

INTRODUCTION

Tonight hopefully I am going to be trying to answer the question, “Is it allowed for women to speak in the church?” I’m going to have my wife say something...

[Cindy] To get the full truth of “Should women speak in the church,” I want you to turn your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 14, verses 26 through the end of the chapter, verse 40. Pastor, can you do justice to this? Okay, you can continue.

[David] Well I asked Cindy to do that, because I wanted you to say, “Well, did we just violate the scripture we are going to be studying tonight?” Frankly, in some churches that would never be allowed. I think it is because perhaps some people have read this passage of scripture we are going to be studying tonight and have been thoroughly confused. I am going to do my best tonight to preach the word as God, the Holy Spirit, has directed me.

This week I had the privilege of preaching at the Christian Heritage Week at Texas College over in North Tyler. I went in there and opened up both barrels. I preached with as much zeal and enthusiasm as I have ever had before for 45 minutes. They told me that’s how long I had to preach. When I finished, I was sweating. I sat down and I’ll never forget what Dr. Champion said when he stood up. “We want to thank Reverend Dykes for that little sermonette!” I hope tonight this may be a little bit more than a little sermonette.

The title of the message is, “Order in the Church” and this is the final message in the series on Spiritual Gifts that began in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. We examined spiritual gifts, talked about something that is greater than gifts (that is love in chapter 13) and in the last message we talked about the priority of the gift of prophecy over the gift of tongues. Now we come to chapter 14:26.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40. “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. Two or three prophets [we would call these preachers] should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored. Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”

As we look at this passage of scripture, there are three principles that provide a structure to order in the church. Look at verse 26. "When you come together, everything that should be done in the last part of verse 26 "should be done for the strengthening of the church." That's one principle. Everything that should be done is for the encouragement of the church. The second principle is in verse 33. "God is not a God of disorder but of peace." Then, the final principle is in verse 40. "Everything should be done in a fitting and an orderly way."

I. THE PROCEDURE FOR WORSHIP

I want to divide the text itself into two sections. First, let's look at the procedure for worship. They had a terrible problem in the church at Corinth. They had a lot of problems, but one of the problems occurred when they gathered together for corporate worship: There was no good leadership. Everybody was standing up and trying to show off. They were all doing what they were doing for exhibition rather than edification. They were saying, "Look at me! Look at what I can do! I can sing! I can speak in tongues. I can preach. I have a word of revelation..." And they were doing it to show off. I could illustrate it this way. This week I read this text as I do most weeks in my Greek New Testament. I could have brought my Greek New Testament to this service tonight and I could have stood up here and read this text in Greek, but would it have edified any of you at all? Dr. Toussaint would be about the only one maybe. Paul would know some of it and others might know a little Greek, but all I would be doing would just be showing off my knowledge of the Greek language, leaving you feeling completely left out. That's why I would never do something like that, because it would never edify you and the problem in the church at Corinth was that they were showing off for their own exhibition, rather than the edification of the body. So Paul said, "I want to give you some procedures for worship."

1. Full participation

First, he says there ought to be full participation. Look at verse 26. This is key, and sometimes we look so deeply at all of the restrictions, we don't look at the positive part of this passage. "When you come together." That means when the whole body gathers together, in contrast to when they would meet in small groups. Look at the next word, "everyone." That means in worship everybody ought to participate in some way. I think tonight is a good example. We have gathered together and I hope everyone has already participated in some way. When Mike led us in the songs, I hope everybody sang! Every believer participated! Because Paul said "When you come together, everyone ought to participate." Then he mentions some other elements of worship. "There may be a word of instruction" That word is "doctrine or teaching." That would really be akin to what we do in our Sunday School classes, when different members of the body teach the Bible. "A revelation." Now a *revelation* means "inspiration from God." This was really necessary before the New Testament was finished, because they did not have the advantage of saying, "Okay, open your Bibles to the gospel according to John." They had to just remember many of the words of Jesus that had been passed down and so it is very important to depend upon this divine revelation. So there were a lot of different things going on and he said, "I want full participation."

2. Forbid disruptive displays

There’s another principle about procedure for worship. Paul said, “You need to be careful to forbid disruptive displays. Don’t allow anything that disrupts the beauty and the orderliness of worship. I have to confess, I have been in a lot of different worship services through the years. That’s one of the things I love to do. I love to worship. A few weeks ago when I was preaching on tongues, I told you I had been in some worship services where tongues were practiced and I thought they were practiced incorrectly. I remember one meeting when I was in college at the Birmingham Jefferson County Civic Center in downtown Birmingham. There was a well-known female evangelist who now has gone to be with the Lord. She was nationally known as a healer and as a preacher. Some of the guys in my dormitory said, “Hey, we need to go down and hear this woman. She’s really gifted by the Lord.”

I went down there and I tell you, I had never been a part of anything like that. There were probably six or seven thousand people in the Civic Center. People were jumping up over here speaking in tongues and jumping up over there speaking in tongues and jumping up over here speaking in tongues. There was hardly any interpretation going on. I just got the sense it was out of control and disorderly. I just knew in my spirit this wasn’t right.

I remember someone came up on the platform and began speaking in tongues. They spoke in tongues for maybe thirty seconds. This female evangelist said, “I have an interpretation.” She was really trying to follow the scripture. So, she began to interpret. But even as a dumb, ole college student, I realized there were several things a bit fishy about her interpretation. First, the guy who spoke in tongues only spoke for about thirty seconds and she spoke for about ten minutes. I guess that’s maybe what you call a microburst of language or something and she just kept on for ten minutes. In addition, she interpreted it as a message FROM God TO the people. As we studied last time, tongues in the New Testament is always a prayer! You are not speaking to man you are speaking to God. So, she interpreted it as some message from God. But the thing that really got me was when she interpreted this message from God to the people, she interpreted it in the old King James English—full of “thees” and “thous” and “wouldst” and “couldst” and “yes.” I thought, “Is God restricted to 17th century English? Does he talk like Shakespeare?”

I began to realize something was unusual. I think we should not just accept any old thing that happens in church. We should, as the Bible says, “Test the spirits to see if it be of God,” and it says, “We are to forbid anything that is disruptive.” There have been times in my ministry (I don’t think I have had to do it here very often) when I had to stop preaching and call people down. Sometimes it’s kids making too much noise and if I hear them or see them I stop and say, “Would you sit down and be quiet? You are disrupting worship.” It can range from that to someone standing up and saying something they shouldn’t be saying in the worship service. I think that we ought to be quick to say, “Brother/sister you are out of order. Sit down and be quiet.” The Bible says we need to do that if it ever happens.

I love old Dwight L. Moody, that great evangelist from Chicago. One Moody’s pet peeves was people who prayed these long, drawn-out prayers in public. On more than one occasion, he was known to do the following: Some visiting pastor at some crusade would stand up and begin to pray and begin to pray and begin to pray and begin to pray and would just keep on praying. D. L. Moody would walk up and say, “While Brother So-and-So catches up on his prayer life, let’s

stand and sing a song! And they would just take off and they would start singing!

It can be a long, unnecessary testimony that disrupts worship. Have you ever heard that? Have you ever been in a testimony meeting and somebody starts testifying and airing their dirty laundry in front of everybody and they go on and on and on? That’s disruptive to the spirit of worship. So the Bible is saying here “God is not the author of confusion.” Anything that disrupts should be forbidden.

3. Follow the leadership of worship

Number three. This is a very important procedure for worship. Paul says, “Follow the leadership of worship.” In the church at Corinth, they preached differently than we preach. There were several preachers who would preach one after the other, two or three. But, he said you can’t just jump up and preach. You have to do in order, in turn. Then he makes this overarching observation in verse 32. “The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets,” meaning there is somebody who is in charge of worship and you submit to the leadership and control of the people who are leading in worship. You don’t just jump up and do it arbitrarily.

I’ve been to the former Soviet Union several times. At first I was surprised when we gathered for prayer in a tiny little basement of the buildings for worship and right before we went up, the Senior Pastor of the church would say, “All right! You preach, then you read scripture, then you preach, then you give a blessing, and then you preach.” And that was all the advance planning that was done. We’d go up and kind of do that. There would be a lot of preaching, I mean a LOT of preaching! At least two or three sermons in every worship service. Do you remember we had those Russian pastors visit here a couple of years ago and they just loved it! I didn’t understand why they did what they did until I was teaching over there a few years ago. We were doing a question and answer time and they asked me, “Why in your churches in America don’t you have more than one preacher?” They cited verse 29. “Two or three prophets should speak.” The reason they do what they do is out of a sincere desire to follow that passage of scripture. I just answered as candidly and honestly as I knew how. I said, “I don’t think our folks could stand more than one! They have a hard time stomaching just one preacher!” These two and three and four hour worship services they wouldn’t care for too much. But that’s why they do it—to try to follow this passage of scripture. The whole point is not the number of preachers. The whole point is that it ought to be planned, orderly and under the control of the leaders of the worship service.

Let me pull back the veil a bit and let you know how we try to plan worship services here at Green Acres Baptist Church, based on these procedures and principles. I thank God for Mike Parks, for bringing him here to this church! I love every one of our staff members—but I am just talking about worship right now. I can say the same thing about the expertise of the other guys in every area. Every week Mike tries to get alone with the Lord and say, “Now, Lord. What do you want to happen this Sunday morning and this Sunday night in our services?” He already knows what I am going to be preaching on months in advance, so he can plan the music around the topic. Then every Tuesday, he and I get together and we talk about what’s going to happen in the worship services. We pray about it and plan it—it is our desire to follow the principles I have just set out for you, to let everybody participate. We don’t want it to be a show where you watch

and see what we do. We want to make sure there is nothing disruptive and there is good leadership in worship. So, with all of our heart we are trying to follow the principles and procedures Paul sets out here for worship. I believe with all my heart it is possible to have a strong, mainstream, evangelical Baptist church (whatever you want to call it) where there is exciting, Christ exalting music and strong Bible preaching. I think we have a church that follows those principles, God is going to honor that church and draw people to it.

II. THE PROHIBITION FOR WOMEN

We go on now to the second point in this passage of scripture: The prohibition for women. I was talking with one of the ladies in our church (we joke together a lot) and I told her what I was going to be preaching on tonight. She said, “You had better watch out! You’re going to make a lot of women in our church mad at you!” I said, “Well, I keep a lot of people made at me most of the time.” It’s not my job to keep people from being angry with me. It’s not my job to try to make people happy. It’s my job to try to expound and to teach the written, revealed word of God. I’m not going to be guilty of “kangaroo eisegesis,” hopping over difficult passages of scripture and moving on ahead. I’m not going to skip it. I want us to see what the Bible says about the behavior of women in public worship. Did my wife violate this passage of scripture at the beginning of this service? I think not, and I’ll show you why.

1 Corinthians 14:33b-34. “As in all the congregations of the saints*, women should remain silent in the churches.”

Ladies, does that mean from the time you drive onto the Green Acres Baptist Church property on any day of the week that you have to shut your trap and cannot utter a single sound until you leave this property and go home? Look at verse 34. “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission,” If you lifted that verse out, you would say, “Yeah! That’s what the Bible says!” That’s one of the problems with taking one verse of scripture out of its context and out of the whole teaching of the word of God and saying, “This is what the Bible says!” It’s a very dangerous practice.

*There is a bit of division on the verses there, which confuses some people. Chapter divisions weren’t added to the Bible until about 1,400 years after Jesus was gone and verse divisions were not added for about another 100 years after that! Verse divisions are not inspired. In the text, look for what are called the paragraphs in Greek. Without a doubt this is divided correctly in the NIV.

1. Contextual issue

There are three issues to consider if we are going to understand exactly what I think God is trying to say. First is what I call the contextual issue. Do not take this out of its context. The word of God and Christianity itself never demeaned nor does it currently demean women. It does elevate women and literally liberates them. Galatians 3:28, says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” In the New Testament there is not an idea of one superior gender. The Bible never teaches a man is superior to a woman. It never teaches a woman is inferior to a man. The only time anything like that is

ever said is when it speaks of the female as the weaker sex. That just means in most marriages the husband can beat the wife in arm wrestling—not in all marriages, but in some marriages. He’s just a little bit stronger than you are and that’s because of his physiological makeup. But it never teaches any kind of superiority or inferiority. In fact, there is total equality in Christ Jesus. We are one in Christ.

The New Testament is full of godly, Christian women: Dorcas, Lydia, Priscilla, Phebe...all the wonderful women in the New Testament who serve God. Did they never utter a word? Of course they spoke! Look at the context of this passage of scripture. We are talking in the context of two things: The context of speaking in tongues and the context of evaluating prophecy or preaching. A key is in verse 29. “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said,” *Evaluate*. I know you evaluate me and what I say, but I hope what you use as the standard of evaluation is the New Testament in the word of God. If I ever depart from the New Testament, I hope you will tell me in a heartbeat. I hope you will weigh it carefully and say, “That is contrary to the word of God.”

In the early church they did not have the New Testament. So it was critical for the other members of the church to listen to what a preacher said to test the spirit, evaluate it. “Is that of God or is it not?” “Is it heresy or is it not?” It was a difficult thing. So after a preacher preached, they discussed what he said. In the context of this passage of scripture—speaking in tongues and women evaluating the preacher in assembly—it says, “Women, you be quiet.” In that context. People are confused. Turn back to 1 Corinthians 11:5. People get very confused, because back in 11:5, it says, “And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved.” It is using the analogy of hair and head talking about submission to authority, but it speaks about women who pray and prophesy. The Bible never contradicts itself! Many scholars say the difference between chapter 11 and chapter 14 is chapter 11 is talking about smaller groups of believers getting together, somewhat like our Sunday School classes, and it’s obvious chapter 14 is talking about when the whole body comes together. I think that is probably a wise distinction to make. But when you look at the overall context of this, it does not say women can never utter a word in church!

2. Cultural issue

Not only is there a contextual issue, number two there is a cultural issue you cannot ignore. Paul was saying to the church at Corinth, “Women you be quiet in the church!” because he is talking about disruptive practices. Many Bible scholars point out that in the early churches there was a gender division. The men didn’t even sit with the women. That was a carryover from Jewish synagogues. (By the way there are some churches that still practice that) One cultural issue that may have been involved was a woman yelling across to her husband, “Hey, what’s he talking about?” Asking questions in church, disruption. That’s one cultural issue. The other cultural issue in Corinth was the temple to Aphrodite and the fertility worship was exclusively female. Do you know who led the Aphrodite worship? I’ve decided this is another oxymoron: sacred prostitutes. It was the sacred prostitutes who led the worship. They were the priestesses of Aphrodite. Paul is saying culturally it is confusing for a woman to shout across the church, “Hey, what’s he talking about?” He says, “Wait until you get home. Be quiet.” And it is confusing for women to stand up and provide worship leadership in an area where the women leading worship

are all temple prostitutes, so there was a cultural issue different than what we have today.

3. Convictional issue

But there is more than just the contextual and the cultural issue. There is a convictional issue. The whole point is not whether or not a woman can speak in church. The convictional issue at stake here is usurping the authority of her husband. Paul explains it better in 1 Timothy 2:11. “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority [that’s a key] over a man; she must be silent.” What’s the whole issue here? In every marriage, God established a head and the Bible says the husband is to be the head of the family. One of the reasons women have had to be very, very vocal in churches is because many men have neglected the role of being the spiritual head. Every year, some of you men lie on your income tax return every time you check the little box that says “head of household,” because you are not providing spiritual leadership. Ladies, the Bible says you are to recognize your husband’s spiritual leadership. Some of you are saying, “He just won’t lead! He won’t be the spiritual leader!” Why do you think Paul says, “Wait until you go home and ask your husband?” Ladies, there is a way you can help your husband be the spiritual leader of your family by asking spiritual questions. He might not have the greatest answer, but the very fact you are asking him will bring out in him a desire to try to just lead you a little bit. I don’t know many men who claim to be Christians, who, if their wife asks them a Bible question they say, “Well, I don’t want to talk about that!” I don’t know many men like that. They may not give a wonderful, scintillating answer, but they will try to talk about it and women, by asking your husband spiritual questions, you are allowing him to be the spiritual leader.

John MacArthur in his excellent commentary on 1 Corinthians says:

“Many women are tempted to go beyond the biblical role because of frustration with Christian men including their own husbands who do not responsibly fulfill the leadership assignments God has given them. God has established the proper order and relationship of male, female roles in the church and they are not to be transgressed for any reason. For a woman to take on a man’s role because he has neglected it merely compounds the problem. It is not possible for a woman to substitute for a man in such things. God often has led women to do work that men have refused to do, but he does not lead them to accomplish that work through roles he has restricted to men. There are times in informal meetings and Bible studies where it is entirely proper for women to teach men and for men and women to share equally in exchanging questions and insights. But when the church comes together as a body to worship God, the standards are clear. The role of leadership is reserved for men.”

I agree with that. It doesn’t make a lot of people happy and there are a many people who disagree with me and others on this. They say, “Well, Pastor, don’t you believe in women in ministry?” Absolutely! I believe in women in ministry and I thank God for all the women in our church who are ministering as unto the Lord. “Do you believe in women Sunday School teachers?” Well, I had better believe in women Sunday School teachers—My wife is one! I sleep with one every night. But you say. “Pastor, do you believe in women pastors?” I do not. I do not think the New Testament teaches it, because I think it is a role the New Testament restricts to

men. That’s not culturally correct these days nor politically correct, but it’s what the Bible teaches. “Do you believe in women deacons?” Well if deacons in a church have a role of spiritual leadership no, I don’t believe in women deacons. But when it says Phebe was a deaconess, as a servant I believe in that kind of women deacons, when they are simply servants. But the idea of pastors and deacons when they are leaders in a church, I think the Bible has restricted that role to men and I don’t think you can get around that any way you want to. There are people who disagree with me and I can lovingly disagree with them. You may disagree with me on that and that’s all right. You go your way and I’ll go His way. You can disagree but to me it is a convictional issue that men are to be the spiritual leaders in a family and in a church.

So, ladies, I do not think it is wrong for a woman to stand behind this pulpit and give a testimony and speak. Cindy did under the authority of me as her husband. I don’t think it is wrong for a woman to stand and teach in a Sunday School class, because I think because our church has placed that structure and has enlisted and called and trained that teacher, I think that lady is teaching under the authority of that church. But I think for a woman to try to begin to be a pastor of a church and lead that church I think that departs from the biblical model. That’s as clearly and as lovingly as I know how to say that.

1. Unwrap and use your spiritual gifts

I want to come to the concluding remarks about spiritual gifts as we finish this series on spiritual gifts. I encourage you to unwrap and to use your gifts. Is there anyone in this room who got a Christmas present that is still sitting there in your home wrapped up? Gifts are meant to be opened and enjoyed. As we learned earlier in this study, God has given to you at least one and the Bible says probably several spiritual gifts as He wills. It’s not for you to ask for. You can’t say, “I want this gift or that gift!” But God has given every believer in this church spiritual gifts that is a supernatural ability to minister for the edification of the body. Every one of you needs to unwrap your gift and start using it in the body of Christ.

2. Focus on the Giver, not the gift

Number two. I encourage you to focus on the Giver not the gift. A church that ever becomes too preoccupied by the gifts themselves can become unbalanced. Our focus should never be on the abilities or the gifts. Our focus should be on worshiping and serving and loving the Giver, the One who gave the gift. Isn’t that what happens when you receive a birthday present or Christmas gift? You open it up and you look at it and you say, “Oh! This is wonderful!” But you don’t worship that gift and you don’t love that gift. It causes you to love the one who gave that gift to you.

3. It is better to be godly than gifted

Finally, it is better to be godly than gifted. That’s what Paul is trying to say. You can preach the stars down. You can speak in the tongues of men and angels. You can give your body as a martyr. You can give all your goods to the poor—but if you don’t love, you are a big, fat zero! The evidence of a mature spirit-filled Christian is not spiritual gifts. The evidence of a spirit-filled Christian is the fruit of the spirit being godly and having those Christ-like attributes love,

joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, and self control. The only time Green Acres Baptist Church will ever function as the body of Christ is when every member every member determines their spiritual gift and begins to use it.

CONCLUSION

As a Pastor it has been my responsibility to visit someone in the hospital who has suffered a stroke. You all know what a stroke is and what a stroke does. A stroke is often caused by a blood clot that goes to a certain part of the body and because it severs the information traveling from the brain to that part of the body, one side of the body, either the face or the arm or the leg is often paralyzed. What a frustrating experience it is, because I've been told for a stroke victim to send the message, "Move, arm." "Move, mouth." "Move, leg." It just doesn't respond. Jesus Christ is the head of the church and we are his body. May I suggest that it must be somewhat divinely frustrating for the Lord Jesus to be sending you a message "Minister, minister, minister, minister" and when you do not, you are like that part of the body of a stroke victim that doesn't move.

Have you found out what your gifts are? Are you using them for ministry? When you do, the body of Christ will come alive and move and minister.

OUTLINE

I. THE PROCEDURE FOR WORSHIP

1. Full participation
2. Forbid disruptive displays
3. Follow the leadership of worship

II. THE PROHIBITION FOR WOMEN

Issues:

1. Context
2. Culture
3. Conviction

REGARDING SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

1. Unwrap and use your spiritual gifts
2. Focus on the Giver, not the gift
3. It is better to be godly than gifted



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes