

Decency and Order in Worship

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 0 0] When it comes to discussions about corporate worship, there are all kinds of debates. Should the song arrangements be spontaneous or planned beforehand, or should the preacher speak from a manuscript or not, so that there's more room for the spirit to move?

But at the heart of all these debates is a theological question. It's the question, what does it mean to worship the Father in spirit and truth, as John 4.23 tells us to do?

And the spirit is a reference to the Holy Spirit, and truth is a reference to Jesus Christ, who throughout the Gospel of John calls himself the true bread, true shepherd, true son, and true resurrection and the life, and true vine.

And he explicitly says in John 14.6, I am the way and the truth and the life. So to worship the Father in spirit and truth is worship in the Holy Spirit and in the truth who is Jesus Christ.

So that means Christian worship is Trinitarian, right? We worship the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. And in worship, then, we get caught up in the triune love of God, and we become surrounded by his presence, and we grow in our love for him and become more like him.

[1 : 1 2] That's what happens in Christian worship. But in the worship debates, people often pit Jesus against the Holy Spirit. They say some churches, usually the more formal liturgical ones, they emphasize the truth part, and they say they insist on doing what is traditional and scripted.

Other churches, usually the more spontaneous charismatic ones, they emphasize the spirit, and they insist on doing what is innovative and spontaneous.

But this is a false dichotomy. They're not mutually exclusive. Things that are traditional and scripted are not necessarily biblical, and things that are spontaneous and innovative are not necessarily spiritual.

According to Scripture, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not in tension. Rather, they work together harmoniously, perfectly. So the Holy Spirit is described in John 16.13 as the spirit of truth.

And he says he does not speak on his own authority, but he speaks whatever he hears from the Son. So they work together. They're not in opposition to each other. And so if that's the case, and I think this passage shows us that, we ought to worship in a way that is spirit-filled, but also filled with truth in an orderly fashion.

[2 : 3 4] And that's Paul's main point here in this passage. We should use the gifts of the spirit in orderly ways for the building up of the church. And he gives us three specific guidelines.

First, guidelines on tongues. Second, guidelines for prophecy. Third, guidelines for teaching. So having taught that the Corinthians should not speak in tongues during corporate worship without interpretation, Paul now teaches that they ought to speak, they ought to use the spiritual gifts of utterance in the context of corporate worship using these guidelines.

He says in verse 26, follow with me. 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. Paul lists five things here, five different things. Hymn, lesson, revelation, tongue, and interpretation. And the common denominator of all of these gifts is that they're all verbal manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

They are all spiritual gifts that involve speaking. So first is a hymn, which is literally the Greek word for psalm, like an Old Testament psalm. It refers to the time of singing during corporate worship.

[3 : 44] And we might not normally think of singing as a form of speaking or teaching, but it does involve speaking and teaching. And so Christian theologian Gordon Fee puts it this way.

He says, I forgot to put this in the slide, but he says, show me a church's songs, and I'll show you their theology, right? Because it has a very important heuristic function.

It's a teaching for didactic function. But this is why Ephesians 5, 18 to 19 puts it this way. Be filled with the Spirit.

So do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, that's the same word, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.

So singing involves speaking to one another the truths of God's Word. And similarly, it says in Colossians 3, 16, let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your heart.

[4 : 52] So again, singing as a form of teaching is involved there. So that's the first item, hymn. Second is lesson, which literally means teaching. It's the same word that was translated as teaching earlier in chapter 14, verse 6.

Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? And that same word is here translated as lesson. And so in the Gospels, the word teaching is used to refer to Jesus' teaching, which is characterized by authority, unlike the teaching of the Pharisees and the scribes.

Later in the history of the early church, recorded in the book of Acts, the same word is used to refer to the apostles' teaching, and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And so it refers to the apostles' teaching, meaning it's a faithful transmission of Christ, the Lord, his teaching. And in the New Testament epistles, the letters that were written, the word teaching refers to different kinds of formal instruction in the context of the worship of the church, so especially the preaching of the gospel and doctrinal instruction.

So for example, Titus 1.9 says, he must hold firmly to the trustworthy word as taught, the same word to teach, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, that's again teaching, and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

[6 : 19] So it refers to lesson that's in view here in Paul's letter, refers to some kind of teaching in the context of corporate worship. And then Paul mentions the three spiritual gifts of utterance that he has been focusing on up to this point in chapter 14, revelation, tongue, and interpretation of tongues.

And by revelation, Paul is probably simply referring to prophecy, and he paired those two words together early in chapter 14, verse 6, since prophecy is the mode by which revelation that's received from God is communicated.

And in tongues, he mentions here is prayer or praise uttered in the spirit in an unintelligible non-human language. So for that reason, it requires the gift of interpretation in order for it to be intelligible and instructive for others in the church.

So after listing these gifts, this speech, Paul reiterates their ultimate purpose, let all things be done for building up. This is now the seventh time he's used the word that means to build up in chapter 14 alone.

This is an overarching concern from all the spiritual gifts are to be used for building up the church. And so verse 26 really serves as a topic sentence. That's kind of the thesis of the rest of the passage that flows from this verse.

[7 : 38] And so from this point on, then Paul teaches the Corinthian church specifically how they should use these spiritual gifts of utterance during corporate worship. Follow with me. Verses 27 to 28.

If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

Right? So first, let there be only two or at most three. The fact that you have received tongues during worship doesn't mean automatically that you have to share it or that you should share it with the whole church.

So Paul caps the number of tongues that are shared to at most three. And then second, and each in turn, right? The tongues should not be shared simultaneously, but in sequence, in order, unless they cause confusion and disorder.

The fact that believers are expected by Paul to be able to control this shows clearly that tongue is not ecstatic speech like used in some pagan religions where they just utter things and they are not in control of themselves.

[8 : 46] People speaking in tongues are in full possession of their mental faculties. And third, he says, and let someone interpret. So it has to be, it has to be, there has to be interpretation.

There has to be no more than three. And he says, lastly, it needs to be interpreted. Paul mentioned in last week's passage that interpretation is absolutely necessary when sharing tongues because it has no value in the corporate worship context without interpretation.

And that's why he says, if there's no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. And because tongues is prayer or praise uttered in the Spirit in an unintelligible non-human language, for that reason requires the gift of interpretation.

And in order for it to be intelligible to other people and instructive for them, it needs to be interpreted in the context of worship. So that's the guidelines for prophecy. Next, he turns to the prophecy, the number and weighing of prophecy.

He says in verse 29, let two or three prophets speak and let the others weigh what is said. It's similar, isn't it, to the instructions to tongues? Like tongues, prophecy should be limited to two or three.

[9 : 55] But because prophecy is already intelligible, it's shared in the language that people speak, it does not need interpretation like tongues. Nevertheless, it needs to be weighed, it says.

And earlier in 1 Corinthians 12.10, when he was listing the gifts of the Spirit, right after listing the gift of prophecy, he listed a gift called the ability to distinguish between spirits.

And that Greek word, to distinguish is the same word that's translated here as weigh. So it's the ability to test prophecy, to ensure that it conforms to the Spirit of God. So this responsibility to weigh what it says falls on the others, probably in particular to those who have the gift of the distinguishing of spirits, but probably to all who are in the audience, who are there, it's incumbent upon them to test prophecy, to weigh what is said.

So it requires the gift of discernment. And then having dealt with the number of prophets that can speak and the necessity of weighing it, he speaks to the sequence again in verses 30 to 31.

If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent, for you all can prophesy one by one so that all may learn and all be encouraged.

[11 : 10] Multiple people should not prophesy at once, and when one is prompted to speak by the Spirit of God, the other should sit and be silent when one person is being told to speak so that you can all prophesy one by one so that all may learn and be encouraged.

So he's once again concerned with building up the church and he intentionally contrasts one by one with the all. The only way in the context of corporate worship for all to be built up, to be encouraged, is for people to speak prophecy one by one.

And so, and this again, and it's submitted, subsumed under the concern to make sure that it builds people up.

Purpose of building up one another necessitates an orderly practice. And lest the Corinthian prophets protest at this point and say, well, but this is the Spirit of God speaking, I can't control myself.

I mean, it's God speaking. What can I do? Paul corrects them, tells them this in verse 32. And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets, right?

[12 : 14] The noun word prophet does not refer to an office or a special category people. It refers to believers with the gift of prophecy. They're called prophets. And prophecy, like tongues, is not a form of ecstatic speech where they lose control and start saying things that they have no idea what they're saying, have no control of themselves.

The spirit of prophets are subject to prophets. They can control when and how they prophesy. The content they receive from the Lord, but they interpret and apply it and they use their mental faculties to do that.

They're in full possession of their mental faculties so they can start and stop when they want to. And then Paul gives the reason for that in verse 33. The reason for this order. For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.

The demonic forces behind the idols of this world might induce disorderly and unruly conduct and ecstatic speech, but God never does that because he is not a God of confusion, but of peace.

Because prophecy is a gift of the spirit, it reflects the character of God, and God is not characterized by confusion or by disorder.

[13 : 23] A worship service that is chaotic and disorderly, therefore, does not rightly represent the character of our God. And it's interesting that Paul uses the word peace here instead of order, because that would be a more logical thing to say, right?

For God is not a God of confusion, but of order. But he doesn't say that. He says God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. Paul begins all 13 of his letters with greeting of grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's how he began 1 Corinthians as well. And the word peace doesn't merely refer to an absence of conflict. It's the concept of, the Old Testament concept of shalom, peace, wholeness, state of being whole, state of being in right relationship with God and with the rest of creation.

It's about having a rightly ordered life in accordance with God's design and desire for us. And that's what that peace is. So the fact that God is a God of peace means that he's the one that brings into fruition and fulfillment the intended purposes of everything in the world.

He's the architect of creation. He alone fully understands its blueprint. And we ought to bring our life and ministry, every aspect of it, into conformity with God's will because God is the God of peace.

[14 : 42] That's what it means. So far from, you know, depriving ourselves when we decide, no, I'm not going to share that prophecy because two or three have already spoken. I'm not going to speak when this person is speaking.

When we choose to do that and we restrain ourselves, far from depriving ourselves of the gift of prophecy, we're using the gift of prophecy to its full potential so that it brings encouragement to all.

And then we come to the final, and in our day, the most controversial part of Paul's guidelines in verses 33 to 35. It says, As in all the churches of the saints, the woman should keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission as the law also says.

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. Now, before you start accusing me of biblical unfaithfulness, saying, why do you let women speak in church?

Because we have women not only prophesy, but also lead prayer times, and so they reduce scripture reading as well, so we have women speak quite frequently in our services, so you could say, you're not being faithful to scripture.

[15 : 53] But let me explain why this is not, and I'm fairly certain of this, that this is not an absolute prohibition of generally women speaking at all in the context of corporate worship. And the reason why is because in 1 Corinthians 11, verses 2 to 16, Paul specifically taught that women should prophesy, and that they should do so while properly observing the cultural conventions that uphold the complementary relationship between men and women.

So we know that Paul does not, in fact, prohibit women from all forms of speaking, because he specifically tells them to prophesy with, in that context, with heads covered. So what then does Paul mean?

That the women should keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak but should be in submission. In order to do that, we need to understand what it means to speak, right? So, this is going to be a little bit dense.

I just ask you to stay with me and follow along because it's going to help us understand what this means and it's going to prove to you that this is actually what the scripture is trying to say. Out of the 52 times the word speak occurs in Paul's letters, 28 of those times, more than half of it, occurs in 1 Corinthians.

So it's obviously a significant word in this letter. It's a key recurring word. It has a range of meanings. So the first range is what we would think of it. It just refers to talking, to speaking.

[17 : 12] And it can also refer to, second meaning would be more formal kind of speaking. For example, the word is used to refer to prophets speaking in the name of the Lord.

So it refers to spiritual utterances, prophecy, for example. And even more formally, the word, this is the third meaning, the word speak refers to official teaching during corporate worship.

For example, 1 Peter 4, 10 to 11. It says, As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

Whoever 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.

The phrase, oracles of God, is literally words of God. So it's probably referring to formal speaking, official speaking in the context of the church. That's probably why Peter only lists two gifts, unlike Paul in places where he lists many gifts.

[18 : 14] He only lists two because he's listing the two gifts that are representative of all the gifts, the two gifts that represent the two offices of the church. Elders speak, and the deacons serve.

The word deacon means to serve. So I think that's what he's referring to here. The word speaking is referring to that official teaching. And then, I don't think I wanted to go to that yet, so forget about it.

I'll get to it later. But in Hebrews 13, 7, it mentions church leaders who spoke to you the word of God. And Paul mentions speaking the gospel or speaking the mystery of Christ in numerous places throughout his letters.

And then Titus 2, 1, which is up there, it says, but as for you, teach, and it's in Greek, it's speak, what accords with sound doctrine. So the third meaning of the word speak is teaching sound doctrine.

It's doctrinal teaching. It's preaching. It's official. It's formal teaching in the context of corporate worship. And so there's three meanings, and we see all three of those ranges of meaning of the word speak in 1 Corinthians.

[19 : 18] And Paul uses the word generically to refer to saying something, speaking or talking, five times in this letter. But more importantly, the other 23 times, Paul uses the word in a more technical sense to refer to speaking in a more formal, official capacity.

For example, Paul refers to expressions of the spiritual gifts of utterance such as tongues and prophecy as speaking. Right? And this is how he uses the word speak 13 times in chapter 14 to refer to these spiritual utterances.

And so this contextual evidence surrounding the word speak tells us that he's not speaking about speaking in general, just talking or saying anything, but he's referring in the more technical sense to formal speaking and teaching.

And so look back at 14:26. Remember I told you that that's kind of the thesis, the topic sentence of this paragraph or this passage? It says, 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. Now, for now, leave out the word hymn because I think Paul mentions that for the sake of completeness, of mentioning all the gifts of speech that are used in the context of corporate worship, but that's not one that he's concerned about.

[20 : 36] The ones that he's been concerned about have been the other gifts that he's been talking about. And so if you don't count that and look at the other gifts that he mentions, he says lesson, which is teaching, and then revelation, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

And if you look at the intervening verses, he addresses each of those gifts that he mentions in reverse order. So if you look at the passage, so he addresses first tongues and its interpretation, verses 27 to 28, and then he addresses revelation in verses 29 to 33, and it's weighing of the revelation.

And in each of those instances, Paul teaches that there are circumstances where people should be silent, right? And so when you're speaking in tongues, you should be silent if you don't have interpretation.

When you're speaking prophecy, you should be silent when someone else is speaking so that you can speak in turn. And so there's only one gift of speech as he goes through that in reverse order that he hasn't addressed directly up to this point.

And that's the lesson. It's the teaching. And so I think he set us up through his structure that the speaking, what he means by speaking is teaching. It's the formal teaching in the context of corporate worship.

[21 : 51] And verses 34 to 35, if you look at it, in light of that pattern, it follows the pattern exactly. So once again, Paul addresses a population that has a particular gift of speech, and in this case, the gift of lesson or teaching.

And then in verse 34, he tells the woman teachers to keep silent in the context of corporate worship just as he taught tongue speakers certain prophets to be silent earlier in verses 28 to 30. And then just as he mentioned that prophets should speak one at a time so that all may learn in verse 31, in verse 35, he mentions that the woman who desired to learn should ask their husband at home.

So these parallels suggest that Paul's giving us the guidelines for the third gift of speech he mentioned in verse 26, namely teaching, lesson. That was the long part, so thanks for staying with me.

You guys been with me? Okay, hopefully that's helpful. And Paul's spoken about how women may share various forms of spiritual utterances up to this point. So prophecy, for example, in chapter 11.

So then he anticipates the question, does that mean that women can bring a lesson to the corporate worship service as well? And I think Paul was prescient really to anticipate that, that line of thinking, because that line of thinking is exactly actually how some denomination, some Pentecostal denominations, for example, justify women teaching.

[23 : 09] They say, well, they have the gift of prophecy, they have the gift of spirit just like us, so why shouldn't they teach also? So Paul actually anticipates that and specifically says, no, that does not apply in that situation.

And I think, and so there, and so in verses 33, 35, read that with me once again. As in all the churches of the saints, this woman, she actually, I'm going to put that up so you guys can see it, and I think my interpretation of this is confirmed by a parallel in 1 Timothy 2, 11 to 12.

If you look at those two side by side, there's a lot of parallels and that's explicitly talking about teaching, so look at it with me. 1 Corinthians 14, 34, 35 says, the woman should keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission as the law also says.

If there's anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. And then look at 1 Timothy 2, 11 to 12. Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man.

Rather, she is to remain quiet. The word man and word husband are the same in Greek, so if you count those, there are six verbal parallels, almost exactly the same phrasing in both of the two verses.

[24 : 22] So I think Paul is here referring to teaching in the official context. A lot of people think that it refers to weighing up prophecies. I don't think that's what it means. I think it's referring to the formal teaching, the speaking, that he mentioned earlier in verse 26.

So in summary, I think you're getting what I'm saying. The type of speaking that he's mentioning here is the type of speaking that he mentioned in chapter 2, verses 6 to 7.

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature, a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away, but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory.

The wisdom of God that he's talking about that refers to the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, his saving message. He's referring to what's the speaking, the formal speaking. That's the kind of speaking that Paul has in mind in the context of the corporate worship of the church.

So what's Paul's reason for this? He better have good reasons, right? He gives a couple different reasons. First, he says in verse 34, for they are not permitted to speak but should be in submission as the law also says, right?

[25 : 35] The law, which is the shorthand for the Old Testament, scripture mandates that Christian women should be in submission. Since in two other places where Paul addresses the different roles of men and women in the church, he specifically cites Genesis 2, 20 to 24.

So that's in 1 Timothy 2, 1 Timothy 11, he both cites Genesis 2. So that's probably the passage he has in mind here also when he says law also says. And so he quoted that in 1 Corinthians 11, 8 to 10 here.

For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels.

So God created man from the dust of the earth and then he created woman from the rib of the man. So the woman was made from man. And in this sense, man was created first. He was the source of the woman.

And the woman was also created for man as his helper and is oriented toward him. And that conveys the idea of the man's leadership and authority. And for Paul, he sees the creator's design and intentionality in this creational order.

[26 : 44] The fact that man came first as a source and the fact that he was called to be the head while the woman is called to be the helper in their relationship within Adam and Eve's marriage.

And so that's what he means when he says, as the law also says. So his point is that when women formally teach the whole church that they are violating that complementary relationship between men and women by their teaching.

So God appointed husbands to exercise headship and wives to exercise helpship in the family and those complementary roles are subverted when, for example, women teach the whole church of which their husbands are also a member, right?

To whom they are supposed to be submitted. And then secondly, because God appointed men who have the requisite calling and character and competence to serve as heads of the spiritual family of God, the church, the elders of the church, when women usurp that role for themselves by preaching in the context of corporate worship, when they formally teach scripture or theology for the whole church, they're again subverting that God-given design and relationship.

So that's the first reason that Paul gives for that prohibition. It's what the law teaches. And then Paul gives a second reason in verse 35. It is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

[28 : 03] The word shameful is the same word that Paul used in 1 Corinthians 11, 6 to say that in the same way it is disgraceful for a woman to cut off her hair or shave her head, it is disgraceful for her to pray her prophecy in the church with her head uncovered.

So shame is what we experience when we do something that is inappropriate or dishonorable, something improper. And because it transgresses the creational, the complementary gender roles that God has instituted, when a woman teaches the word in the context of corporate worship in the church, it brings shame.

It's seen as inappropriate. The converse, of course, is also true. When men and women fulfill their God-given complementary roles, gender roles, it is honorable. It is good.

Our attitude toward this teaching should not be one of begrudging concession, but of enthusiastic celebration. And when the sea proceeds and recedes in order without overflowing the banks and causing destruction, right?

When the earth rotates around its axis and revolves around the sun so that the sun rises and sets in orderly fashion, bringing light and rest to the world, there's goodness there.

[29 : 16] There is beauty there. There is order there. Likewise, when men and women relate to each other in accordance with God's created design, it is right.

It is good. It is honorable. And the fact that this command is given in the context of the corporate worship of the church is really a very important qualification that we must not forget.

So three times in verses 33 to 35, Paul said, repeated the word church. Follow with me. Verses 33 to 35. He says, as in all the churches of the saints, the woman should keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission as the law also says.

If there's anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. It's almost redundant. He says it over and over again because he wants to drive that point home.

Paul's not concerned with the role of women in society at large, but in the churches. And the church is a Greek word that means gathering or a congregation of believers.

[30 : 21] It's a gathering of Christians. The church, which is a colony of heaven on earth, is supposed to showcase a different ethic. It's supposed to exemplify God's creative design for men and women, for the world to see.

That's why it's significant that this has to be observed in the context of corporate worship. Furthermore, it's only within the community of God's people where men embody Christ-like sacrificial leadership.

And women embody Christ's humble submission to the Father. It's only in that community, only in that kind of a context where this command can be observed without degenerating into abuse and misogyny.

That's why he emphasizes in the churches, in the church. And Paul's not saying that women should never teach in any church context.

He says specifically in Titus 2-3 that older Christian women should teach what is good to the younger woman. It's only in the context of the whole church, the gathered church, where both men and women are present, young and old are gathered, that women are to refrain from teaching.

[31 : 30] And as a church, we work hard to try to equip women who are gifted to teach, to use those gifts in appropriate contexts. And with his two preceding guidelines relating to tongues and prophecy, Paul addressed both the speaking and the church's interaction with it, right?

So in verse 27, he says, if anyone speaks in the tongue, let someone interpret. So the speaking and then the interaction with the speaking, how the church should interact with it. And then again, in verse 29, Paul said, let two or three prophets speak and let the others weigh what is said.

So again, the speaking and the interaction with what is said. So there are two churches to weigh the prophets that are spoken. And I think verse 35 is following this exact pattern. So it's, in the ancient world, listeners customarily asked questions in response to lectures.

So just as, and it was a way of critiquing or interacting, dialoguing with the speaker. So just as the church interpreted tongues and weighed prophecies, they questioned teachings.

And, but in the context of public worship, women were not to partake in the formal teaching. And in that, Paul includes the formal questioning that goes with that. So bringing, critiquing the formal teaching of the church here.

[32 : 41] So because that, again, brings that person under the authority of the person who is leveling that critique. So if there is anything they desire to learn, he says, let them ask their husbands at home. The inquiry should be made in the private context of the home rather than in the public context of the church.

Now that, we don't have that kind of formal questioning in our church context, mainly because I don't want to be questioned by anybody. I'm just kidding. No, we have, there's too many people.

So we ask people to come up with questions after service. And so it's informal. So in that context, everybody could obviously ask questions. This is, this wouldn't apply to us because we don't practice that in the context of corporate worship.

Now, while it's easy, right, it's, I'm going to just digress for a little bit to then defend this. It's because it's easy for us nowadays to dismiss scriptural teaching on this as kind of a cultural artifact, of a regressive bygone era.

But we need to recognize how progressive this is, this teaching is, and downright how subversive it was at the time it was given. Because Paul's not, as we might think, simply regurgitating the cultural customs of his time.

[33 : 46] In the Roman Empire, a woman did not have the authority to speak for herself in public context. In fact, married women were not even allowed to be instructed by other men, men other than their husbands.

And for example, the first century Jewish historian Josephus says this in his book Against Apian, but let not the testimony of women be admitted on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.

Right? They didn't even let women's testimony be admitted in public context. And their testimony in legal cases were not heard. Similarly, Roman philosopher Philo writes this, marketplaces and council chambers and courts of justice and large companies and assemblies of numerous crowds and a life in the open air full of arguments and actions relating to war and peace are suited to men.

But taking care of the house and remaining at home are the proper duties of women. The virgins having their apartments in the center of the house within the innermost doors and the full-grown women not going beyond the vestibule and outer courts.

Right? That's the context in which the apostle Paul writes. And later, moral philosophers like Aristotle echoed sentiments. They didn't deviate from these. But Paul, in his letters, not only directly addresses women, even though he's not their husband, but teaches that they should receive instruction in the context of corporate worship from the elders of the church who are not their husbands.

[35 : 03] He expects a level of moral responsibility from women that was unprecedented in Greek thought. And so he does not prohibit women from participating in public society at large.

And he doesn't stop there. He encourages women to speak in the context of corporate worship through the use of their gift of prophecy and presumably the use of the tongues as well.

In Greco-Roman society, they were not even allowed to be instructed by someone other than their husband. But in the church, they were able to receive revelation from God himself and share that with the church.

The whole church. So it's a mistake to think that the Bible is merely echoing the culture of its times. It's not afraid to challenge where the culture is wrong. And if the idea of complimenting your general role still seems regressive or oppressive to you, then we need to consider that perhaps it's so because we are so enmeshed in our own culture.

In other cultures in Asia, the Middle East, in places of worship, sometimes women are not even admitted. Or if they are admitted, they're completely segregated from men. To them, leading this passage, this would seem way too progressive, not regressive.

[36 : 15] So if that's the case, why should our cultural sensitivities trump their cultural sensitivities? If the Bible really is the revelation of God, and therefore it is not the product of any single culture, but it transcends culture, even though it is written, of course, in culture, would it not challenge every culture at some point?

If it really is from God, would it not offend your cultural sensitivity? Sensibilities, and sinful preferences at some point? As Christian pastor Tim Keller often says, quote, if your God never disagrees with you, you might just be worshiping an idealized version of yourself.

Paul said in verse 33 that what he is teaching is the common practice in all the churches of the saints. Now, this is the fourth time in this letter Paul's correcting the Corinthians behavior by appealing to the practice of all the churches, other churches.

And if that was a strong argument in Paul's day when there were not as many churches and when they haven't had as much church history, this is a much stronger argument for us because for 1900 years of church history, every major stream of Christianity, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant have taught the differentiated rules of man and woman.

And even today, if you examined, even after the rise of feminism, if you examine the churches throughout the world and not just here in the U.S., in Western civilization, that is still the dominant teaching. And the Corinthians were acting presumptuously by deviating from such a well-attested practice.

[37 : 53] And so Paul admonishes them with two rhetorical questions in verse 36. Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?

They were acting in pride as if they were themselves the originators of God's word, as if they were unique in their reception of God's word. The word of God is another way to refer to God's revelation and usually it refers to God's ultimate revelation which is the gospel, the saving message of Jesus Christ.

So we did not invent the gospel, we did not originate the gospel, and we are not the only ones who have received the word of God, we are not the only ones who have the spirit of God, so like the ones who have gone before us, we should submit to God's word and be wary of departing from what churches have done and trying to twist the word of God to fit our purposes and preferences.

Thomas Jefferson is infamous for cutting out parts of the Bible that he found offensive or he found hard to believe and he glued together parts that he liked and he called it the Jefferson Bible, right?

And Thomas Jefferson was acting like he was the originator of the word of God. He made himself and not God the ultimate arbiter of truth.

[39 : 16] He did not follow God. He did not love Christ. He followed himself. He loved himself. He was not a Christian. He was a Jeffersonian.

So we must strive rather to be found on the side of all the churches of the saints. Paul continues in verses 37 to 38. 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.

If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. The guidelines that he has just produced for an orderly worship service is a command, not a suggestion. And if anyone is truly spiritual, he says, if anyone is truly a prophet, he would acknowledge and abide by his teaching.

And whoever does not recognize this teaching will himself be unrecognized. That repetition highlights the reciprocity. Whoever ignores Paul's teaching on these matters, whoever ignores the word of God on this matter will himself be ignored.

And then Paul concludes this passage by reiterating his main point in verses 39 to 40. So my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy and do not forbid speaking in tongues, but all things should be done decently and in order in this.

[40 : 28] And the reason why it's important that all things in the worship should be done decently and in order again is what he said in verse 33 because the God of worship is not a God of confusion, but of peace.

Now I want to speak to unbelievers that are missed for a moment because if you're not a believer, you're not yet a part of the church. Before you can observe any of these practices, receive any of these gifts to use them in the context of corporate worship, you need to first become a follower of Christ.

You need to receive the giver, the gift, the giver of all good gifts and come into relationship with them first before you can receive this gift. And the God is the God of peace. He's the one who orders all creation as it ought to be.

And we all need to come to Christ because we have deviated from that order in all of our lives, myself included. All of us have done this. God is the creator. He created the world.

He created men and women to follow Him, to obey Him, and to worship Him. And in that, to find their greatest fulfillment and to find their ultimate purposes met. But instead of following God, we have deviated from that creation order by rebelling against God, guilty of high treason, and seeking to live for ourselves and for our own glory.

[41 : 36] That's what every single human being on earth has done. That's what, we're all sinners. But God, in His grace, instead of leaving us to ourselves and saying, forget about you, He's the one, even though He's the offended party, He takes the initiative.

While we are still His enemies, He loves us, and He Himself comes to pay the price for our sin and our rebellion. And sends His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for our sins.

If anything in the history of mankind was disordered, that cross was disordered. Christ, who alone deserved glory, who deserved to sit at the right hand of the Father, came and died on that shame of the cross.

that's disordered. God did that so that He can bring us back in the right order of the relationship between Him and us. So if you're not a believer, come to Christ, repent of your sins and believe in Him.

And if you are already a believer, let me encourage you by sharing this, it might feel stifling, right, from one point of view to be silent and not speak out in tongues just because you don't have interpretation.

[42 : 53] Maybe you're singing or doing something and all of a sudden you receive tongues and you really want to share it, but I tell you no because you don't have interpretation. Yeah, that could feel stifling, right? Or it could feel stifling that when you have to sit down because someone else is prophesying and two or three have already prophesied so you don't get to share your prophecy.

That could be stifling as well. Likewise, it might feel stifling for women to be silent rather than being allowed to preach and teach the whole church in the context of corporate worship. But in all of those contexts, we can follow these guidelines joyfully because we know that this order that God commands is consistent with His character and He's the God of peace, He's good, and He's the God of love.

The Lord who commands silence in these various contexts is the same Lord who according to Isaiah 53, 7 was oppressed and afflicted yet opened not His mouth.

Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before it shears is silent, so He opened not His mouth. Jesus Christ, the Word of God itself, silenced before sinful men.

Why? So that He could save us. so that He could build us up, bring us into His family. He was punished so we could be free.

[44 : 23] Similarly, we then should use our gifts of speech in orderly ways for the building of the church. So let us gladly curb our freedoms. Let us gladly forego our rights.

Let us gladly submit ourselves to the God-given order within corporate worship for the glory of God and up-building of the church. Let's take a moment in silence to reflect on His teaching and then we'll respond by praying together.

Amen. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Amen. Thank you.