

ORDER IN THE MEETING OF THE CHURCH

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Key Truth:

Our church family is most effectively built up when we minister our grace-gifts in an orderly, peaceful manner.

A number of years back we were remodeling Room 2 for the Youth Ministry. Jimmy Higgins, our youth pastor at the time, and I were observing the progress and talking to the electrical contractor who was working. Come to find out, he often worked on houses built by Bob Bush. Of his own accord he shared that he really liked working for Bob for two reasons: Bob knows how to lay out the project so that the subs aren't working on top of each other, but can get in, do their job unimpeded and get out; and Bob pays.

Oikodomeo is a construction term used throughout 1 Corinthians 14. It means *to build*. As we've discovered, the purpose of grace-gifts is *to build up* the church. When grace-gifts are exercised in an orderly and peaceful manner in the meeting of the church, the church is effectively built up.

This is Paul's focus in his final instructions on grace-gifts in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40.

Verses 26-33a lay out practical instructions of how the "worship and teaching" time of the meeting is to flow following the supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34). Believers are to come to the meeting prepared to minister in an orderly manner.

COME PREPARED TO MINISTER IN AN ORDERLY MANNER (1 Corinthians 14:26-33a)

1 Corinthians 14:26-33 (ESV)

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰ If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, ³² and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. ³³ For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

The meetings of the early church were more participatory than ours. Believers were to come prepared. All could come ready to suggest a hymn.

Grace-gifted teachers were to come with a lesson prepared from the Old Testament or previous revelations given through the prophets.

Grace-gifted tongue speakers were to come prepared to share the message the Spirit was speaking through them in a foreign language. If a grace-gifted interpreter was present, up to three tongue speakers could address the church family. If no interpreter was present and they themselves were not enabled to interpret, then they were to be silent.

Grace-gifted prophets were to come prepared to share a revelation(s) that came to them during the week and, if empowered, any revelation given during the meeting. Up to three prophets, one at a time, could address the family and if a revelation came to one sitting down, the one speaking should yield the floor.

When a prophet is speaking, the other prophets are *to weigh* what is said. The term means to test or prove the nature of something. It may involve evaluating if the speaker is indeed a prophet. The *weighing* might also include correlating legitimate revelations with previous revelations and the teachings of the Old Testament. Verse 30 clarifies that at the heart of the grace-gift of prophecy is the receiving of divine revelation (truth never before made known). The phrase *to another* in Greek is *to another of the same kind*, that is, to another prophet. So verse 30 reveals that prophets receive divine revelation. Since

the closing of the New Testament canon, I am very skeptical that the grace-gift of prophecy continues to be given. I am not saying it is not given, but it would seem that the church's need for revelation has been met through the New Testament documents. Certainly, many, if not all, of those claiming to be prophets today do not have the grace-gift of prophecy and are not true prophets of God. Every person claiming the grace-gift of prophecy should be vetted by the tests given in Deuteronomy 13 & 18.

Paul envisions the prophets speaking one after another in an orderly fashion because they can exercise self-control. That's what he means when he says that *the spirit of prophets are subject to prophets*. In other words, even if they are receiving a revelation from the Spirit while another person is speaking, they don't have to blurt it out; they can wait until the one speaking finishes or yields the floor. This is in keeping with the fact that God is not a God of confusion, but peace.

In verses 26-33a Paul lays out an orderly and peaceful flow for the meeting of the church. He encourages them to come prepared to minister their grace-gifts in an orderly manner that will build up the church.

Finally, Paul instructs men and women to conduct themselves in the meeting of the church in a manner that maintains God's line of authority in the home.

MINISTER IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH GOD'S LINE OF AUTHORITY (1 Corinthians 14:33b-36)

¹ 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 (ESV)

³³ As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ If 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. ³⁶ Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?

The latter half of verse 33 belongs with verse 34. This instruction was not given to certain churches with unruly women; it is based on principle not circumstances. In all churches, women are to be silent during the meeting of the church.

Is this an absolute prohibition? Are women to be silent during the supper, singing, praying and teaching? The context indicates otherwise.

In context, Paul is focused on prophecy and tongues. Both grace-gifts involve declaring the Word of God. Even those gifted to prophesy and speak in tongues were to keep silent if certain circumstances prevailed such as the lack of an interpreter.

With regard to declaring the Word of God to the church family in the meeting of the church, women are to keep silent.

Why?

Please turn to 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

Paul teaches the same prohibition as in 1 Corinthians with a bit more explanation.

¹ 1 Timothy 2:8-15 (ESV)

⁸ I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

Paul roots his reason in the Creation of Adam and Eve and in the Fall. Therefore, the reason for this prohibition against women teaching in the meeting of the church is timeless and universal; it applies to all churches everywhere at every time, including today.

Adam was formed first indicating his authority over Eve. When Eve acted independently from Adam tragedy struck the entire human race. Both Adam and Eve failed to live out the roles God had given them. Nothing good comes when we fail to live out the roles God has given us as men and women, husbands and wives.

To teach the Word of God in the meeting of the church is to exercise spiritual authority. For a woman to teach in the meeting of the church and thus exercise authority over her husband violates God's line of authority. Life in the church family should reinforce life in the Christian home (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-25).

The meaning of verse 15 has been debated for centuries and I'm certainly not going to resolve that debate this morning. But I think Paul includes verse 15 to protect women from vilification and degradation. Though Eve's actions lead to the Fall, God promised that it would be through the seed of the woman that the serpent would be defeated and the effects of the Fall reversed (Genesis 3:15). Far from vilifying womankind, God graciously elevates her and uses her to accomplish His victory over His enemy.

The reason for the prohibition in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 is so that the line of authority God has established in the home is also practiced in the meeting of the church.

Let us be careful not to react and make this prohibition out to be more than it is. This prohibition does not deny that women were given the grace-gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9). Nor does this prohibition suggest women are not given the grace-gifts of teaching and of pastor-teacher. This prohibition does not restrict women from instructing men on an individual basis as took place in the case of Apollos who was instructed by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26). This prohibition has to do with the appropriate deployment of these grace-gifts by the women of the church family.

Nor does this restriction indicate that the Apostle Paul hated women. Read Romans 16:1-7 and see how many women Paul greets and commends in the closing of his letter to the church in Rome. In Philippians 4:2-3 he entreats Euodia and Syntyche to reconcile describing them as *...women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel....* In his final letter, written to Timothy, Paul expresses appreciation for the genuine Christian faith of Lois and Eunice, Timothy's grandmother and mother both of whom deeply influenced Timothy (1 Timothy 1:5). Indeed Paul is no hater of women.

In the end, this prohibition is not the Apostle Paul's opinion, but the command of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.

1 Corinthians 14:37-40 (ESV)

³⁷ 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. ³⁸ If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹ So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But all things should be done decently and in order.

As out of step as this puts us with our society and many of our churches, we believe these commands apply to us today here at Grace Community Church.

We believe God knows best.

We believe in God's line of authority in the home and in the church.

We believe the problem is not in God's Creation design, but in our sinful failure and rebellion. Men, are we loving our wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her? If we cherish and serve our wives it goes a long way to helping them submit to our leadership. Men, we are to be disciplined students of God's Word from whom our wives can learn at home (1 Cor. 14:35).

Ladies, God is calling you to trust Him through trusting and submitting to your husband. I know this is a huge challenge. Some of you have been terribly hurt by the men in your life. The best counsel I can give is to encourage you to spend time with some of the godly ladies in our church family who can help you in this area.

Our policy here at Grace is that in the meeting of the church, the formal time of teaching God's Word will be conducted by men. But if you've been with us for any length of time, you know that we welcome our sisters to speak to the church family in sharing ministry opportunities, testimonies and in Q&As.

My caution is that we neither reject this clear teaching of Jesus nor that we over apply it beyond its intended context.

Let us minister our grace-gifts in an orderly, peaceful manner that reinforces God's line of authority in the home and in the church.

This is what the Lord Jesus is calling us to do.