

ORDER IN THE CHURCH, part 2
1 Cor. 14:33b-40

Turn back to 1 Cor. 14...

I was blown away this week reading about how precisely our universe is designed so that life can exist on this one blue planet, the only place so far in the entire universe where life has been found. – Do you realise how incredibly God has fine-tuned everything? – All the world's finest engineers and architects combined could begin to match this kind of perfect calibration!

There are supposedly over 100 different parameters necessary for life to exist here. – If any one of these is off, even by one millionth of a part, 'kaboom', it's over for Earth: from nuclear forces, to gravitational & electromagnetic forces, speed of light & distance between stars; tilt of the earth; distance of earth from sun's heat, and moon's gravitational pull; thickness of earth's crust; length of a day. – All of these must be perfectly aligned.

Then there is the recently discovered complexity of the DNA molecule – with its 3 billion genetic letters, giving instructions to the 100 trillion cells in our body. – Study the masterful engineering behind whip-like flagellum on one minute little bacteria cell. – OR study the human eye, made of over 40 different components, with far more sub-components. – If any one of these failed, you wouldn't be looking at me right now.

In response to all this, we cannot help but cry out with the psalms, "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!"

Or, we can say with Paul in 1 Cor. 14: vv. 33a, 40...

Give title...

NB, HOW else has this God of perfect precision, the Architect of the universe, chosen to put His glory on display on this earth? –

WHERE does the NT tell us that God has *especially* chosen to manifest His name, His order & His beauty? –

Even more than in His vast universe, God wants to showcase His skill & craftsmanship in His Church. – Even more than in the wonders of the human body, God wants to exhibit His majesty in the body of Christ, the local church. (cf. Eph. 2-3, etc.)

Stand, Read vv. 33-40 & Pray:

****FIVE TRUTHS about God-honouring, orderly worship – the kind of worship that doesn't tear us down but builds us up instead:***

First two covered already last week...

1. v. 26, The RULE: 'Only What Edifies!'
2. vv. 27-33a, The REGULATIONS
 - a. vv. 27-28, TONGUES – Four regulations
 - b. vv. 29-33, PROPHECY – Six regulations

Today three more truths for God-honouring, orderly worship...

3. vv. 33b-35, The RESTRICTION (for women)

Now, elsewhere in Paul's writings, his greatest emphasis is on ALL that women CAN do in ministry. – And we mustn't allow prohibitions like this to blind us to the full biblical view of the diverse, multi-faceted roles of women in the church. –

Paul gladly and frequently spoke of the indispensable role of Christian women in his ministry – the Phoebes and Junias and Eudias and Synteches. – Paul was FAR from a male chauvinist.

The NT is abundantly clear that women have spiritual gifts – gracious gifts from God, given for the building up of Christ's entire body, needed by the whole church family. –

The Bible gives women an exalted place in the human household and in God's household – esp. in areas of serving, hospitality, love, nurturing children, teaching other women, and so on. – Women do many things that men could *never dream of doing half as well*.

However, still there are some God-given restrictions:

v. 33b – Doesn't make sense for Paul to assure us that God is the same "in all the churches", which should be pretty obvious. – Makes more sense to start a new sentence after "peace" (as in NIV; HCSB; ESV): read vv. 33b-34a...

I.e., 'We all want to be the exception! Yes, Paul, I know, BUT you don't understand the climate at Corinth. If we try that here, it'll never work. We'll chase people away. We'll have a mob of angry women on our hands, etc.'

But Paul says: v. 33b – i.e., 'I'm just being consistent. I'm not gunning for you or picking on certain churches. I teach the same everywhere, in every church.' – Paul has appealed to this motivation 3x already in 1 Cor.:

4:17, "just as I teach everywhere in every church"; 7:17, "And so I direct in ALL the churches"; 11:16, "We have no other practice, nor have the churches of God."

vv. 34-35 – Yikes; just reading that in public today could get you in trouble, esp. if you wait until this Friday to read it to everyone – since it JUST so happens to be Women's Day! ☺ (God's timing is impeccable!)

+ Here's how one modern feminist tells us what she thinks about the traditional view of gender roles: *Once upon a time, in a land far away, a beautiful princess happened upon a frog.... The frog hopped into the princess's lap and said, 'Elegant lady, I once was a handsome prince, until an evil witch cast a spell on me. One kiss from you, however, and I will turn back into the dapper, handsome, and charming prince that I was, and then my sweet, we can marry and [I will take you home to my castle where you can keep house], prepare meals, clean my clothes, bear my children, and forever feel grateful and happy doing so.*

...That night, on a repast of lightly sautéed frog legs seasoned in white wine and onion cream sauce, the princess chuckled to herself and thought, 'I don't think so.'

The battles of the sexes rages today, as it also raged in ancient Corinth. – Few subjects in Scripture call us to swim upstream against society more than this one – the biblical role of women.

As I told you back in chp. 11, we (and all Sola5 churches) are unashamedly complimentary in our view on the biblical teaching on gender roles, holding that men & women are equal in value but distinct & complimentary in roles & functions. –

However, most of Christianity today is not complimentary, but rather *egalitarian*, holding that men & women are equal in every way and can do most or all of the same roles in the home & church.

+ Ligon Duncan notes, “There is no more easily observable example of today’s widespread rejection of the Bible in church than the ever-growing number of female preachers.” –

Female co-pastors cover the billboards of today. – Female worship leaders set the pace and shape the trends. – Some of the best proofs of so-called revival today are all the ladies in church prophesying and speaking in tongues. – Many charismatic groups were begun and founded by women.

WHAT THEN do egalitarians do with a tough text like this? – Well, you’d be amazed at their acrobatic feats in trying to get around it. – For example, some just say outright that these 2 vss. are so shocking that Paul could not have written, but that it was a later scribal addition. – YET there is not ONE Greek mss lacking these verses.

Others try more subtle tactics to explain away this text. – But in the end, they all come up short, while this passage stands there in our Bibles, waiting to be explained and applied and obeyed by God’s people. –

NB, the context (6x) of chp. 14 is all about what edifies – so this is not given to tear women or any of us down, but to build us up and mature us as a church.

So WHAT is Paul saying? – In the context here of chp. 14, Paul is calling for the ladies to refrain from tongues or prophecy or any public speaking in the worship service.

Instead, they are to:

Subject themselves – To WHOM? – To answer this, turn over to the other key place where Paul teaches on this same thing, on the role of women in public worship:

1 Tim. 2:11-12 – Same root word, “submission, to line up under, to subordinate and place yourself under a higher authority”. – Plus, NB, “all, full, entire”, b/c he knows the temptation to do so half-heartedly.

To WHOM? – Cf. 1 Tim. 3:1ff, i.e., the male elders of the church, the primary teachers & shepherds of the church, the overseers to whom Christ has entrusted the leading & feeding of HIS flock.

But WHY? – Is this just b/c of a unique, cultural problem at Ephesus or Corinth? – Was it just b/c women of that day were less educated than women today? – Not so: 1 Tim. 2:13:

I.e., In Gen. 1-3, Moses makes it clear that men & women are created *equal* in God's image, but *different* in role & function. – Man was created “first” and called to lead. – Woman was created 2nd, *after* man.

As Paul himself put it back in 1 Cor. 11, “For man does not originate from the woman, but woman from the man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.”

That's God's good & wise design: woman made after the man, from the man, for the man.

+ WHY didn't God just make Adam & Eve at the same time on Day 6, which He could've easily done? – Why not just say, 'OK, you're a team, nobody is the coach, you both joined the team at the same time, play together, help each other out, share & enjoy!'

But God didn't do it that way: reread 1 Tim. 2:13 – God made Adam first as founder or coach of the team. – Then said, 'Eve, I'm putting you on Adam's team to help him out and make it better – much, much better!'

Next: 1 Tim. 2:14 – This is what happened when Eve tried to start her own team, which she was never designed to do. – No, she was made to function under Adam's protection & leadership. –

But the opposing team, Satan, knew the winning strategy: isolate her from Adam, appeal to her independence, lure her away from male headship. – Thus the whole human race was ruined.

→So also, says Paul, it will ruin a church if the women defy male leadership in the church and try to take the reins which God never designed for them to have.

NOW BACK to 1 Cor. 14. – In 1 Tim. 2, Paul clearly grounds his argument in universally binding, creation principles that transcend all cultures and generations. – Let's see if he makes his case any differently at Corinth?:

v. 34d – Same basis as in 1 Tim. 2: the OT Law. – In fact, Paul's basis here is so assumed as obvious that he sees no need to specify which part of the OT. – Really the whole tenor of the OT establishes this pattern of male leadership and female submission. (That's why this has been the custom of the Jewish synagogues throughout history.)

Specifically, Paul probably has Genesis in mind again, just as in 1 Tim. 2: Men & women *equal* in God's image, but *different* in role & function.

NB, Paul never tires of showing how his view on gender roles is rooted deep in the soil of Genesis. – 1 Cor. 11, 14; 1 Tim. 2; Eph. 5 with marriage...

As in the OT, so also we see this pattern of male leadership across the pages of the NT: WHO did Jesus choose to be the first Twelve leaders of His newly established Church? – Men.

1 Tim. 3 & Titus 1 & Acts (20:30, etc.) – all elders were to be?... “husband of one wife”, i.e., male.

The head of a marriage & home is to be? – Gen. 2, Eph. 5, Col. 3, 1 Pet. 3, etc. – the husband.

WHAT is the ultimate illustration that male headship & female submission has NOTHING to do with intelligence or education or worth or value? – Turn back to 11:3...

Is Jesus less than God, or inferior in any way? – Never! – Only that they have different roles & functions.

WHAT THEN about 1 Cor. 11:5? – Is this a contradiction?...

Not at all. – chp. 11 is not about instructions for corporate worship, as in chp. 14. – Paul is only regulating what they were already doing, not necessarily giving it his full approval. – But when he comes to chp. 14, then it is clear what is Paul's over-arching, general principle on the woman's role in corporate worship.

I believe (with Calvin, Matthew Henry & others) that we should read chp. 11 in light of chp. 14 which is a much clearer, direct instruction from Paul on the woman's non-vocal role in the worship service. – And not vice-versa, as some do. (Cf. 8:10 & 10:21 for similar pattern)

Back to chp. 14. – Now in v. 35 Paul puts it even more strongly:

v. 35 – Paul says it is: “improper, disgraceful”, same as was used 3 in chp. 11. I.e., “ugly, deformed, disgusting, attractive”, the LAST thing a lady wants to be, the opposite of all that God has wired a woman for!

NB, the issue here is not whether women are competent, intelligent, or clever enough. – NO, the issue is how they relate to male leadership in the church and home. – God knows that a woman is most (opposite of “improper, etc.”) “attractive, graceful, beautiful, and proper” when she?...

...Gladly affirms male leadership in the home & church as God's best for her & for everyone.

+ Hudson Taylor wisely applies Paul's teaching in a letter he wrote in 1868 to a single female missionary (Miss Faulding) on the field in China:

I do not know when I may be able to return, and it will not do for Church affairs to wait for me. You cannot take a Pastor's place in name, but you must help (Wang) Lae-djun to act in matters of receiving and excluding as far as you can (i.e., membership).

You can speak privately to candidates, and can be present at Church meetings, and might even, through others, suggest questions to be asked of those desiring baptism. Then after the meeting you can talk privately with Lae-djun about them, and suggest who you think he might receive next time they meet. Thus he may have the help he needs, and there will be nothing that any one could regard as unseemly.

NB, Hudson Taylor's great concern for what is “seemly, proper” (vv. 35b, 40), b/c God's own character was on display, v. 33a... 1 Cor. 13:5, “love does not act unbecomingly”.

→Yes, the ladies would have to control their curiosity until they got home from church, lest their questions disrupt the worship service. But NB, Paul is encouraging them to learn. – Paul did not share the view of many in the ancient world that education was for men only.

Paul & the Bible have done more to raise the view of women and female dignity than any other religion! – As Paul says in 1 Tim. 2, “let them LEARN!” – So here, “if they desire to LEARN”. – Ladies, God wants you to use your mind, ask your questions, feed your soul, reach your God-given potential – grow, grow, grow!...

~ Historian Alvin Schmidt, after his vast survey of history, concludes: *Before Christianity arrived, century upon century had brought little or no freedom or dignity to women in any pagan culture. In short, where else do women have more freedom, opportunity, and human worth than in countries that have been highly influenced by the Christian ethic?*

→BUT what about widows & singles without a husband to consult? Or those married to an unbeliever, or a weaker believer?

Answer: Paul gives the general case of a married couple. – He assumes that the Corinthians can then make appropriate applications for single women. – They should know of godly men or leaders in the church whom they could speak to afterwards.

→What about asking questions in Bible Hour, or in small groups? – I think that is different, if done in an appropriate way that is respectful and submissive. – It is not a worship service; it is a different, less formal gather of PART of the church. –

Cf. Acts 18, “Priscilla and Aquila...took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (v. 26).

Paul is NOT excluding women from participating in the natural flow of conversation & fellowship between Christians. – Sharing what you’ve learned, praying for one another, etc.

→What about women on worship team, or singing solos?! – Well, that’s just obedience. – The WHOLE church is commanded to sing to one another, Eph. 5, Col, 3, etc.!

Paul’s concern here is women “speaking” (x2), i.e., teaching or asking or talking in any way that would dishonour God’s design for male leadership in the worship service.

→MEN: Don’t miss the huge implication here. – Matthew Henry said, ‘If it is a shame for our wives to speak in church when they should be silent, it is a shame for us to be silent at home when we should speak.’ – If it’s her duty to ask at home, it’s OUR duty to have an answer at home!

Brothers, are you the resident theologian in your home. – And if not, what will it take for you to become that? – *It’s not usually the radical changes, but the daily habits that make the difference:*

E.G., daily Bible reading & prayer; regular family worship, catechism and/or Scripture memory; small groups, Iron Men; Christian books, etc.!...

→Let's start real simple, men: No matter how crazy your weeks are, let's just think about making the most of Sundays: opportunity for 3 square meals, that's 11 meals a month (b/c of picnic), 132 messages a year if you made every Sunday. –

But let's say you miss a few, but still over 5 years you could've easily heard over 500 teachings from Scripture.

If you listen & believe & obey what you hear, that WILL make a theologian of you (as IS making many of you one already!). – And it WILL make you that kind of husband that a wife wants to come to with her questions!

And imagine what kind of marriages this will make? – And what kind of church this will make?!...

→Young ladies: This is the kind of man you look for – who can lead you spiritually. – Settle for nothing less than this!

→Young men: This is the kind of woman you look for – one who will ask & listen & let you lead. – Settle for nothing less than this!

Now Paul (like today) anticipates the push back coming his way after such unpopular words...

4. vv. 36-38, The RECOGNITION

v. 36 – I.e., 'Did Christianity begin at Corinth? Is this the New Jerusalem? Did you forget that the Church was birthed at the real Jerusalem over 20 yrs ago? And that apostolic teaching has gone out by now to plant and establish many churches? You have no right to behave differently than other churches, or expect that you deserve special favours or permission. You don't have a corner on the truth.'

→i.e., 'If you didn't write Scripture, then your job is obey it. Don't stand in judgment *over* the Word. Bow in humility *under* the Word.'

v. 37 – Continuing some of his sarcasm from v. 36, Paul says: 'You gifted Corinthians, you prophets and spiritual ones, put your gift to good use in this way':

'Discern that I speak to you with a unique apostolic authority, that what I write to you is from the very mouth of the Lord, from the risen Christ Himself Who commissioned me.'

I'm not just giving you my experience, or good advice, nice suggestions, wise ideas, or my own cultural bias or male chauvinism.' – No: v. 37b...

As Paul has said to them before, 'What I received from the Lord, I deliver to you.' – I'm not the author; I'm just the messenger!...

The Apostle John sums it up best: 1 Jn. 4:6, "We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

→Beloved, when the Bible speaks, God speaks. – Nothing in the world is more serious than how we respond to the commands of this Book. – Either we will live UNDER it, or we

will live over it in some way. – Even if we claim that the Bible is ‘one of the top authorities’ in our life, we are standing over the Bible, b/c it makes exclusive claims to be the ONLY Word of God. – It allows no rivals, and does not share the throne with other powers or voices.

v. 37b...

We submit to Scripture, OR ELSE:

v. 38 – Here’s the clearest way to detect a false prophet: Some were saying, ‘We don’t need Paul’s help anymore. We’ve got the Holy Spirit, we’ve got tongues & prophecies, we’ve outgrown Mr. Apostle over there!’

So Paul replies (nb, his play on words), ‘If you think my teaching is invalid, then God will not validate you. If you choose to be ignorant on this, you’ll be ignored. If you don’t want to know, you won’t be known.’

→What a sobering warning: who wants to be ignored by God Himself, unrecognised & rejected?! – i.e., treated as an unbeliever.

→Want to know if you are *saved*? – Here’s one of the best tests: Do you welcome God’s Word (1 Thess. 1-2), or do you stiff-arm it?

Isa. 66:2b, “...to this one I will look: to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.”

HOW do you respond when you hear the truth of the gospel – the bad news & the good news [explain]?...

→Repeat v. 38... Friend, what good is ALL the recognition in the world if God Himself is against you and does not recognise you? – Conversely, ‘If God is for us, who can be against us?!’ – If God accepts you, you can fall the rejection in the world, because you cling to His precious promises!...

5. vv. 39-40, The REITERATION

v. 39 – I.e., ‘Those of you with these miraculous gifts, use them, for the good of the body!’ Here again we met a very important principle in life: the abuse of something does not invalidate the thing itself. – Or, ‘Don’t throw out the baby with the bathwater.’

Seems that some in the Corinthian church were so frustrated by the outbursts of attention-seekers, with their uninterpreted tongues, that they were tempted to ban tongues altogether. – But Paul says not to. – When it comes to biblical tongues – speaking an unlearned foreign language as a sign to the Jews – welcome it.

BUT as for any other kinds of unbiblical tongues, this verse cannot apply. – It has no relevance whatsoever, b/c Paul is assuming only the category of biblical, legitimate tongues.

v. 40 – Paul coming full circle to where he began back in v. 26d. – How will “all things” edify in the church? – BY being done: v. 40...

~ Someone has said, 'The Holy Spirit who brings ardour (passion) is also the One who brings order (precision).'

Properly = lit, "good" + *skema*, where we get "scheme, plan, pattern" today. – This is more of an artistic term: "well-formed, decently, gracefully, beautifully, fitting, comely, harmoniously" –

I.e., in a way that leaves a pleasing impression to the viewer (esp. to mature believers). – Cf. same word in 13:5, love "is not rude; doesn't act unbecomingly".

→You've heard about 'indecent exposure', but what about *indecent worship*??...

Orderly = A military term: "disciplined, organised", each person doing his duty, knowing when & how to perform it. – A well-ordered battalion of soldiers on the march, compared to an angry mob on a mindless rampage or toy-toy.

+ I heard of a church building project that was going badly, and everything had gone haywire on site. – Until they finally realised:

The lumberyard supplying the materials had a different set of plans than the contractor on site. – Oops!

→*YET if we fail to following Christ's plans & principles for us here in His Word, we will run into the same chaos spiritually!* – The plans are not up to us. – He has given them already, right here in His Word!...

WHAT would v. 40 look like to Paul? – Like what he just showed us in vv. 26ff – review points....

But it would apply even further back: chp. 13, chp. 12, chp. 11 on head coverings & Lord's Supper. – Why make such a big deal about those details? – Repeat: v. 40...

→Applies to church buildings also! – Pray for the building committee in their designing and finalising of plans!...

WHY so important? – Because God's nature is on display, cf. v. 33a...

~ "God is a God of beauty and harmony, of propriety and order, and all things that His children do should reflect those divine characteristics." (J. Mac)

→Here is why we do lots of things at church to try and be organised & orderly and not sloppy & careless:

E.G., having a Decl. Of Faith, a Covenant, and a Constitution, our founding documents rooted in Scripture;

...from membership classes & process, to members mtgs...

...to regular leaders' meetings, with minutes...

...to church services that start on time, and usually end about the same time...

...with sermons that have some structure & outline, and a bulletin & a newsletter each week...

EACH church will do this a bit differently and apply these principles uniquely. – But unless or until we find a better way to reflect God’s character and have order in His church, we’ll stick with our imperfect-but-chosen way of doing things.

...always keeping the GOAL in mind: not order (as an end in itself), but v. 26, edification, the growth of Christ’s body, outwards & upwards!...

CONCL. – Do you know what was one of the first insults thrown at the Puritans? – Possibly even before they were called ‘Puritans’, they were called ‘Precisians, Precisionists’? – WHY?

Because in contrast to the Catholicism & Anglicanism of the day, the Puritans had a much higher view of God and His Word. – They were calling for a reforming of the church & its worship back to the patterns of Scripture. – Because the Puritans were so Scripture-saturated, they had strong & specific views on not only the gospel essentials, but also on gender roles, on how a church should be led and should worship, and on how to live all of life to God’s glory!

When one puritan was out riding his horse with a local lord of the manor, the lord asked this puritan what made him so precise about everything? – He replied, ‘O sir, I serve a precise God.’

And so God used the Puritans to win many to Christ, to establish godly homes & churches, and to transform nations for the glory of God.

Repeat: vv. 40, 26d, 33a....

PRAY: ...Lord, show us ways that we can be more decent & orderly as a church. – Forgive us for being indecent and disorderly in the ways we serve You. – May the world visit us and see a reflect of You, a reflect of Your beauty and order, Your peace & harmony, Your love & power to save...