

Orderly Worship

1Corinthians 14:26-40

I would love to step into a time machine and visit the church in Antioch or Ephesus. Not to imitate or copy the format because they were in a very different culture. Some things would be so strange and incomprehensible to us that they would not be conducive to worship. Three weeks ago the message was on why we worship corporately. We found that we needed the encouragement of our Family in the Lord, a place to minister and be ministered to. We are here to build each other up in the faith. We are those embers that need each other to keep the fire and not grow cold.

But walking into that early church I might be able to see some of what we have lost through time. I would look for principles that the Spirit applied that I would need to bring and apply to our fellowship. So lets go and dial back two thousand years. Set it at around 50AD. Aim for Ephesus. Seat belts on? GO!

Oh no, we landed across the Aegean Sea from Ephesus at Corinth. This thriving city is on a peninsula. A good part of the population are slaves that drag ships on logs across the peninsula. There several different cultures here. There are temples to Greek and Roman gods everywhere. One temple boasts 1000 prostitutes. Beautiful stone buildings and lots of opulence. This is a wild city! Kind of reminds me of an ancient Las Vegas. But look, there is a group of people going in that stone building, smiles on their faces, greeting each other with a kiss. I think we found it. This must be a synagogue that Christians are using. The men are sitting on one side and the women on the other.

"Quiet, quiet" a man says. One of the men sitting in front facing us gets up and goes to what looks like a cabinet and opens it very reverently and brings out a parchment. He hands it to the speaker who says, "Now we read last week the letter from the elder and Apostle Paul. He has shared with us how we have been too disorderly in our services. Let us read again how we are to conduct ourselves in an orderly way as we worship our Lord Jesus together"

Wow! What a great time to have shown up here. This is just what we were interested in since we've been learning about elders and the early church.

It's 1Cor 14:26 so we can read along in our English Bibles. Don't mind their stares, they've never seen Levis or tennis shoes before. Levites yes, Levis no. VERSE 26-Sounds like everyone likes to participate. The elder says, "Notice he says everyone has ... if you remember earlier in this letter he reminds us that we all have a certain gift. He didn't say we all have the same gift. And so it was with our Fathers. The metal crafters did not try to be priests, those who carried the ark of covenant did not carry the tent covering, the musicians did not trade places with the High Priest. You don't all have all the gifts but you are acting like you do. No wonder we spend the entire day here. We have come to honor the Lord not your versatility.

There are five ways he mentions that we participate. A hymn or song. We all have a song in our hearts because of what our Lord has done but is his Spirit calling you all to

share the song?" (I guess they just suggested a song and everyone sang along. Probably one of the Psalms. No wonder they quote the Psalms so often. Now how could we do that? We don't all have the same songs memorized, but you could suggest to me a song on your heart during the week so I could print it up. Or if we all know it you can just start singing and we'll join you. These people like to sing and considering the smiles on their faces it looks like they have something to sing about.)

Oh, he's moving on, "A word of instruction, you are not all gifted to teach the Word of the Lord" (a teaching, more than likely on a Scripture passage. If they followed the synagogue style many different people would share, one or two each gathering, there was not necessarily a main speaker. Certainly we have more than one person with the gift of teaching. Notice we seem to be at the other end of the spectrum. They all wanted to do everything. I hope this encourages you to discover and use your gift in the worship.)

"A revelation, something new God has revealed to you that we have not seen or recognized before. Some of your revelations are for you personally and need not be shared, I think some of you look all week to find a new truth to share. Let the Spirit lead you to them don't insist on coming up with one in your carnal wisdom." (Again it sounds as if they must have all wanted respect for finding something "new" in God's word" How different! Are we the other extreme?)

"A tongue or an interpretation, which he speaks more on in the following" (Woe we never have anything like that) "All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. I want us all to understand it is not to display your gifts, call attention to you, but to strengthen each other, that God has given us these gifts. We need to check our motivation, our source. Is this that I wish to share a direction of the Holy Spirit or of my ego." (Wow that is good advice, I'm glad I have this pocket recorder on.)

Verse 27 – (Why do so many churches ignore this?)

Verse 28 – (I wonder how they knew there was an interpreter? Was one or more persons known for having that gift?)

Verse 29 – "Now I want you to notice the Apostle is not limiting fore telling, or forth telling of God's word to only two at most three as he did with tongues and interpretation but he's saying at least two. As it is written: "Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance." Prov 1:5 But pay careful heed that you discern if the words are from the Lord or from the mind of the speaker. The elders will comment if it is necessary for clarity or correction. (I wish he would have elaborated here a bit more. There is so much controversy today as to what that means. But notice in verse 26 prophecy was not listed unless it is under revelation or teaching. He did tell us in the beginning of the chapter this is one gift we should desire and that is good for the church. And in Thessalonians he tells us not to despise prophecy.)

Verse 30 – "Let us be attentive to each one especially as God moves to clarify something in our hearts so that we all may be encouraged. No speaker is above his

brothers and should listen and learn what truths the Word has revealed in another's heart." (Sounds to me like people would be inspired by what someone was saying and have something to add. We do that too! Maybe not as much as they did but this can remind us to be open to that. In most churches you wouldn't dare stand up and interrupt the preacher. Would you?)

Verse 31 – "We should not all be talking at once but one at a time so we can all hear and contemplate for our instruction and encouragement."

Verse 32 – "You are not out of control are you? I would hope you are mature enough to control your spirit and wait and listen as another speaks." (Things must have been kind of rowdy a few weeks back)

Verse 33a. – "We have been guilty of disorder. We should repent and ask our Lord to be Lord of our worship that we might have a time ordered by the Holy Spirit that lives in us and ministers through us." (Sounds like great advice for any church, but I think most churches are guilty of man's order and not enough Spirit order, don't you?)

Verse 33b-35 "We have to many of you women talking across to your husbands or fathers in the other side of the synagogue. Wait till you are at home to ask questions or make plans for lunch. You disturb everyone's worship when you do this. You disgrace your husband when you disturb the time of worship." (11:5, 14:26, Titus 2:3-5 Shows that you women can pray and prophecy and teach the women. 1Tim 2:12, Acts 21:9)

Verse 36-40 "Let us be mindful and sensitive to the order of the Holy Spirit who directs our praise to the Lord Jesus in our midst. Let us not be silent when He directs us to speak but let us be cautious not to speak unless He directs. Let us no longer be guilty of disorder" (Wait a minute – he forgot the Senior Pastor and the sermon... hmmm?) (Now they are beginning to quote prayers. Some are spontaneous. I notice each one is waiting on the other in an orderly way. There are some with tears in their prayers of repentance. What an opportunity to happen in on this service! I hope we all learned something. I have! Let's get back before they break up and ask who we are.) Did you receive revelation while we looked at that church?

From Barclay's Commentary (a conservative)

There was obviously a flexibility about the order of service in the early Church.

Everything was informal enough to allow any man who felt that he had a message to give to give it. It may well be that we set far too much store on dignity and order nowadays, and have become the slaves of orders of service. The really notable thing about an early Church service must have been that almost everyone came feeling that he had both the privilege and the obligation of contributing something to it. A man did not come with the sole intention of being a passive listener; he came not only to receive but to give. Obviously this had its dangers, for it is clear that in Corinth there were those who were too fond of their own voices; but nonetheless the Church must have been in those days much more the real possession of the ordinary Christian. It may well be that the Church lost something when she delegated so much to the professional ministry and left so little to the ordinary Church member...