

Discovering God's Wisdom

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Lesson 18 1 Corinthians 14:20-40

Searching the Scriptures for hidden treasure

"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure." Psalm 119:162

In this portion of chapter 14, Paul continues his teaching on the distinction between tongues and prophecy. He ended our passage last week with very strong words! He said that although he, himself, spoke in tongues, *in the church* he would rather speak 5 words with his understanding, in order that he could teach others, than *10,000* words in a tongue. What might those 5 words have been? Perhaps, "*Jesus died for your sins.*"

First Day: Read 1 Corinthians 14:20-25

As we begin our study today, we need to remember, again, the fact that the Corinthians were putting undo emphasis on the seemingly spectacular gift of tongues. The rest of chapter 14 is really a word of instruction to the church concerning the two gifts we have been studying.

1. Paul begins this section with an exhortation to the Corinthians *not to be children...*
 - a. When were they to be *babes*?
 - b. When were they to be *mature*?
2. Paul has already spoken to them about this problem in chapter 3. What did he communicate to them in the following verses of chapter 3:
verse 1?
verse 2?
verse 3?
3. In the past, how did God use foreign or strange speech? 1 Corinthians 14:21
 - a. Although this is not an exact quote, this verse was taken in part from Isaiah 28:11. From your understanding of Israel's history and this verse (you may notice the words, "*And yet, for all that...*"), why do you think God did this?
 - b. What was the result of the *other tongues* according to verse 21?

- c. What was Paul's conclusion in verse 22?
4. What would be the response of an unbeliever entering into a worship session of only tongues? v. 23
- a. Have you ever had this experience? Do you know anyone who has? What did you/they think?
 - b. What would be the response and result of an unbeliever entering into a worship session of prophecy? (List the unbeliever's reaction in the stages Paul gives in these verses.) v. 24-25
 - c. Explain the difference between these 2 scenarios (tongues and prophecy).

Making It Personal...

5. Paul says, "*In evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature.*" Is there a way you can be a *babe in evil* in your circumstance right now? Share.
- a. What are some ways we can be mature in our thinking (in general)?
 - b. Is there a way you can be *mature in your thinking* in your circumstances right now? Share.

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Consider how the Corinthians' *childishness* was shown in their preference for tongues.
- ❖ How could *mature thinking* correct their discrepancy in this area?
- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

Pearl of Great Price

"Let all things be done decently and in order." 1 Corinthians 14:40 This is your memory verse—begin memorizing it today!

Second Day: Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-33

In this chapter, where Paul seeks to give the Corinthians a proper understanding of the gifts of prophecy and tongues, he gives the goal in verse 12 when he says, “*Let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.*”

The worship session that Paul describes in the passage at hand may be a little different from what we know today. It may have been more like what we experience in a prayer meeting.

1. Make a list of the elements Paul says may be included in the meeting he describes. See if you can follow each element with a description of what that would be.
 - a. What again is the goal of all that is done in this meeting? v. 26

Paul now begins to give specific *guidelines* for the gifts we have been studying...

2. What are the three guidelines for tongues in verse 27?
 - ✓
 - ✓
 - ✓
 - a. One more guideline is given in verse 28. Paul says that if there is no interpreter, the one who speaks in tongues should be *silent*:
 - ✓ *Where?* What does this mean?
 - ✓ *What should he do instead of speaking in tongues out loud in the church?* What does this mean?

Notice that Paul’s *prescription* for this particular situation fits in exactly with his description for the gift of tongues in verse 2.

3. What are the two guidelines for prophecy?
 - ✓
 - ✓
 - a. What do you think Paul means when he says, *let others judge*?
4. What is the guideline for a revelation that comes in the midst of prophecy?

We need to remember that the prophesying referred to here is different from what we know today as preaching. This is not referring to a service in which the Pastor is in the midst of giving his message or reading from Scripture. We might best think of it in terms of a prayer meeting, when each one present is given their opportunity to share in prayer.

- a. How should this service proceed according to verse 31?
- b. What little bit of information does verse 32 give to the one who has a word or a tongue? Do you know what this means?
- c. What is the purpose of the guidelines given here? v. 33 If you see confusion in a worship service, what will that reveal to you?

Making It Personal...

5. Speaking of the orderliness of the worship service, Paul says that when the prophets speak, the others are to judge...
 - a. How should we, as *hearers*, be doing this very thing every time a message proclaimed in our worship services today? (We can let the Bereans be our example in this—see Acts 17:11!) *Do you do this?*
 - b. How is this in line with Paul's words in verse 20, "*In understanding be mature*"?

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

Third Day: Read 1 Corinthians 14:34-40

The passage we will look at today can be very confusing and has been very misunderstood. As always, we need to be *mature in our understanding!* We need to compare Scripture with Scripture and also take into consideration the situation of the day.

1. Still in the guideline mode, what guidelines does Paul give for the women in the church?

verse 34

verse 35

The word for silent in verse 34 is the same word Paul used in verses 28 and 30—*sigao*—which means to keep silent, keep close (secret, silence), hold peace. In each of those cases (verses 28 and 30) it was given as an assurance of keeping order within the church, which is what our passage today is predominantly about. It has to do with submitting to the *order* of the moment and keeping silent at a particular time. The issue is not men versus women, but confusion versus order.

2. How does 1 Corinthians 11:5 help us to realize that Paul *did* allow women to speak in the church?

Paul's concern has to do with confusion, "*For God is not the author of confusion but of peace*" (verse 33).

- b. Try to explain what Paul might have been communicating to the men and the women (really husbands and wives) at the Corinthian church about talking during the worship service.

In a word of sarcasm, as well as a word of authority, Paul asks the Corinthians if the word of God had come originally from *them*, or if they were the only church it had reached. Paul himself had brought the teaching of Jesus Christ to the Corinthian church, and he was the one who had the authority to correct them concerning the subject at hand.

3. What does Paul consider the words he is sharing with them at this time? v. 37
 - a. What does he consider anyone who refuses to accept his words as true? v. 38
 - b. What is his final word on the subject of prophecy and tongues? v. 39
 - c. What is his final word on church etiquette? v. 40

That word for *decently* means with beauty and honesty, and the word for *order* speaks of arrangement and perfection!

Making It Personal...

4. Is there any way that you, as a woman in the church today, might apply Paul's final word on orderliness to your own church etiquette?

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Tie this week's memory verse (1 Corinthians 14:40) with the heart of what Paul is saying in this chapter as a whole.

Fourth Day:

Deeper Discoveries

This portion of the lesson will take a closer look at some of the words in the chapter. You will need to have your tools—or resources at hand: more than one Bible translation, a dictionary or Bible dictionary, concordance, atlas, and encyclopedia. (If you don't have all of these, simply use what you do have to enrich your learning.)

Using the tools you have at hand, do some digging into the following terms. Start with your dictionary (or Bible dictionary), and then look up the references to add to your understanding. If you have additional resources, you may want to keep digging (making notes in the margins). After you've completed the investigative process, write a definition in your own words. Your investigation in today's lesson will lay the groundwork for tomorrow's study, so be as thorough as you can in your research.

Decently (14:40) *“Let all things be done decently...”*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? Romans 13:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:12

❖ Write your own definition: _____

In order (14:40) *“Let all things be done decently and in order..”*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? 1 Corinthians 11:34; Titus 1:5

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Fifth Day:

Heartsearch

Are you walking worthy of your high calling? Are you applying the wisdom of God to your daily life? Get ready for some self-discovery! This portion of the lesson will give you the opportunity to examine your heart, express your mind, and experience your lesson, by applying what you are learning to everyday circumstances.

Worship Involves Body Ministry

“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” Romans 14:19

The Bible does not specifically give the order for the worship service in the church, but here in 1 Corinthians 14:26 we have a pretty good idea of what went on in the early church service: *“Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”* In other words, when the body of Christ comes together to worship, God expects us to have something to share with one another! Our motive should not be to receive a blessing for ourselves (even though we do), but rather to lift up our hearts in praise, and to reach out our hands in service.

1. Please take a moment to give some thought to the following and then record your comments.
 - Briefly recall an instance when the worship service left an impact on you and why.
 - Do you leave the worship service a better person than when you entered?
 - What kind of positive statement does your presence in a worship service make to other Christians?
 - What does your absence prevent you from doing? See Hebrews 10:24-25
 - What promise is there for you when you actively put God first? Matthew 6:33
 - What should your motive be when you assemble to worship with other saints? Matthew 20:28

Have you ever considered that the worship assembly is called a “service” because it is a time of serving? We minister to God with our praise and thanksgiving, because of who He is and the fact that He is worthy. We minister to one another through the use of our gifts, because we are given the privilege and the duty to strengthen and edify the body.

The following list represents some of the ways in which *body ministry* takes place whenever believers assemble together to worship. Though not an all-inclusive list, it does give us a pretty good perspective of the kind of ministry that can, and should, take place as part of our offering of praise to God.

2. Please look up each of the following references and write down—using just a word or two—*how* we are encouraged to minister to one another. This is body ministry in action—name the action...

Romans 12:10

Ephesians 4:32

Romans 12:16

Colossians 3:16

Romans 15:7

1 Thessalonians 4:18

1 Corinthians 12:25

1 Thessalonians 5:11

1 Corinthians 16:20

Hebrews 3:13

Galatians 5:13

James 5:16

Galatians 6:2

1 John 1:7

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:10

Heartsearch: Briefly look back over your *entire lesson* before filling in the following.

❖ *Examine your heart*

What has God put His finger on through your study and brought to light in a new way? (What did you learn about yourself?)

❖ *Express your mind*

What change has this week’s study brought about in your thought process? What difference will this make in how you view your current circumstances?

❖ *Experience your lesson*

What nugget of wisdom from your lesson do you plan to apply to your life?

Sixth Day:

Laying Up Treasure

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6:19-21*

The highest calling of the believer, and the most important way to lay up treasure in heaven, is through intercessory prayer. You will want to give thoughtful consideration to what you record on this page, as it will be the basis for your prayer during group time. The format for this day of your lesson is based upon the ACTS method of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In addition to these four, there is space provided for you to keep track of answered prayers, people and things you want to pray for in the coming week, and also a place to write out this week’s Scripture verse from memory.

Using the lesson as your focal point, write out your prayer for each of the following:

I praise God for (an aspect of His marvelous character) _____

I confess to God that I _____

I thank God for _____

I am asking God _____

Praise for answered prayer: _____

People/things I want to pray for this coming week: _____

Pearl of Great Price: _____

Notes