

# First Corinthians 14:26-39

## 14:26

1. hymn
2. word of instruction
3. a revelation
4. a tongue
5. interpretation

**“All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church”**

## 14:27-28

Guidelines for Tongues in a church service:

1. Two or three at the most should speak in a church service
2. One person speaks in tongues at a time
3. Some one must interpret
4. If there is no one to interpret “the speaker should. . .”:
  - a. Keep quiet in the church
  - b. Speak to himself and God

## 14:29-32

Guidelines for Prophets or the gift of prophecy:

1. Two or Three prophets should speak
2. The “others” (other prophets or other members of the congregation) should weight carefully what is said
3. If a revelation comes to another prophet while the first prophet is speaking, the first prophet should stop and let the other prophet speak
4. You can all prophecy
5. Prophecy in turn, do not talk while someone else is talking
6. Do this so everyone may be
  - a. instructed
  - b. encouraged
7. This can be controlled because “the spirit of the prophet is controlled by the prophet.”

## 14:33

In 1 Cor. 11:33 woman were being given instructions on proper prayer and prophecy in church.

1 Timothy 2:9-15

Some deal with these verses by saying they are additions to the text in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. This is not the case. The only proof is the difficulty of the verses.

This could refer to women not being allowed to interpret the prophecies, although they were allowed to prophecy.

This may refer to woman asking the prophets questions.

This may refer to disruptive behavior.

#### **14:34**

#### **“Women should remain silent in the churches”**

Two reasons are given:

1. They are **not allowed to speak**
2. They **must be in submission**
  - a. Source of authority for this church rule: **“the Law says”**

#### **14:35**

Why were they speaking? “. . .**they want to inquire about something”**

The provision for their questions being answered is: **“ask their own husbands at home”**

Point: **“It is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”**

This appears to be focused on interrupting the service to have your own personal question answered. It may fall into the same category of self-edification. Paul may be saying don't interrupt the flow of the service for your own question. Or, stop interrupting the prophet who is presenting. Wait and ask at home. Apparently women were praying and prophesying in church and Paul has stated that they “all pray in tongues.”

- 1 Timothy 2:11-12 – “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.”
- 1 Cor. 11:5 – provides instruction for woman to prophecy correctly in the church assembly

#### **14:36**

Sarcasm.

Did the Word of God come out of Corinth or is the Word of God going into Corinth?

Does everyone have to come to Corinth to learn the Word of God or does the Word of God need to come to Corinth to teach?

#### **14:37**

If your gift is going to be accepted you better follow these directions.

#### **14:38**

Ignore the person and their gift if they ignore the written word of God

#### **14:39**

Be eager to prophecy.

Do not forbid speaking in tongues.

#### **14:40**

The point of these chapters: Do these things in a fitting and orderly way.

1. “fitting” means “decently, properly”
2. “orderly” means “according to order”
  - a. Josephus used it to describe how the Romans erected their camps
  - b. Josephus used it to describe how the Essenes spoke in turn

***The below notes are from John MacArthur.  
They are inserted here for the presentation of another view on  
these verses.***

***In many places Galyn Wiemers does not agree with the  
information concerning tongues and spiritual gifts  
that MacArthur presents but does want it made available  
to compare, contrast and balance with his own teaching.***

**The Truth about Tongues--Part 4  
by John MacArthur**

**1 Corinthians 14:26-40**

**III. THE PROCEDURE FOR THE GIFT OF TONGUES: SYSTEMATIC (vv. 26-40)**

**A. The State Of The Corinthians' Worship (v. 26)**

"How is it, then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."

**1. THE OVERVIEW**

Paul basically says, "How is it, knowing what you know about the foolishness of confusion, that all of you are doing all of these things...all at the same time, in the same place?" Now, Paul is not telling the Corinthians to do what is listed in verse 26, he's simply detailing for them what they are already doing. It's incredible that such chaos could be going on. All of them were vying for the preeminence and the prominence, and using their gifts all at the same time. And those who were using counterfeit or nonexistent gifts were thrown into this mishmash. So, the Corinthian assembly was something like a meeting at the United Nations. The only difference in the Corinthian church was that everybody in the church was standing up and shouting out speeches in an ecstatic language. Nobody could have been edified in their services if they had tried. In fact, unbelievers concluded that the Corinthian Christians were out of their minds.

**2. THE SPECIFICS**

a. **"...When ye come together..."** This phrase indicates a church in its assemblage when it comes together for its corporate time of worship and fellowship. Verse 23 indicates that this is when the whole church gathers together. In other words, if you attended church in Corinth on any given Sunday, the following is what you'd experience:

b. **"...every one of you hath a psalm..."** When we see the word "psalm," we usually think of a psalm from the Old Testament book of Psalms. And it's possible that some of the people in the Corinthian church may have had one of those psalms they wanted to read out loud to the congregation. However, the Greek word used here literally means "a song sung to the accompaniment of an instrument." So, more likely, what was going on in the Corinthian church was everybody singing a solo at the same time.

Can you imagine the absolute chaos of a situation like that? Anybody who wanted to sing a solo just started to sing to the accompaniment of someone plucking along on a stringed instrument or someone blowing a flute. Imagine the cacophony of the Corinthian chaos that would have been produced. One thing is certain--they didn't have a music director.

Now psalms were a common part of Christian worship. Colossians 3:16 mentions "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." In fact, the ministry of music was not something added to the church at a later date. It existed from the very first time the church began to meet in the New Testament. Singing has always been a part of the Christian experience--a wonderful part. But in Corinth, it became a point of pride, where everybody was trying to outsing everybody else. It was quite a mess!

Now if that wasn't bad enough, Paul said that every one of them...

c. "...hath a doctrine..."

This simply means "a teaching" or "a lesson." Everybody who wanted to exercise the gift of teaching, or everybody who thought he was a would-be teacher, just stood up in his own little corner and started giving his lesson. So, over the din of one group of people singing solos, there was another group of people giving lessons--teaching whatever it was they felt the church needed to hear.

Adding to the cacophony of the singing and the teaching, the next item in the list, according to the Greek text, is that every one of them...

d. "...hath a revelation..."

There were people standing up in the congregation and saying, "Thus saith the Lord...", and then proclaiming some great supposed revelation they were having. Of course, they had to do it over the noise of the people who were trying to teach their lesson, and those people who were trying to sing their song.

On top of all that, there were also people who...

e. "...hath a tongue..."

There were people who were standing up and speaking with the gift of languages--legitimately, but out of order and in the wrong place. It was the true gift in a wrong expression. And there were others who didn't have the true gift of tongues who were mumbling gibberish. Add that to the rest of the chaos!

Now, I told you in an earlier lesson that when the word tongue appears earlier in this chapter in the singular form, it has reference to the false gift, because gibberish can't be plural. However, in verses 26 and 27, the singular word "tongue" could have reference to the true gift, because it's simply singling out that one of them has a tongue. In other words, it could be translated, "One of you has a language," referring to the true gift, just as easily as it could be translated, "One of you has gibberish--a counterfeit." The use of the singular word "tongue" is demanded here because the subject of the verse is singular. The same thing is true in verse 27, as we shall see. So that doesn't violate my premise that where the word tongues appears in the plural it is referring to the true gift and the singular word tongue refers to the false, counterfeit gift. So, when the singular word is demanded by a singular subject, it could be referring to either the true or the false gift.

Besides all the singing, the teaching, the revelations, and the tongues, there were all kinds of people who...

f. "...hath an interpretation."

These people were attempting to interpret whatever was going on--and probably fighting and arguing about which interpretation was right.

All of this was the order of worship in the Corinthian church. Now you can understand why unbelievers who came in and saw all of this going on said, "These people are out of their minds! What kind of craziness is this?" Well, at the end of verse 26, Paul calls a halt to all of this chaos and says, "...Let all things be done unto edifying." This is a key statement. He's saying, "Look, the way to resolve all of this confusion is to edify--to build one another up. Then, as he proceeds to tell them how to edify, in verses 27-35, four things come to his mind to establish...

## **B. The Structure For The Corinthians' Edification** (vv. 27-35)

### 1. THE PROCEDURE FOR TONGUES (vv. 27-28)

Verse 27 begins, "If any man speak in an unknown tongue..." Notice that the subject is singular, as it was in verse 26. Unfortunately, the King James translators added the word "unknown" here. I think that this is the one time they added it when they shouldn't have, because I believe he's talking about the true gift. I believe this is the case for two reasons: First of all, the singular subject demands a singular verb and a singular object. The second reason I believe that Paul is referring to the true gift here is that Paul would never regulate gibberish. Gibberish was to be totally eliminated--not regulated! Only the true gift could be regulated.

If any man used the true gift of tongues and spoke a language, it was to be regulated. So, Paul gives four principles to regulate this gift:

#### a. Principle #1 (v. 27b)

"...let it be by two, or at the most by three..."

Every gift that has ever been given by God is subject to the control of the possessor. The Holy Spirit never does anything through somebody who is out of control--somebody who is flipped out, slain in the Spirit, bowled over, or rolling on the floor. The Spirit of God ministers the gifts through people who are characterized by controlled behavior, not out-of-control behavior like the pagans. Spiritual gifts were not like the pagan ecstasies, which were totally out of the control of the individual. The gifts of the Spirit were ministered when people were in control. Consequently, principles of use could be applied that the people could respond to.

Now, how were the people with the real gift of languages regulated? Well, somebody in the congregation would let a person with the gift know when there was an unbelieving Jew in their midst that spoke a certain foreign language. Then the person with the gift would look around to make sure that someone with the gift of interpretation was also present. So, in the right place at the right time, the one with the gift of languages would speak that language--a language unknown to him, but known to that Jewish unbeliever. The message, then, would reach that Jewish person, the interpreter would interpret it for the edification of the congregation, and it would be used in its proper way.

The gift of tongues was always to be used under control. And the first limiting factor was that there were never to be more than two, or at the very most, three people using this gift. It was a gift reserved for those special times when both an unbelieving Jew and an interpreter were there. Those special times and those alone. And never should it occur more than three at any one given time. That was the limit.

Now, beloved, this is not what is done today in the Charismatic movement. They do not have such limitations. They do not limit their tongues speaking on the basis of an unbelieving Jew being present, they do not limit it on the basis of a legitimate language being spoken, and they do not limit it to two or three at a time. There may be some isolated cases where these guidelines are followed, but in most cases they are not. So, what we have today is the Corinthian problem all over again--the problem that ignores these basic features.

#### b. Principle #2 (v. 27c)

"...and that by course..."

The Greek means "in turn," or "in order," or "in sequence." The Corinthians were involved in simultaneously expressing their gifts, as I've pointed out. Well, that is forbidden. But that is precisely what goes on so frequently in Charismatic tongues meetings today where everybody is speaking in tongues all at the same time. Have you ever noticed, on Charismatic television programs, that when the people begin to pray in tongues, they all do it at the same time? It's just normal procedure in almost all Charismatic churches for everyone to pray in tongues at the same time-- all in direct violation of 1 Corinthians 14:27! But that's exactly what the Corinthians were doing.

c. **Principle #3** (v. 27d)

"...and let one interpret."

Now, I want to show you something that everybody misses. The Greek emphasizes the word "one" (Gk. heis) in this verse by putting it in the emphatic form. The verse is saying, "Let one interpret--not two, five, seven, or fourteen--just one." Why? Because the problem in the Corinthian church was that everybody wanted to gain the preeminence by giving the interpretation. Consequently, there was always a fight about whose interpretation was right.

So Paul says, "I'll settle the problem you're having with tongues. Only two, or three at the most, are to speak in tongues...and always in sequence. Furthermore, only one person with the gift of interpretation is to interpret." Now, that takes care of the problem, doesn't it? You say, "But what if there isn't an interpreter around to give the interpretation?" Well, that's answered by...

d. **Principle #4** (v. 28)

"But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."

In other words, if you had the true gift of tongues, and an unbelieving Jew came into the assembly, but there wasn't anybody around with the gift of interpretation, you were to just sit there and meditate. "Why?" you say. "It could be a great evangelistic tool!" Yes, but if there wasn't anybody there who could translate, it wouldn't have any capacity to edify the church. And the purpose for the church meeting together is edification. So, in a case like that where no one could translate, you would just have to drop it.

Now, do you know what this verse also tells me? It tells me that the Corinthians were supposed to know who in their congregation had the true gift of interpretation. So, if none of them were there, the only alternative for those with the gift of tongues was to remain silent. There are no legitimate instances of someone speaking in tongues anywhere in the Bible that are not understandable to somebody. And if such a case was to ever present itself in the church, it was to be stopped immediately. If there was no interpreter present, the tongues speaker was to be quiet. He was to just sit there, meditate, and talk to God in prayer. But he were not to say anything out loud.

I'd say these principles regulate tongues pretty well, wouldn't you? In fact, if the true gift of tongues hadn't ceased in the first century, these regulations would probably end ninety-five percent of what goes on in the tongues movement today. What we have today, beloved, is Corinth all over again. Everybody's speaking in tongues, all at the same time, with nobody interpreting. But it doesn't matter...they do it anyway. It's Corinth all over again.

2. THE PROCEDURE FOR PROPHECYING (vv. 29-33a)

One might think that because the gift of prophesying was such a great, grandiose, exalted gift in this chapter, that it never fell into abuse. Well, it did. So Paul had to set down some principles for regulating this gift. In verses 29-33a, he addresses the gift of prophesying, which was so vital to the early church. Apparently, people in the Corinthian church were jumping up all over the place and saying they had a word from the Lord that they wanted to proclaim. They wanted to give a good statement from God and preach a great truth. So, to bring all of this chaos into some kind of order that could edify the people, Paul wrote four principles to regulate the procedure for prophesying in the church:

a. **Principle #1** (v. 29a)

"Let the prophets speak two or three..."

This is the same principle that regulated speaking in tongues. There were never to be more than three prophets speaking in one service. One is great, two are okay, but three are maximum.

1) The Prophets' Description

You say, "Who are the prophets that are mentioned here in 1 Corinthians 14? Are these Old Testament prophets?" No, these are New Testament prophets. The word prophet comes from two Greek words, pro and phemi, and literally means "someone who speaks before." The prophets, then, were the men who spoke before the people. They were those who stood up to declare God's message.

2) The Prophets' Declaration

The prophets spoke in two ways. They spoke direct revelation from God that had never been given before for the life of a church. And they spoke reiteration-- repeating a message that had already been given by one of the Apostles, a message that had already been received. So, a prophet could speak a direct revelation or he could simply reiterate something that had already been revealed. And the church service, apparently, was structured so that one, two, or at the most, three prophets could take their time to be the ones who spoke God's message.

3) The Prophets' Disappearance

The prophets were foundational. They're not mentioned later on in the church. For example, when Paul wrote certain epistles to set the churches in order--1 and 2 Timothy and Titus--he never mentions prophets. He simply talks about elders, presbyters, bishops, deacons, and deaconesses. That's all he ever talks about because prophets passed away with the passing of the Apostolic Age. They were a unique group. Ephesians 2:20 says that they were given for the foundation of the church. They belonged to that time.

So, the prophets were to speak God's message. Sometimes they spoke messages that they had prepared, and sometimes they spoke direct revelation from God that they had received. Either way, they were to speak-- but never more than two or three. Why? Because anything more than that would be chaotic, and there would be a constant fight to see who would be able to stand up and speak.

b. **Principle #2** (v. 29b)

"...and let the others judge."

The "others" refers to the other prophets. The other prophets were to sit in the front beside the one speaking to evaluate the truth of what he was saying. It might well be that these prophets had the gift of discernment (see 1 Cor. 12:10). In other words, they were given the ability to discern whether something was of God or not. They were there to evaluate the truth of the message. People were not to just stand up and speak without someone evaluating it.

This principle presents a problem in the Charismatic situation today. When someone stands up in a church and says, "I have the gift of prophecy and a revelation from God..." and then proceeds to give his revelation, what criteria does the church have to know whether or not what he says is of God? Well, the criteria in that day were men of God who were divinely granted the ability to discern a true from a false revelation. It had to be that way, because they didn't have the written Word that we now have.

We don't need any more revelations today. The complete revelation is here. And when people today have what they claim are new revelations, they're in real trouble. Why? Because they have no way of knowing whether or not their revelation is from God. It's far better to stop with the last part of the book of Revelation and leave it.

Who were the leaders of the Corinthian church?

Did you know that there weren't any elders at the church in Corinth? They didn't even have a pastor-teacher, as far as we know. None are ever indicated. The Corinthian church didn't have any of the people that are designated as leaders in the Pastoral Epistles--elders, bishops, presbyters, or pastor-teachers. They did have prophets, however. But they were only for that foundational time of the church.

c. **Principle #3** (v. 30)

"If anything be revealed to another [prophet] that sitteth by, let the first [prophet] hold his peace."

This is most interesting. Let's say a prophet was giving a message that he had prepared, when all of a sudden, God gives a new revelation to one of the other prophets. The prophet with the new revelation was to immediately pull the tunic of the prophet speaking, and say, "Hey, God just gave me a new revelation." At that point, the prophet that was speaking had to sit down. Why? Because a new revelation always took precedence over reiterating something that had already been given. God had special words for His church that had never been given.

Now, beloved, this reinforces a point that I've been trying to make all along that people sometimes argue with me about. Some say that the prophets only spoke new revelation. But I don't think so. I think they spoke either revelation or reiteration. This verse is one of the strongest proofs of that because it describes a prophet who is reiterating, who has to sit down if another prophet gets new revelation. It's very reasonable, then, to see that some prophets received new revelation on occasion, while others were simply reiterating a message that was no less from God, but not a fresh, new revelation for the moment.

Now, at this point, one of the Corinthian prophets was probably saying, "But Paul, I don't know if I can do that. When I get under the power of the Holy Spirit, the words just come out. I can't control it." So, Paul gives another principle in verses 31-32:

d. **Principle #4** (vv. 31-32)

"For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."

Paul's point is this: "If you're a true prophet, you will be able to control the gift." You see, a true gift never functions in some kind of pagan ecstasy...never. True gifts always function under the control of the individual.

Paul gave the prophets some simple principles to follow. Why? The purpose is always the same: "...that all may learn, and all may be comforted." The edification of the church is the issue. Nobody gets edified if there is nothing but disorder and chaos. So Paul says, "Don't give me the excuse that you're out of control." Incidentally, the word "spirits" is the same word translated "spiritual gifts" in verse 12 of this chapter. In other words, he's saying, "Your gift of prophecy is under the control of the other prophets, so you can't operate in an uncontrolled manner."

At the beginning of verse 33, Paul sums up his discussion on the procedure for prophesying with a beautiful truth. He says, "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace...." This is the key to the whole chapter. The worship service of the church should manifest the character of God. "When you come together," says Paul, "all that is a part of your service should be manifesting the God whom we serve. Our God is not a God of confusion, He is a God of peace. So, when somebody comes into your church and sees confusion, and fighting for preeminence, he will conclude that you have a confused, angry, fighting God."

I'm afraid that there are people who see what goes on in some of the Charismatic chaos so prevalent today, and conclude that the God they worship is in the same state of chaos. However, God is a God of order and dignity. He is a God who functions systematically for results, not chaotically for feelings. And that characteristic of God is to be manifest properly in the worship of His church.



After his discussion on tongues and prophesying, Paul turns to one other category of instruction:

### 3. THE PROCEDURE FOR WOMEN (vv. 33b-35)

"...as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

Now, I believe that the end of verse 33 should be attached to verse 34. There are many reasons for this, which I'm not going to go into now. But let me just say that it doesn't make sense to connect the great, sweeping, theological truth that "God is not the author of confusion but of peace" with the statement, "...as in all churches of the saints." That just doesn't make sense. God is not a God of confusion but of peace...period. Not just in the churches of the saints.

You say, "Why does Paul all of a sudden bring up the subject of women in the church?" Well, it appears that the women in the Corinthian assembly were leading the parade to seek the showy gifts as well as usurping the place of the men in the congregation. The women were not being silent and submissive in the church; they were blurting out and trying to take over the service.

#### a. The Woman's Silence

##### 1) Is it cultural?

I hear people say, "You know that stuff in 1 Corinthians 14 about women keeping silent in the church? That was just a Corinthian problem--strictly a cultural thing. Paul was just trying to accommodate to the Corinthian culture." Well, in case you think that, look again at verses 33b-34a. Paul says, "...as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches...." It isn't a Corinthian cultural issue; it's to be the standard in all the churches. In the Corinthian church, women were speaking in tongues, interpreting, singing their songs, prophesying, and usurping the man's authority. So Paul singles them out, and reminds them that women are to take the place of submission and silence in the public service of the church.

Now, I know that God has gifted many women in marvelous ways. Many of them have wonderful gifts of teaching and proclaiming God's Word. But they are not to exercise those gifts in the mixed assembly of the church when it comes together. That belongs to men.

You say, "John, that was just a Corinthian problem. It's only cultural." Well, that's not true. Notice, at the end of verse 34, why women are not permitted to speak in the church:

##### 2) It is commanded!

Verse 34 says, "...for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." What law? The law of God--the Pentateuch. In Genesis 3:16 it says that the man will rule over the woman. From the very beginning, the man was given the authority over the woman.

In 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul said, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Why? Well, not because of the culture of Ephesus, or because of a problem in Timothy's town. Verses 13-14 give us the reasons: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression." In other words, this is a divine design from the beginning. You can't just slide it out the door and get rid of it on the basis of culture. It is in the law of God.

#### b. The Woman's Shame

In verse 35 Paul says, "...for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." The Greek word translated "shame" (aischros) literally means "ugly" or "deformed." In other words, for a woman to speak in the church is a deformity of God's intention--a perversion of beauty into ugliness.

Many women are excellent teachers, and they should be busy teaching other women--in the right place at the right time. But the right place and the right time is not the assembly of the church. I thank God for the gifted women who teach other women, and for the older women who teach the younger women to be godly, as Paul told Titus to instruct them to do (2:3-5). But we must obey God's standards.

You see, God has a plan. Husbands are to love and lead, and wives are to submit and respond. God wants that order made visible because it is His order out of His nature, and He wants His nature to be manifest in His church. When that doesn't exist in His church, the revealing of His order and His nature is violated. For example, God cannot be on display in a church where a woman is preaching. Why? Simply because His nature, His plan, and His purpose are violated...even though the woman may say good things.

#### c. The Woman's Source

According to verse 35, if a woman has questions, she's supposed to go home and ask her husband. Now, that puts the responsibility on the husbands to get some answers, doesn't it? But that's the way God has designed it. Husbands, don't be content to give a standard answer of, "I don't know." Get some answers and be the spiritual leader in your home.

#### d. The Woman's Speaking Out

Notice the phrase "if they will learn anything" in verse 35. I believe this is saying that some of the women were asking questions in the service under false pretenses. They were blurting out their questions to confront the prophet who was speaking. They were interrupting the prophet (and the service) on the pretense of having a legitimate question. When, in actuality, they just wanted to be heard. Apparently, according to verses 29-30, the only ones who had the right to ask questions in the service were the prophets. So, these women were usurping the place of the prophets, who had the responsibility of discerning what was being said.

Now, I don't believe Paul is saying that women are never to ask spiritual questions of anyone other than their husbands. There's nothing wrong when questions are asked in the sharing together of Bible study and fellowship. In fact, I believe it's proper, when we have a question and answer time in our church, for anyone to ask a question--because that's the order of the time. But during the duly constituted worship service of the church, when there is structure and order for the edification of the whole body, we are to follow these patterns. A public worship service is never to be interrupted and usurped by a woman asking a question. Can you imagine those poor prophets in the Corinthian church trying to get through their messages with everyone trying to argue with them?

#### C. The Sarcasm To Cause The Corinthians' Acceptance (v. 36)

Paul is really strong about these procedures for the regulation of women, tongues, and prophecy in the church. So strong, that he responds, in verse 36, to their possible resistance to accept his words. He says, "What? Came the word of God out from you? Or came it unto you only?" In other words he says, "Do you want to argue about this? Did you write the Word of God? Or did it just come to you? Are you some kind of a law unto yourselves?" I believe that Paul is being very sarcastic with them in order to get them to respond to and accept what he had to say. He is saying, "Did you write the Bible? Either you are the ones who wrote it or you are required to submit to it. Those are the only options! Now if you're not going to obey it, maybe you think you wrote it. Or maybe you just think it doesn't apply to you, just everybody else. Well, since the same Scripture applies to you that applies to everybody else, and since it's all authored by God, you only have one response--to obey." In a strong, sarcastic way, Paul calls a halt to all their selfish activity, and says, "Do only that which edifies!"

#### D. The Summary Of The Corinthians' Exhortation (vv. 37-40)

## 1. ACKNOWLEDGE IT AS A COMMANDMENT OF GOD (v. 37)

"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual [which I believe refers to the gift of tongues because it's the sum of what Paul is saying], let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

This is a great closing statement. It gets closure on the whole argument. He says, "Those people who have legitimate gifts will acknowledge that I speak the Word of God. And if they acknowledge that I speak the Word of God, they will bring their gifts under submission to the principles I've just spoken. Now, if they don't, they don't have the true gift. What they're doing is not a legitimate manifestation of the Holy Spirit." Paul was trying to force the Corinthians to see that if the gifts of tongues and prophecy weren't used according to the regulations that he had just laid down in verses 27-33, those people who violated those principles were not legitimate. So Paul really lays down the rules.

One of the greatest claims that Paul ever made to being inspired by God is the statement that he makes here in verse 37: "...the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." I'll never forget the man who believed only the red letters of his red-letter Bible. I've never liked red-letter Bibles since. He believed that the words in red, which indicate the statements of Jesus in the Gospels, were the only important words. Well, I told him that the words of Paul are just as important as the words of Jesus. Then I showed him this passage: "...the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

Don't ever try to pass off Paul's teaching as cultural or only opinion. I hear people say, "Women don't have to be silent in the church. Women can preach if they want to. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 14 are only cultural." I also hear them say, "We don't have to follow all these different regulations about tongues and prophesying today, because those regulations were only for Corinth." No, no, no! These are God's commandments.

## 2. REJECT THOSE WHO IGNORE IT (v. 38)

In verse 38, Paul recognizes that there are going to be some people who are going to ignore his commandments: "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." Now, the literal meaning of the verse is this: "If anybody ignores these things, you ignore him." In other words, if a person didn't recognize that Paul's words of regulation were the Word of God, then that person can't be recognized as having the true gift. Therefore, that person was to be ostracized and shut up because he was a phony. If he didn't obey these principles and acknowledge them as the commandments of God, then he was to be rejected.

## 3. DESIRE PROPHECY IN THE CHURCH (v. 39)

In verse 39 Paul summarizes everything and says, "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues." In other words he says, "On the basis of all that I've said, zealously desire to prophesy." Why? Well, do you remember what he said in verse 3? "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

Then Paul says, "...and forbid not to speak with tongues." For that time and that age there was a true gift of languages. And even though the gift of prophecy was to be emphasized in the church, Paul was not forbidding the use of a true gift in its true expression at its true time. Now this cannot be applied to today, because the true gift of tongues has ceased (see pp. xx-xx). But for that time, Paul says, "I recognize the true gift of tongues, and I'm not forbidding you to use it. It has its place. But when you come together in the church, seek to prophesy."

## 4. LET THE CHURCH SERVICE MANIFEST GOD'S CHARACTER (v. 40)

Summing it up, Paul says, "Let all things be done

decently and in order." The word "decently" refers to harmony and beauty, and the word "order" refers to things being done in sequence. Well, since God is a God of harmony, beauty, and order, Paul says, "Let

your assembling together manifest those characteristics of God." And as the church manifests God and is edified, it will also be multiplied. That's God's promise.