



1 Corinthians 14:26-33a

26 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. **27** If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. **28** But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. **29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. **30** If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. **31** For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, **32** and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. **33** For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

Try to picture the busy scene that Paul describes in worship. How many people are getting up speaking (in tongues or prophecy)? How would you follow what was going on and learn with all the commotion? What is Paul's solution?

1 Corinthians 14:33b-35

As in all the churches of the saints, **34** the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. **35** 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.

*Paul writes, "women should keep silent," but what would give you reason to think twice about what he means here? What did Paul say about women speaking in church already? **Read 1 Corinthians 11:4-5.***

If Paul expects there to be women prophets leading in worship, how does that influence your reading of this passage??

In chapter 14 Paul has been writing about speaking in church and not speaking in church, trying to maintain order in the church's worship service. He has told both those speaking in tongues and speaking prophecy to be silent. He tells them to be silent to protect worship and encourage peace and the building up of the body. He doesn't tell them to be silent because they have no place in worship-- Paul lifts up their value in these chapters. In that context, it is not unlikely that he is telling women now to be silent because of disruptions in worship that may have occurred as women, in that time usually less educated and separated from the men in worship, were talking with each other or speaking to their husbands asking questions in order to better understand what was being said. Paul would rather that take place elsewhere and he values peace over confusion and commotion when the church gathers.

How have other interpretations of this passage shaped the role of women in the church and elsewhere?

1 Corinthians 14:36-40

36 Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? **37** 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. **38** If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. **39** So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. **40** But all things should be done decently and in order.

Perhaps sensing some opposition or knowing there are those in the church in Corinth who would do things very differently from what he has described in this chapter, Paul strengthens what he has said by arguing that it is a command of the Lord. If someone didn't agree to act in this way, what would happen?

How else can we value decency and order in worship? How can we do so in a way that remembers the purpose behind it is to build up the body, not just to keep things neat and tidy?

1 Kings 19:9-13

9 There [Elijah] came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 He said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." 11 And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. 13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Try to visualize this scene. Picture all that passed Elijah by. Imagine the smells and the heat. What stands out to you in Elijah's encounter with God?

God didn't speak in the commotion--the wind, earthquake, nor the fire. But he did speak in the peaceful whisper. What can we do to find peaceful times to not only speak to God, but to be intentional about listening for his voice, his low whisper?

How can you apply these Scriptures to your life?