

Intro:

This message comes from Nov 29, 1998, back when I knew everything. As I've aged, I find that I seem to know less than I used to know! (Or my attitude has changed, hopefully for the better.)

Consequently, I am offering a modified version of this message. It is not that I am less certain of the answer, but less blunt in making applications.

We are in our Questions series. Here is our question this time:

Since 1 Cor 14.34-35 say women should keep silent in the church and ask their questions at home, why do we allow women to ask questions in our Bible study time?

That's a fair question, and one that touches on an area where church practice and teaching contradicts modern society.

I suppose the short answer is that we see our Bible study service as something different from our other services.

But that short answer can't be just a "dodge" and needs biblical justification.

The passage in question comes to us as the conclusion to Paul's teaching on tongues versus prophecy. We are going to have to consider the context, but I can't give you the whole context. When I went through 1 Cor 14 in 1998, this was the last of six, so there are five hours of context ahead of this one.

In answering our question, I need to show you how this passage fits in with the subject of the rest of the chapter, that is, tongues vs. prophecy. The basic themes of the chapter are:

1. Prophecy is superior to tongues
2. Tongues are not for the believer but the unbeliever
3. Tongues must operate within a regulated format

In that context comes our passage:

Read 1 Cor 14.34-40

As we think through this question, we need to submit our thinking to the word of God. Our culture tells us many things, but our culture isn't from God, it is from the world.

The world, made up of men in the image of God, gets a few things right, but since men are fallen, even the things it gets right, it usually gets it right in the wrong way.

Proposition: Our goal in every aspect of our lives is to reflect God's order, regardless of what the world may think.

I. The restriction of speech in the church (34-35; see 27-33)

A. Three restrictions:

1. Regulation of tongues (27-28)
2. Regulation of prophecy (29-33)
3. Regulation of women (34-35)

They are regulated by way of prohibition

B. The regulation of women

1. Part of the restoration of order

a. Elements of disorder

- 1) out of control and un-intelligible tongues
- 2) prophecies without order
- 3) women speaking up in church

a) Note: he allows women to pray or prophesy in church
"with heads covered" (1 Co 11.5)

[Just mentioning this will raise other questions!!!]

b) Whatever "prayer" or "prophecy" means in 1 Cor 11,
clearly, he doesn't mean they may *never* speak in church

b. The restoration of order

- 1) Allowed tongues under proscribed circumstances
- 2) Regulated the use of prophecy
- 3) Forbad women to speak up in church

2. The nature of the regulation

a. Not regulation of the gift of prophecy.

1) Note these passages

- a) Acts 2.17
- b) Acts 21.9
- c) 1 Corinthians 11.5

Therefore: There is a context in which it was legitimate for women to prophesy.

2) Note this verse: 1 Corinthians 14.26 — identify the kinds of speech

- a) a psalm
- b) a doctrine
- c) a tongue
- d) a revelation
- e) an interpretation

Note: At least two of these are *supernatural* (the tongue and the revelation). Three of these are not.

other scriptures have a bearing as well.

b. Compare a parallel passage in 1 Timothy:

¹ Tim 2.9-15 Likewise, *I want* women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments,¹⁰ but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.¹¹ A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.¹² But **I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man**, but to remain quiet.¹³ For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve.¹⁴ And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.¹⁵ But *women* will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

- 1) Two prohibitions:
 - a) Teaching
 - b) Exercising authority over a man
- 2) The foundation of this is the creation order, God created men and women to fulfill specific roles in creation
- c. Back to 1 Cor 14: The context is tongues and prophecy in the church (supernatural gifts)
 - 1) It mattered not if the woman had spoken a tongue or a prophecy (the supernatural aspect)
 - 2) The authority of these speeches rested not in the gender of the speaker but in the Spirit inspiring the speech
 - 3) Teaching, on the other hand, is an authoritative act, which in God's economy rests with the men of the church alone.
- d. When prophets speak in the church, the hearers are to "pass judgement" (1 Co 14.29)

1 Cor 14.29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgement.

- 1) To "pass judgement" seems to be to question, evaluate, authorize
- 2) If a woman does this to a prophet, is she exercising authority over a man? I would say, Yes.

3. Summing up

- a. What women were allowed to do in the church: prophesy
 - 1) Singing psalms
 - 2) Giving God's word (tongue, prophesy [revelation])
- b. Women are not allowed to evaluate/question other prophecies or to teach (1 Tim 2.9-15)

A further note: the supernatural aspect of prophecy and of tongues no longer exists in the church

[Yet another area that could raise questions.]

C. Appeal to Scriptural authority: “just as the law also says”

1. In the 1 Timothy passage, Paul grounds his teaching in the creation order [taught by the Law]
2. Throughout the Law, God ordered homes and society with male leadership (not male *dominance*, we should add)
3. The impropriety of women speaking in church (35) upsets the order of God’s law
 - a. It must therefore be upsetting the creation order
 - b. The solution is for them to discuss the prophecies with their husbands (or other male leaders in their home) at home (35)
4. Objections:
 - a. These verses are a later addition, not original – don’t have authority [no evidence]
 - b. Paul put it in to condescend to his culture, he didn’t really believe it
 - 1) Paul writes elsewhere about equality (Gal 3.28) which shows his real thinking
 - 2) Paul allowed this to give the church time to catch up culturally with his advanced ideas
 - 3) That would mean the church basically *hasn’t been ready for this until (at the earliest) the last 150 years*. Paul’s “stealth” doctrine has been lying dormant all this time.
 - c. Some say this is just an example of how God, the church, and the Bible are simply repressive
 - 1) The Bible never endorses domination of one person by another or by a group of persons
 - 2) The Bible does teach us to reproduce as much as possible God’s created order

II. The strong statement of authority (36-37)

A. Who are you? (36)

1. The word of God didn’t come out from you

2. The word of God came to you

B. Who am I? (37)

1. My words are the commands of God

2. Those who are spiritual will acknowledge that

C. What shall be done with those who object? (38)

1. If they will not submit to this word

2. They are not recognized (given a platform of any kind) in church

III. The recipe for Christ honoring worship (39-40)

A. Emphasis on preaching and allowance for spiritual gifts (39)

B. Properly and orderly (40)

1. These last two verses apply to the whole chapter, but we will apply them to men and women

2. The promotion of femininity not feminism

a. Note v. 35

1) The word “improper” refers to something “deformed or ugly”

2) When the woman stands over the men, evaluating them in the public service, they are overturning God’s order, something “not beautiful”

b. Women should cultivate and practice femininity

Does this mean you should all wear frilly dresses and talk like you just got out of a Jane Austen novel?

Christian women should practice a godly femininity that emphasizes the gifts, talents, and abilities that God uniquely gave to women for the benefit of mankind and the glory of God.

The converse is true for men, by the way. Men should practice a godly masculinity, not a “He-man, master of the universe” mentality, but real manliness. Maturity, gravity, sobriety, discipline, and leadership.

3. When women submit to Paul's teaching here, they contribute to the proper and orderly conduct of church life

1 Cor 14.40 But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

- a. Properly = beauty
- b. Order = discipline

Conclusion:

Proposition: Our goal in every aspect of our lives is to reflect God's order, regardless of what the world may think.

Is that the way your life is? Is your life an example of the beauty and discipline of a godly Christian life?

Or is your life a shambles and a confusion, a disorder, and a disharmony?

Are you really obeying God's word in your life?