truly spiritual will obey, and not ignore the commands of God. If a “prophet” or “spiritually” gifted person does not follow the truth of God’s Word, he/she should not be accepted or affirmed in the church as a spiritual authority, leader or teacher.

4. The PRECEPT of Orderly Worship (vs.39-40)

➤ Paul’s concluding remarks are a summary of his teaching on the subject of orderly worship: *“So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues”* (vs.39). As for prophecy, “be eager to prophesy.” As for speaking in tongues, “do not forbid” it.

✓ Illust: “Right revelation should be obeyed in the right way, and right gifts should be exercised in the right way” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*; 14:39-40).

➤ Paul commands, *“But all things should be done decently and in order”* (vs.40). The word *“decently”* (*euschēmōnōs*) describes something that is graceful, becoming, harmonious, and beautiful. The church should reflect the God it worships. The phrase *“in order”* (*taxis*; arranged or rank) has the meaning of “in turn” or “one at a time.”

➤ The Corinthian’s false view of spirituality and spiritual gifts came from their false theology. They held to a very shallow and self-serving view of God. They did not live supremely for the glory and honor of God in their lives. They did not strive to love God with everything they had and everything they were. They did not pursue love above all things. And they failed to edify the church through their spiritual gifts and responsibilities.

Conclusion

➤ This passage serves as instruction and as an admonition – that we do not make the same mistakes the Corinthian church made – that we are not self-centered or self-serving; that we are not discordant or divisive; that we are not unloving or unchristian. For we are called to be the true church of Jesus Christ, representing Him and proclaiming Him in everything we say and do.

✓ Illust: “The sign that true worship is being achieved is a maturing congregation. Personal witness is widespread. Loving service to those who hurt should be increasing. Friction among members should be decreasing. Appreciation for benefits and public thanksgiving should be often manifest. Moral standards are held in high regard, but deviations are not coldly treated, and the steps of discipline given in Matthew 18 are lovingly followed. The exposition of the word of God lies at the heart of every ministry, and the exercise of spiritual gifts is continually encouraged. When these things are happening, a congregation has clearly become the household of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth, a people belonging to God. And remember that the Father is seeking such to worship him. In true worship, something happens to the worshipers. Minds are cleared, perceptions come into focus, spirits are renewed, truth breaks out in new clarity. That's what sends us out to tell the good news to those who long for hope or peace or freedom from guilt” (Ray Stedman, *True Worship*).