

Spiritual Gifts: Tongues or Prophecy - Part 2

1 Corinthians 14:21-40

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First Corinthians chapters 12, 13, and 14 are on the subject of spiritual gifts, and not just spiritual gifts, but specifically what seemed to be happening was that the church at Corinth—no surprise—was abusing the gifts. They weren't following proper protocol or using them with the right motive for the glory of God and in love, so Paul's correcting the problems that were there in this Corinthian city.

Corinth was a city that was very wicked, and the church had allowed the wickedness of the world to come into their congregation, so there's a lot of information correcting the problems there in Corinth. In this context, Paul is going to be contrasting the value of tongues over prophecy, and he's going to be pointing out, the basic tenet is going to be, that when you're gathered together corporately in the church, that prophecy is to be preferred over tongues, and he's giving us the reasons why. "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God"—and then he says—"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." So, he says when you come together in the church, the priority is mutual edification and instruction and building up. We speak words we can understand so that we can be edified and that we can be built up.

I want to back up to verse 19. We are going to start at verse 21, but as quite often, I want to get a tiny bit of a running start because I want you to see this statement in verse 19, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. 20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice"—or in evil—"be ye children, but in understanding be men." I want you to note that statement in verse 19, "Yet in the church"

Everything Paul says in this chapter is in the context of corporate worship. When we come together corporately, we come together publicly, that there's those three goals: We use our gift in love, we use them for the good of others, and we use them for the glory of God. If you don't get anything out of this whole little miniseries on the gifts of the Spirit, those are foundational truths: Use your gift in love, 1 Corinthians 13; use your gift for the good of others to build them up; and use your gift for the glory of God. The gifts of the Spirit are not toys to fight over, they're not jewelry to show off, they're tools to build and to build the body of Christ. God wants to use us.

It seems as though what was going on in Corinth, and again I say seems as though because we're not sure what the problem was. We have to conclude what the problem was based on what the words Paul told them, so the correction kind of indicates what the problem was; but it seems the problem was that they were overemphasizing speaking in tongues.

Now, what is the gift of tongues? The gift of tongues that happened in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost came and the Church was born is a gift from the Holy Spirit to speak in a language

that you have not learned, and it's a supernatural gift; and in praying or speaking in tongues, you're talking to God. So, if you're going to speak in tongues in a public setting, we're going to see the restrictions and the guidelines for that, and for sure one of them is that there be an interpreter and that it be interpreted so others can hear and be instructed and be built up and be edified. But they were abusing that. They weren't using it properly, and this is not uncommon today in many churches that are charismatic or Pentecostal. They have an overemphasis quite often on the experience to the neglect of Scripture.

This chapter is actually a good reminder that we don't just go on feelings, we don't just go on emotions, and we don't base our truth on experience, we actually base it on the Word of God. Experience is subjective; the Word of God is objective truth. What you believe should be based on what the Bible teaches. It's to be solidly built upon the Word of God.

There's two main sections tonight. The first is verses 21-25, and we see the contrast between tongues and prophecy in the area of evangelism and ministering to the believers in the church. But in the context of evangelism, is it for the believer or for the unbeliever? Go with me to verse 21. He says, "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. 22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."

I'm going to question you on this after church tonight, so you'll want to get this kind of figured out. But it is kind of challenging. Notice verse 23. He give us a hypothetical situation, "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place,"—that's why I read verse 19, you're in the church, you're meeting publicly—"and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?"—or you're crazy or we would say, 'They're flipped out.' Verse 24, "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: 25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."

Again, this is a section that I have to solemnly confess it challenges me. I've preached it many, many times over many, many years; and I've read a bunch of commentaries, studied it, and listened to other pastors preach on it as well, but it's a challenge to interpret only because we're not sure exactly all that was going on in Corinth and the historical context of why Paul said what he said.

Now, go back with me to verse 21, "In the law it is written,"—when he uses that phrase in verse 21, 'the law,' it's used different ways in the Bible. Sometimes it's used for just the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, the law of Moses; sometimes it's used for just the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments; but here it's actually used in a third way, that is, for all of the Old Testament. The Jews would sometimes call the Old Testament, the law. They'd sometimes say it's the law and the prophets or the law of the prophets and the writings.

Here I think it's just reference to the fact that the Old Testament, and it says, "In the law it is written,"—he's going to be drawing from (if you're taking notes write this down) Isaiah 28:11-12. He's using this Old Testament text to support the idea of how the gift of tongues is actually " . . . for a sign . . . to them that believe not"—or unbelievers, and the gift of prophecy is a sign for those who believe. He says, "In the law it is written,"—and, as I said, that's Isaiah 28:11-12—"With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people"—'this people' that are going to be spoken to are the people of Israel in the area of Judah—"and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord." Why? Because they are unbelievers. They're not trusting God; they're not believing God.

The context of Isaiah 28:11-12 is that the Lord was going to bring on the nation of Israel the Assyrian Empire, and He was going to do that because they were unbelieving and disobedient. He was going to actually chasten them by using this pagan Assyrian Empire to come upon them and then to take them captive. He's going to speak to them in languages that they did not know or that they hadn't heard. So, they would speak the Chaldean or the Babylonian language of the Assyrians, and it's basically in the context of unbelieving Jews who God was going to say, "This is what I'm going to do to punish you, to condemn you, because you've turned away from Me. I'm going to let the Assyrians come in, they're going to overtake you, and you're going to hear them speak in languages that you knew not of." " . . . and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord." Paul's using this Old Testament story to point out this point that he wants us to have; that is, that tongues is a sign for those who believe not or unbelieving, like the Jews, like the people in Isaiah's day. They were mocking the idea that God was going to judge them, but God said, "I will judge you."

Here's an interesting thought. In Acts 2, when the day of Pentecost came and the Holy Spirit descended, the Bible says they were all filled with the Spirit. Remember they had the little cloven tongues of fire over their heads, and there was " . . . a sound . . . as of a rushing mighty wind . . . and began to speak with other tongues,"—and those that were there for the Pentecost feast in Jerusalem—" . . . heard them speak in his own language . . . the wonderful works of God." But when the gospel was preached, Peter stood up and preached, in probably Hebrew or Aramaic in the language they understood, the gospel. It wasn't used to reach these unbelievers for salvation, but it was used to reach them the fact that they were condemned and unbelieving. Why? Because they heard them speak " . . . the wonderful works of God."

The Jews that heard them on the day of Pentecost, what did they say? They said, "These men are full of new wine,"—they're drunk. That was a sign that these people were unbelieving, that their hearts were not right with God, "They are drunk; they are full of new wine." Peter stands up and says, "No, it can't be. It's only 9 o'clock in the morning. "For these are not drunken, as ye suppose . . . this is that which was spoken"—of in the Old Testament that God said—"I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." They were mocking the idea that these people were of God, that they were drunk or somehow intoxicated with new wine.

Verse 22, here's the conclusion, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign,"—the challenge is in what sense is tongues a sign—"not to them that believe, but to them that believe not,"—in the sense of I believe like in the Old Testament with Isaiah and the Assyrians, it means their condemnation not their salvation. This doesn't bring conviction, it brings condemnation. So, ". . . for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not"—but, again, the opposite, prophecy, those are the two contrasts, tongues and prophecy. Prophesying is speaking forth the Word of God. It can be also modern-day preaching, I believe. ". . . serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."

I don't often read quotes from other commentaries, but I wanted to read what Charles Erdman had to say about this verse. He said, "The second phase of inferiority of tongues to prophecy Paul emphasizes by quoting from the Old Testament. Long ago, when the drunken Israelites mocked the simple message of God through Isaiah as though it had been fit only for babes, the prophet warned them that the Lord would speak unto them in another fashion. He would give His lesson through the lips of the Assyrian invaders and conquerors." Listen carefully, "Their speech," he's quoting from the Isaiah passage, "would indicate Judah's doom. God would address them though through strange foreign tongues in retribution not to arouse the faith of the Israelites but to confirm and consummate their unbelief." In other words, what it did was it manifested their unbelief because they wouldn't believe and trust in the Lord.

It's kind of like a story I heard once about a bunch of miners that were digging down in the earth in a mine and there was an explosion. In the explosion the mine caved in and they were there for many, many days trying to get them out of this mine as can happen. When the rescuers finally broke through and got to the miners that were trapped in this cave, they had lanterns on, but the miners had in the explosion been blinded, so when they broke through the cave with the lanterns on, the miners were saying, "Someone turn on lights. Someone turn on lights. Why didn't you bring light. Why don't you turn on the lights," and they're standing there with their lanterns on with light. They realized then that these miners had gone blind. The light didn't blind them, the light exposes that they were blind. That, to me, is how the sign is used here for this speaking in tongues, that they would mock the idea that God was among them.

Verse 22, ". . . but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe." If you go back to verse 3, you'll see there that prophecy was used to edify, to encourage, comfort, and to strengthen the believers; so the Word of God would be understood, be received, and built them up. The Scriptures spoken prophetically or taught from the Word of God is that which edifies and comforts and encourages and builds us up, so the contrast of the two.

Verse 23, "If therefore"—as I said, this is a hypothetical situation—"the whole church be come together into one place"—like we are here tonight—"and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" If you come into a church service, and I've had this happen, and everybody in the congregation starts to speak in tongues and they're getting blessed and getting excited, they're emoting and gyrating and doing whatever they want to do, which is fine, you can do that, but there's no

mutual edification or instruction. The unlearned, or the unbeliever, just says, "You guys are all crazy. I don't know what you're even talking about."

We're going to get, in just a moment when we get to verse 26, instructions and guidelines on how tongues should be used in the church. He's saying, "That's the sign. They're going to see you're mad," and it's an indication that this person's unbelieving.

Verse 24, "But if all prophecy,"—he comes back to prophecy—"and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all"—or he is convicted, the Spirit of God convicts him—"he is judged of all: 25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."

I want to go back over these five results of prophecy they used in the church. The contrast, again, is verse 23, we have tongues used the wrong way in the church and all it does is have unbelievers say, "You're crazy." Then, in verses 24-25, you have prophecy, which is speaking forth the Word of God, and God uses it to convert and edify and instruct individuals or unbelievers.

I want you to note the five results of prophecy in the church assembly. First, " . . . he is convinced of all"—in other words, he is convicted. I do know that many times when I'm preaching the Bible, teaching the Word of God, that the Spirit of God will take the Word of God and convict a nonbeliever of their sin, of their unrighteousness, and the judgment of God. Or, I'm preaching or teaching the Bible and someone comes up to me afterwards and says, "How did you know?" I say, "Know what?" "How did you know what I needed to hear? How did you know what was going on in my life? Did you bug the bulletin? Were you listening to my conversation at home?" No, we don't do that. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to convict and convince. That doesn't happen if you're speaking in tongues and have a language that no one understands.

Secondly, that " . . . he is judged of all." It means that God brings a condemnation upon him. Thirdly, "And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest" You perhaps have experienced this where the Bible's being taught or someone's preaching in the church and you're sitting there thinking, God is speaking directly to me. How did he know what I needed to hear? God knows what I needed to hear, because the Spirit of God uses the Word of God. Prophecy does just that. It says, "And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest" Fourthly, " . . . and so falling down on his face he will worship God,"—that's the effect that prophecy has over tongues in the public assembly. Fifth, "and report that God is in you of a truth." If you come to a church service and everybody's speaking in tongues, "These people are crazy. I'm out of here!" SWOOSH! You're gone. But if you come to a church service and they're quoting Scripture, they're sharing the Word of God, the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to convict an individual, to speak to their heart, to bring them to repentance, and actually the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to actually bring about regeneration and salvation.

In evangelism and in missions, it's absolutely essential that we "prophesy" or preach the gospel

or preach the Word of God. This is why I believe it's detrimental for the church to veer away from the proclamation of God's Word because the power is in the Word of God with the Spirit of God.

Here's the second division we'll look at tonight, verses 26-40. These are the rules for the exercise of the gifts. There are a lot of different ways I could've titled this section, but basically he's going to lay down the guidelines or the rules. Whenever the gifts of the Spirit are exercised in the church, guess what? They should always be operating according to the Bible—not tradition, not our feelings, not our emotion, not our experience, but the Bible; the B-I-B-L-E. The Bible needs to be the foundation for all that we believe and every practice we have in the church.

Verse 26, "How is it then, brethren?"—notice the question mark. By the way, all through this chapter every time he uses the word 'brethren,' he's starting a new section. He's saying, "How is it then, brethren?"—question mark—"when ye come together"—remember, again, this was all in the context of public assembly—"every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." That is a rock-solid principle for the function of the gifts of the Spirit in the church, the end of verse 26, "Let all things be done unto edifying." You can highlight that. You can put, "Praise God," on the side of your margin of your Bible. You can put a star by it, note it, mark it, "Let all things be done unto edifying."

This is one of the main foundational principles. So, when we gather together, like we have tonight, this is why we open the Bible, we read the Bible, we explain the Bible, we apply the Bible because that's what edifies or builds us up, which is what we're supposed to be doing, "Let all things be done unto edifying"—edification or building up. That's the rule, the main point.

Verse 27, "If any man speak in an unknown tongue,"—here we go, verse 27—"let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. 28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God." Here's guidelines for speaking in tongues in the church, "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three" This is a scriptural, biblical principle. How many times have I been in churches where everybody, out loud at the same time, all start speaking in tongues, and there is no interpretation. That is unbiblical. I don't know how else to say that.

I was planning on saying this at the end of my study tonight, but I'll say it right now. We should not divide over spiritual gifts. It's not an essential doctrine that we should have with other believers that we divide over. We should love one another. We can disagree, agreeably, respectfully. You may not hold the same view of a gift of the Spirit. You may be a cessationist, you believe that the miraculous gifts have ceased. You may be a continuist, like I am as well, where the gifts are still available today, but we don't divide over that. We don't fight over that. It's not like the Trinity or the deity of Christ or salvation by grace alone or the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ, but it is important that we follow these guidelines.

So, there's five of them in verses 27 and 28. The first, " . . . let it be by two, or at the most by

three” In a public gathering of believers, if more than three people speak in tongues and there’s no interpretation, it’s unbiblical. It’s not to be done. Secondly, they are to speak “ . . . by course,”—so, one at a time; two or three, one at a time—“by course.” Thirdly, “and let one interpret.” Someone must interpret, and if there’s no one there to interpret, then the tongue-speaker is to pray that they can interpret. If they don’t interpret, then they need to keep silent, which is number four, verse 28, “But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.” Which, by the way, indicates at the end of verse 28 that tongues can be used in your private devotions, that it can be used rightfully, biblically, in private devotions.

Sometimes when you pray words are impossible, so there’s a sense in which the Spirit’s praying for you. Paul, in Romans 8, talked about the Spirit groans for us, so that “groaning” can be found even in the gift of tongues as you’re talking to God. But you do it in your private devotions, you’re not doing it in the public assembly or setting. Those are five guidelines or rules for tongues.

Now, the guidelines for prophecy, verses 29-33, “Let the prophets speak two or three,”—now, again, there’s six guidelines in these verses. The first is they speak by two or three. So, no more than three people are to prophesy or speak forth the Word in the public assembly. Secondly, verse 29, “and let the other judge.” So, when anyone speaks and shares the Word of God or prophesies, then there has to be those who judge. How do they judge it? By the Word of God. Now, they didn’t have the whole New Testament when this was written, it was just being written, or what Scriptures they did have, what apostles were present, and what understanding they had of the Old Testament, they were to use that to judge what was spoken. I believe it’s healthy that when anything is preached, taught, or spoken in a church service, you should open your Bible and judge what they’re saying by the Scriptures, the Word of God. You never just say, “Well, that’s what the pastor believes; that’s what I believe. The pastor said it, I believe it, that settles it.” No. What does the Bible say, what does the Bible mean, how is it to be applied. Every one of us as believers needs to be a Berean—we need to rightly divide the Word of truth, rightly cutting the Scriptures so that we interpret it and apply it properly.

Notice the second, “ . . . and let the other judge.” Thirdly, “If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.” If God’s speaking through someone else, don’t interrupt them. Just wait your turn and speak in course. Notice, fourthly, verse 31, “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn,”—which is the fifth, prophecy is so that we can learn —“and all may be comforted.” Again, that’s the purpose of prophecy. That’s why Paul says it’s to be desired over tongues because it teaches, it edifies, it comforts, it builds up.

Look at verse 32, “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” Again, I want you to underline that, and you can take that to the bank. If anyone says, “I couldn’t help myself, I just had to speak out in tongues. It just took control of me.” That’s not true. The Spirit of God is a gentleman, it never takes away your own free will. He never robs you or takes away your free will. You have power to use it or not use it; to exercise it or not to exercise it. Don’t blame the Spirit. Sometimes people have interrupted the preaching or teaching of the Word of God,

and please don't do that right now.

I'll never forget, years ago one time I was teaching this very same text, saying the very same thing, probably thirty years ago, and the minute I got out of my...someone jumped up in the center aisle, I shouldn't be telling you this, and pointed at me and said, "You're wrong! You're wrong! You're wrong!" He just started screaming at me in the middle of the service. Of course, the ushers politely had him exit out of the church. But he misunderstood completely what I said, but he illustrated what I said. The Spirit of God is a gentleman. He doesn't interrupt Himself. If God is speaking through the preacher and he's reading Scripture, you shouldn't interrupt him.

I appreciate it when you say, "Amen," and you're agreeing with what I say, but sometimes people just, "Amen! Amen! Amen!" I could make some bizarre statement that wasn't even biblical and they're not even listening, "Amen! Amen!" They're just kind of like a machine. Like you switched the "Amen," switch or something. Sometimes they're distracting like, "Amen! Oh wow!" Did somebody get hit by a car over there? Any time the Spirit of God is working to preach the Word of God, which is in a sense a prophetic Word, He's not going to interrupt that by someone else. Anything that distracts from that is not the Spirit of God, it's the flesh of man. That's why he's saying, "Be mature. Don't be babies. Don't be infants in this area."

Whenever I teach a message like this, so often people get all upset because I step on their feelings or I step on their traditions, or I step on their experience. It's awfully hard to correct somebody that has experienced something and they know it's to be true because they've experienced it when it's contrary to Scripture. They actually have their emotions involved. It's like whenever you've been visited by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, known as Mormons, if you ask them, "How do you know the book of Mormon is true?" What do they say? "Because I have a burning in my bosom." I'm like, "Big deal." The older I get, everything I eat gives me a burning in my bosom. That's no criteria for what is true or what is not true. "I just know it's true because I have a burning in my bosom." Well, thank God that when the Word of God is taught, it can create a fire that burns in our heart, but that isn't how we know what is true. We know what is true because of God's objective truth in His Word. This is what this text is so pertinent toward, "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." It's so important to know that.

Verse 33, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." I love that verse, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." If you peek, we'll get there in just a second, verse 40, "Let all things be done decently and in order." The word "decently" is the opposite of confusion. Everything should be done decently.

I grew up in a church that was Pentecostal with a lot of crazy yelling and screaming and jumping up and down, speaking in tongues. I never was taught the Bible, never properly taught the Word of God, and what a change happened in my life when I came under good Bible teaching and began to learn the Word of God and mature and grow in my walk with the Lord.

This is a good guideline, “For God is not the author of confusion” If you go into a church service, and you’re like, “What is going on? What’s he talking about? What’s happening?” You’re confused, then that’s not the work of the Holy Spirit. He’s a God of peace, “ . . . as in all churches of the saints.”

Some scholars believe this last phrase in verse 33, “ . . . as in all churches of the saints,” belongs at the beginning of verse 34. I don’t know that I can prove that or I’m sure about that, but it does make some sense. If you start verse 34 with, “ . . . as in all churches of the saints,” verse 34, “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. 35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

You can see why I was a little bit agonizing having to teach this tonight. God bless you, ladies, let’s close in prayer. What am I going to say? I’m going to tell you what I believe is going on, but I don’t know for sure this is the right way to interpret this text. Let me tell you what I know for sure. Paul is not teaching here that in a public gathering of the church women cannot actually speak because it’s clear in the Bible earlier in Corinthians that women can pray and prophesy.

Now, the Corinthian women were being liberated by the Spirit to the point where they were dishonoring their husbands. They had taken off their veils or their head coverings, so they were coming to church, “Oh, I’m free in Jesus. I’m free in Christ,” and they were taking off their head coverings. That was dishonoring to their husbands in that culture, in that time. It could be that what they were doing was actually they were talking during the gathering of the saints and the instruction of the Word of God, and they were causing distraction by asking their husbands questions instead of waiting until they got home to ask the questions in private. This is why, verse 35, “And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.” You might think of it in a sense of talking or interrupting or asking questions.

In Christ, “There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . bond nor free . . . neither male nor female” God does not love men more than women. God does not love women more than men. A Christian man or a Christian woman, the man does not have a closer walk with God because he’s a man. Women are equally justified and born again and sanctified and filled with the Spirit, and they have the same access to God. They have all the blessings and all the rights of being a child of God and being in Christ. But there is such a thing as in the church there is order for the sake of there not being confusion as there is in marriage. Whenever we teach on marriage, “Wives, submit . . . unto your . . . husbands. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” This is not to oppress women. This is not to subject women down. This is to be functioning in God’s design and purpose in marriage and in the home—as so goes the home, so goes the church.

I think that basically many times the gathering together of the Christians at this time they'd have the women in one area of the sanctuary or in the synagogue or wherever they met, in the house, and the men on the other side. The common belief is that they were asking their husbands, "What do you think about that?" It'd be like having Mrs. Miller over here and Mr. Miller over here, and the preacher makes a statement and she hollers all the way across the sanctuary, "I don't know if I believe that. Do you believe that, John?" It would be disruptive. He's basically just saying ask at home.

You know, in the book of Acts there's an evangelist by the name of Philip, and if I'm not mistaken, correct me if I'm wrong, he had four daughters and they all prophesied. They were prophesying. So, women can prophesy. In Corinthians it says that they have to do it with their head covering on to respect their husbands, and they can pray in church, and God uses them in many, many different aspects and facets in ministry.

It's a different subject, but it might be tied together to some degree as far as pastors and elders or pastors and deacons—elders, bishops, pastors are all synonymous terms for one individual—they're always in the masculine, always designated as men. I don't believe the Bible teaches that it's biblical for women to be pastors of a church. Now, if there is no other opportunity for anyone but a woman to open her Bible and teach the Word of God, go for it. You have Priscilla and Aquila, and Apollos came on the scene in Ephesians at Ephesus, and she taught with her husband Apollos the Word of God more clearly. But the position in the church of an elder, which is a synonymous term for pastor, bishop, overseer, is always in the masculine. It's always a man. I don't believe in women pastors, and I don't believe in women deacons in that sense in that the office is not clearly defined in the New Testament.

Paul isn't just saying, "Okay, ladies, the minute you get in the church, zip your lip. No talking. Silence." Again, I think it's in the context of them asking questions, verse 35, that this statement is made. Certainly, we should practice good etiquette, by the way, when we're in church. It's extremely distracting for me to be in the pulpit, and this is not happening right now, so don't freak out, but when I'm teaching, and I look down and people are talking, they're having a big old conversation and talking to one another, I almost feel like stopping saying, "Would you like to share with us what you guys got going? What you want to talk about?" It's like, "Excuse me? I'm trying to preach right now." If you want to visit and talk, go out on the patio. Go to Starbucks. Go somewhere...you shouldn't be talking. Sometimes you're distracting people that you're sitting in front of, if you're talking. Even during the worship when we're singing and praising the Lord and we're lifting our voices in praise, you shouldn't be talking or visiting. You should show respect that we're in the house of God and we're worshiping God.

Years ago, by the way, I got a book on etiquette, and there's a chapter in there on church etiquette, and that's in that book—not talking in church, respecting the guidelines of the service for the congregation that you're seated at.

Paul deals with women, verses 34-35; then he deals with the need for us to obey the Word of God, in closing, verses 36-40, "What?"—question mark—"came the word of God out from you?"

or came it unto you only?" It seems as though some in Corinth thought they were really hot stuff and that they had the Word of God coming out of them or from them instead of recognizing that the Word of God comes from God to us, and that's a humble position. Verse 37, "If any man think himself to be a prophet,"—this ties in with what I just said about verse 36, they were braggadocious. They thought they were hot, the Word of God coming from me. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." I love this verse because Paul is actually saying that what he is writing is the Word of God. Paul lays claim to his writing to be the Word or " . . . the commandments of the Lord." So, we build our lives on the Scriptures; it's the house on the rock.

Verse 38, "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." I love that. Do you want to be ignorant? Be ignorant, and you're ignorant when you don't follow the Word of God.

Verse 39, "Wherefore,"—here's the grand conclusion—"brethren"—wrap up—"covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues." He's not saying we shouldn't speak in tongues, but we must follow the guidelines given to us in the text. Notice, it's interesting, he doesn't say, "covet to prophesy,"—and covet to speak in tongues. He doesn't say that. He just says, " . . . and forbid not to speak with tongues"—don't forbid speaking in tongues.

I love verse 40, "Let all things be done decently and in order." I love that verse! Everything should be done decently and in order. God is a God of order and decency. That word "decently," by the way in the Greek could be translated gracefully or becomingly. In the church meetings everything should be graceful and becoming and decently. This is why when we take Communion, we serve the elements until we're all served, we hold the elements, we pray, we partake together. There's instruction, there's edification, there's glorification of Christ. These are foundational truths, " . . . covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues." But let everything we do in the church fellowship " . . . be done decently and in order." Amen?