

# 1 Corinthians 14:33-40 “Decently; Orderly; Excellently”

**1 Corinthians 12:1** Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

**1 Corinthians 12:31** But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

**1 Corinthians 14:40** **Let all things be done decently and in order.**

## Decently

- εὐσχημόνως [*euschemonos* /yoo·skhay·mon·ose/] From 2158; GK 2361; Three occurrences; AV translates as “**honestly**” twice, and “decently” once. <sup>1</sup>

## Orderly

- τάξις [*taxis* /tax·is/] From 5021; GK 5423; 10 occurrences; AV translates as “order” 10 times.
  - 1 an arranging, arrangement.
  - 2 order; a fixed succession observing a fixed time.
  - 3 due or right order, orderly condition.
  - 4 the post, rank, or position which one holds in civic or other affairs. <sup>2</sup>

## Excellently

- ὑπερβολή [*hyperbole* /hoop·er·bol·ay/] From 5235; TDNT 8:520; TDNTA 1230; GK 5651; Eight occurrences; AV translates as “far more + 2596” once, “exceeding + 2596” once, “more excellent + 2596” once, “out of measure + 2596” once, “beyond measure + 2596” once, “excellency” once, “abundance” once, **beyond measure, exceedingly, preeminently; beyond all measure.** <sup>3</sup>

## In the ancient world the place of women was low.

- In the Greek world Sophocles had said, “Silence confers grace upon a woman.”
- Women, unless they were very poor or very loose in their morals, led a very secluded life in Greece.
  - Women were rarely seen in public and never without husbandly escort
  - Women in public alone were immediately considered prostitutes.
  - Women were never allowed into public debates
  - Women would more likely be killed than allowed to have authority over a man.
- **The Jews had an even lower idea of women.**
  - Amongst the Rabbinic sayings there are many which belittle their place. “As to teaching the law to a woman one might as well teach her to sin.”

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GK Goodrick-Kohlenberger  
AV Authorized Version

<sup>1</sup>Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G2156). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

GK Goodrick-Kohlenberger  
AV Authorized Version

<sup>2</sup>Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G5010). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament  
TDNTA Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume

GK Goodrick-Kohlenberger  
AV Authorized Version

<sup>3</sup>Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G5236). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

- To teach the law to a woman was “to cast pearls before swine.”
- The Talmud lists among the plagues of the world “the talkative and the inquisitive widow and the virgin who wastes her time in prayers.”
- It was even forbidden to speak to a woman on the street. “One must not ask a service from a woman, or salute her.”<sup>4</sup>
- Unmarried women never left their apartments, except on occasions of festal processions, either as spectators or participants. Even after marriage they were largely confined to the *gynaeconitis* or *women’s rooms*.<sup>5</sup>
- **It was in a society like that that Paul wrote this passage.**
  - In all likelihood what was uppermost in his mind was the lax moral state of Corinth and the feeling that absolutely nothing, must be done which would bring upon the infant Church the faintest suspicion of immodesty. It would certainly be very wrong to take these words out of their context and make them a universal rule for the Church.<sup>6</sup>
- While addressing the topic of church order, Paul briefly digresses from his contrast of prophecy and tongues and regulations concerning them to address the disorderly interruptions of some women occurring during the teaching period of the church service.<sup>7</sup>

**33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.**  
**34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.**  
**35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.**

- **Issues at hand:**
  - **Church must be a place where the confusions of the world are solved through His Spirit and His Word.**
  - **Women with questions about Scripture or the Sermon/teaching should ask their husbands for a further explanation at home**
- Some theologians get around the problem of these Scriptures by stating that this section is a later addition and not by Paul. But **every manuscript ever found includes this passage.**

## Let’s take each issue at hand:

### Issue #1: Orderly

<sup>4</sup>*The letters to the Corinthians*. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

<sup>5</sup>Vincent, M. R. (2002). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 3, Page 1-247). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>6</sup>*The letters to the Corinthians*. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

digresses **Digression**. A change of subject (usually brief) before returning to the previous point; this was a standard technique in ancient speeches and literature. prophecy **Prophecy**. Speaking forth God’s message by his inspiration. It can, but need not, involve prediction. Although “prophet” technically refers to anyone who prophesies, Judaism generally reserved this title for God’s spokespeople of the distant past.

<sup>7</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Co 14:33-35). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

- **Church must be a place where the confusions of the world are solved through His Spirit and His Word.**

- **Order** – it is found in every arena of creation

- Intelligent design

- Taxonomy

**tax•on•o•my** \tak- 'sä-nə-mē\ *noun*

[French *taxonomie*, from *tax-* + *-nomie* -nomy]

(circa 1828)

**1** : the study of the general principles of scientific classification :  
SYSTEMATICS

**2** : CLASSIFICATION; *especially* : orderly classification of plants and animals according to their presumed natural relationships

Merriam-Webster, I. (1996, c1993). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. (10th ed.). Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster.

- Confusion will always arise when men or women step out of God's order

- His Word and His Spirit are man's only resources for God's voice, works, ways, and will.

- **Here is God's order for the household:**

**Ephesians 5:22-29**

**22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.**

**23 For the husband is head of the wife**, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

**24** Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything.

**Colossians 3:18** **Wives, submit to your own husbands**, as is fitting in the Lord.

**Titus 2:4-5** that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

**5** to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, **obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.**

**1 Peter 3:1-5** **Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands**, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,

**2** when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear.

**3** Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel—

**4** rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a **gentle and quiet spirit**, which is very precious in the sight of God.

**5** For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, **being submissive to their own husbands,**

- **Orderliness** must invade every arena of a man's life

**Psalms 37:23-24**

**23** The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds *him with His hand.*

- Children and others learn from the way a “Christian” man conducts his life

## Issue #2:

- **Women are to keep silent in church**

- **Women play an integral role in most arenas of ministry**

- **Examples of just a few essential biblical leaders:**

- Sarah
- Rahab
- Deborah
- Esther
- Mary
- **Prayer leaders like Lydia of Philippi (Acts 16:11-15)**
- **The 4 daughters of Philip were prophetesses. (Acts 21:9)**

- **Women do most of the teaching in our Sunday schools today.**

- **Churches of China led primarily by women.**

- **Women missionaries all over the world accomplish much of the work of the Lord by themselves.**

*Elisabeth Elliot, after the murder of her husband and several other missionaries in Ecuador, was the only missionary left who could speak the language of the Auca Indians. Rather than violate the Word of God, she taught one of the Auca men the sermon each week, and he then preached it to the church until male leaders could be found.*<sup>8</sup>

- **Paul does not say that women have no spiritual gifts, or they should be slaves to the men.**

- **He teaches that both men and women, if acting out of place in the church, tear down the church instead of building it up.**

- Paul also lays a responsibility upon the men; they were to teach their wives spiritual truths, but to do so at home. Sad to say, in many families it is the wife who has to teach the husband!<sup>9</sup>

- **Factors of cultural background may have, in fact, explained Paul's commands:**

- Perhaps the largely **uneducated women** of that day were interrupting proceedings with irrelevant questions that would be better dealt with in their homes.

<sup>8</sup>MacArthur, J. (1997, c1994). *Different by design*. Includes indexes. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

<sup>9</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament* (Page 462). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

- This would explain the language of verse 35. Perhaps they were “chattering,” or even gossiping, as some Jewish women sitting in their segregated synagogue balconies reputedly liked to do.
    - Perhaps they were caught up in subtly promoting false teaching.
    - But while historically and contextually plausible, each of these views fails to explain why Paul silenced all women and no men, when presumably there were at least a few well-educated, courteous, or orthodox women and at least a few uneducated, less than polite, or doctrinally aberrant men.
  - Others think Paul is excluding women from speaking not in general but in tongues. This perspective has the advantage of recognizing that the verb “speak” in verse 34 is regularly used throughout this chapter for charismatic speech. But if tongues is a spiritual gift, then surely the Spirit gives it to whomever He chooses irrespective of gender.
 

**1 Corinthians 12:11** But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.
  - Equally implausible is the older, extremely conservative perspective that verses 34-35 are absolute commands silencing women in every way during the Corinthian worship service. This view has to assume that **11:5** was in fact not applying Paul’s approval of women praying or prophesying publicly, but surely if that were the case he would have had to say so. Or else one has to assume, without any contextual support, that two different kinds of Christian assemblies are in view in the two passages. Or, if one has an extremely low view of Paul, not only as uninspired but also as unable to remember what he has recently written, one can simply admit a contradiction. But these approaches surely reflect last-ditch efforts to support a highly chauvinistic interpretation of 14:34-35.
- **Perhaps the best perspective, therefore, is to take Paul’s commands as prohibiting women from participating in the final church decisions about the legitimacy of any given prophecy.**
  - To begin with, “speak”, in twenty of the twenty-one appearances of this verb in this chapter outside of verses 34-35, refers either directly or by analogy to one of **four very particular kinds of speech**: tongues, their interpretation, prophecy or its evaluation.
    - But the **first three of these are spiritual gifts**, distributed regardless of gender.
    - An authoritative evaluation of prophecy, however, while requiring input from the whole congregation, would ultimately have been the responsibility of the church leadership (what Paul elsewhere calls elders or over seers), who at least in the first century, seem to have been exclusively males.

- This interpretation also explains why these verses come where they do.
  - The **sequence of topics from verses 27-33** has been precisely:
    - Tongues,
    - Tongues interpretation,
    - Prophecy,
    - Prophecy evaluation, **in that order.**
  - The obvious drawback is that it must infer a meaning for “speaking” which Paul never spells out. But that problem afflicts all of views that take Paul’s words as less than absolute at this point, and this view seems to have the least number of additional difficulties. <sup>10</sup>
- **Judicial (judging prophecy) silence is particularly required from married women as they express their submission to their husbands by having a quiet spirit.**
  - Quietness as an act of submission mentioned in Verse 34.
    - **“submission”** (hypotassēsthōsan). When it occurs elsewhere in the New Testament with specific reference to a woman, it always refers to a married woman who was to be subject to her husband (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1, 5). <sup>11</sup>
    - **1 Timothy 2:11-15**, which enjoins women to be quiet in worship, is frequently cited as a parallel to this passage. But there too, married women were probably in view, as verse 15 (*bearing children*) would not apply to an unmarried woman.
  - **Scripture does not require that all women be submissive to all men!**  
**1 Cor 11:3 “The head of the woman is man”**
    - There is no article in the Greek, **it is not the man.**
    - Notice it is not **every** woman; it is not an absolute.
    - **It refers only to marriage** where the woman is to respond to the man.
    - It is normal for the woman to be subject to the man in marriage. <sup>12</sup>
- **It is shameful for women to wage authority against any elder in church**  
**1 Timothy 2:11-12** Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.  
**12** And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.
  - The shame is not in the speaking
  - The shame is in the disorderly expression of authority within the church over men, specifically “elders” in leadership.

<sup>10</sup> The NIV Application Commentary, 1 Corinthians, by Craig Blomberg; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, copyright 1994, ISBN 0-310-48490-1.

<sup>11</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary: An exposition of the scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>12</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (Vol. 5, Page 49). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- God has established the proper order and relationship of male-female roles in the church, and they are not to be violated for any reason.
- **Women are not to:**
  - Hold positions of authority over men
    - Cannot hold the office of Elder or Pastor
  - Teach Scriptural truths and admonitions to men
  - **Judge the Scriptural quality of an expression of Tongues, a revelation, or a prophecy.**
  - Be offended by God's order.
- **Women are to:**
  - Pray out loud in church services
  - Prophecy out loud in church services
  - Read Scriptures out loud in church services
  - Speak in tongues
  - Offer tongue interpretations
  - Encourage the teaching of the Word and doctrine at home by their husbands.

### Issue #3: Decently

- Decency can only be found in placing oneself willing and submissively into God's perfect will.

#### **Romans 12:1-2**

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

**36** Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached?  
**37** If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

- Man didn't invent church
  - Man didn't invent or inspire the Scriptures
  - This is God's house – so we play by God's rules
- What Paul has just taught are the commandments of the Lord
  - Your argument is therefore with God, not with Paul

**38** But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

- If, after all this, you are still ignorant of God's Spiritual gifts – then you must be really, actually ignorant

**39** Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

**40** Let all things be done decently and in order.

- **Paul's conclusion to these weighty matters**
- Let's all make sure we seek to do all things in this church:
  - Honestly

- According to God's blueprint
- Only through the vehicle of God's enduring Love.