

Iglesia de Carne

Studies in First Corinthians

Text

First Corinthians 14:26-40

Topic

The apostle Paul insists that a believer not only can but must gain control of their exercise of spiritual gifts in public if they are to benefit others

Title

***“I’m So Excited, and I Can’t Wait to Try It.
I’m About to Gain Control and I Think I Like It”***

I’ll fess up to it: I like *Three Dog Night*. (The band, that is, not cuddling with sled dogs).

One is the Loneliest Number... Celebrate... Eli’s Comin’... Easy to be Hard... Their cover of *Your Song*. Rock classics all.

Mama Told Me Not to Come is the song I found myself humming while reading our verses in First Corinthians. A bit of trivia first: The song was written by Randy Newman.

The song features a sheltered, straight-laced young man recounting what was presumably his first wild party in the big city. He was shocked and appalled by

1 of 12

First Corinthians 14:26-40

“I’m About to Gain Control and I Think I Like It”



what was going on. He exclaims, "This is the craziest party that there could ever be."

In the first century church in Corinth, it wasn't a wild party. It was *wild worship*. In verse twenty three, one translation says, "So if the whole congregation comes together with everybody speaking in tongues, and uninstructed people or unbelievers come in, *won't they say you're crazy?*"

The *Three Dog Night* cover version - "This is the craziest worship service that there could ever be."

After two and one-half chapters, Paul was ready to tell these wild and crazy worshippers how to get control in order to build-up one another as believers, and to reach nonbelievers with the Gospel.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Others Are Only Edified When You Keep Gifted Speaking Under Control**, and **#2 Others Are Only Edified When You Keep General Speaking Under Control**.

#1 - Others Are Only Edified When You Keep Gifted Speaking Under Control (v26-32)

Disagreeing with Mr. Spock's decision keeping Jim Kirk out of the action, Dr. McCoy exclaimed, "You know, back home we have a saying: 'If you're gonna ride in the Kentucky Derby, you don't leave your prize stallion in the stable.' "

Spock answered, "A curious metaphor, doctor, as a stallion must first be broken before it can reach its potential."

The wild worshippers in Corinth definitely needed to 'break' a few habits. Doing so would help them reach their potential in using their gifts to benefit others.

2 of 12

First Corinthians 14:26-40

"I'm About to Gain Control and I Think I Like It"



1Co 14:26 How is it then, brethren? 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.

Different meetings of the church are described in the Book of Acts:

- There were prayer meetings.
- There was a teaching that lasted all night.
- There were leadership meetings.
- There was a church council.

Since each meeting had a different emphasis, different things went on at them.

- If you read the account of the church council meeting in Jerusalem, you'd probably agree that it would have been inappropriate for everyone to suddenly start speaking in tongues.
- Likewise it would have been odd for Paul and Barnabas to leave on an evangelistic tour without having heard from the Holy Spirit at the prayer meeting in Antioch.

There were different meetings in Corinth; at least two. We know that they met weekly for a potluck followed by celebrating the Lord's Supper. The meeting described in our verses is a very different meeting. It was a worship service in which everyone had an opportunity to participate in singing, in teaching, in speaking in tongues, in interpreting tongues, and in prophecy.

Paul added a quick reminder that "all things be done for edification" - with the goal of building-up others.

If this exhortation is heeded, you'll never have a problem in church. How could you, if you are preferring others and not yourself?

3 of 12

First Corinthians 14:26-40

"I'm About to Gain Control and I Think I Like It"



It makes spiritual sense that a worship service should follow an etiquette. The potential for changing lives for eternity is too great to allow behavior that would undermine the Holy Spirit's work. Left to ourselves, we have a tendency to draw attention to ourselves. We can be rude in public, out of order, interruptive, and without situational awareness.

This, then, is the apostle Paul's etiquette for participating in a worship service of the gathered church. They're more like guidelines than strict rules; but they are not to be taken lightly, or dismissed. He places extra emphasis on speaking in tongues not because it is the most important gift, but because it was being exercised improperly in Corinth.

1Co 14:27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret.

1Co 14:28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.

The gift of tongues is controllable. We will see that *all* the gifts are subject to control. The Holy Spirit doesn't overpower you, take advantage of you, embarrass you, make you seem crazy.

Here are the basic principles governing the public exercise of the gift of tongues in every church, in every century:

1. "Let there be two or at the most three" - Speaking in tongues should not dominate a meeting. Two or three people might be allowed to speak in tongues to the whole group, and that's all.
2. "Each in turn" - There is to be no multiple speaking or singing in tongues; only one person at a time should be exercising the gift of tongues.
3. "... Let one interpret. If there is no interpreter... keep silent." You must be concerned with there being an interpretation of the utterance in tongues since uninterpreted tongues cannot edify others. If there is an utterance in

4 of 12

First Corinthians 14:26-40

"I'm About to Gain Control and I Think I Like It"



tongues that goes uninterpreted, that's a pretty good indication that there should be no further exercise of the gift in that meeting.

4. In verse two of chapter fourteen we learned, "For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries." Thus the interpretation of a tongue must always be prayer and praise *from* men to God. It will *never* be a message from God to men.

The spiritual leader of the meeting indicates to you whether or not it would be appropriate to have a time of prayer and praise during which the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues could be exercised. As the group prays and praises, *you are prompted to speak in tongues*. You might already know someone there has the gift of interpretation. If so, you can be somewhat comfortable in speaking or singing in tongues.

What if you're not sure if someone there has the gift of interpretation? You might simply share with the leader of the group that you feel God prompting you to speak in tongues. Perhaps he knows if someone is there who can interpret.

Or he might chance that God wants to give someone the gift of interpretation as they hear your tongues being spoken. He will instruct you what to do.

If there is no instruction about the exercise of tongues, it's an indication that you should refrain, or ask about it, before you blurt-out, "*Shandala Bibbi*."

An interpretation is *not* a word-for-word translation. You don't recognize words and phrases, like you would a known language. You are given the sense of what is being prayed - then you use words that describe the sense of what was spoken to God.



Don't overlook Paul's suggestion that you "speak to [yourself] and to God." He meant quietly, under your breath as it were. You can exercise tongues without calling any attention to it or to yourself.

1Co 14:29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.

Once again, the leader of the meeting indicates to you whether or not it would be appropriate to have a time of prayer and praise during which the gift of prophecy could be exercised. As the group prays and praises, you receive a word of prophecy.

It often is as simply profound as a Bible verse, or Bible passage, that you are prompted to share. Someone in the meeting needs to hear it. The Lord wants to edify and encourage and comfort them by it.

Maybe you'll have a waking vision... Or you've had a dream that seems spiritual and you share it.

"Two or three" simply means prophecy should not be allowed to dominate the meeting. All of the gifts are for edification and there should be no over-emphasis of any one gift.

"And let the others judge."

When someone speaks what they believe to be a word of prophecy the leader of the group, and the group itself, has a very real responsibility to judge the accuracy of the prophecy.

It's not enough to be in awe that God has spoken. We should look at the utterance from at least these two viewpoints: Content and Character:

- Does it's content agree with the revealed content of Scripture?

6 of 12

First Corinthians 14:26-40

"I'm About to Gain Control and I Think I Like It"



- Does it's character agree with the revealed character of God?

This requires some interaction. Some worship services seem more like a seance where you can't break the atmosphere with any interaction - as if it would scare the Holy Spirit away. That is not spiritual, it is superstition.

1Co 14:30 But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.

At first this statement seems like a contradiction. It seems to be saying that you can interrupt someone if you suddenly receive a prophecy. Nope.

Paul just told you "let two or three prophets speak."

He is putting a reasonable time limit on each prophecy. Some people have a tendency to ramble on. They prophesy (or even pray) too long - dominating a meeting. He wanted them to be concise, thinking that there were others who had things to share.

1 Corinthians 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

When Paul says "you can all prophesy," is he saying everyone can and should have this gift? No. In chapter twelve you learned that not everyone has the gift of prophecy. In addition, he just limited the exercise of the gift of prophecy to several instances per meeting.

He is simply saying that "all" who do have the gift of prophecy at the meeting should exercise it in an orderly way, one after another, allowing time for each to exercise their gifts.

1Co 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

7 of 12

First Corinthians 14:26-40

"I'm About to Gain Control and I Think I Like It"



Let's read the NIV's translation of verse thirty-two:

1 Corinthians 14:32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the **control** of prophets.

Occasionally you'll hear someone reference the Amplified Bible. It's a translation that uses explanatory alternate readings and amplifications to assist us in understanding what Scripture really says. Multiple English word equivalents to each key Hebrew and Greek word clarify and amplify meanings that may otherwise have been concealed by a traditional translation method. Here is First Corinthians 14:32 in the AV:

1 Corinthians 14:32 For the spirits of the prophets (the speakers in tongues) are under the speaker's **control** [and subject to being silenced as may be necessary],

The same Holy Spirit who prompts you to speak in tongues or prophecy inspired the apostle Paul to write these words telling you that not only you can, you *must*, always keep His supernatural promptings to speak under control. **Period.**

1Co 14:33 For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

When the Holy Spirit is truly the source of your gifts there will be "peace" not "confusion." No one will go away afraid, thinking you are crazy, having not heard the Gospel.

"As in all the churches." In our day this means Pentecostal churches as well as conservative churches. **No one is exempt or has any other leading of the Holy Spirit.** These are His principles governing His gifts.

8 of 12

First Corinthians 14:26-40

"I'm About to Gain Control and I Think I Like It"



Rude and disorderly behavior are all too common in our society. Who brings a baby to see *Terminator*? And why won't they take him or her out when they are crying as if they are being eviscerated? Don't get me started on line etiquette.

Paul's grace etiquette for the church throughout the church age is not at all hard to understand. Tradition and superstition hinders many from following it. If they did, it would not quench the Spirit, but rather release Him.

#2 - Others Are Only Edified When You Keep General Speaking Under Control (v34-40)

Who talks more - Women or men?

The stereotype that women are Chatty Kathy's is one that is fairly ingrained in our society. In the first print of *The Female Brain*, Louann Brizendine claimed that women use 20,000 words per day while men use 7,000.

However, there were no studies in existence that validated that claim or showed that women spoke more than men.

An actual study in 2014 "found that there was no significant gender difference whatsoever." On average, women speak 16,215 words per day and men speak 15,669 words per day.

Women speaking in the meetings during the worship services was causing problems in Corinth. But it wasn't just their speaking. It was a kind of speaking.

1Co 14:34 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.

1Co 14:35 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.

9 of 12

First Corinthians 14:26-40

"I'm About to Gain Control and I Think I Like It"



Tough to hear... Not so tough to heed, once we understand what was being said.

Women were allowed to speak in the meetings. Paul referred positively to women *praying* and *prophesying* in meetings (11:5 & 13).

So what was Paul talking about? If you think about the words you conclude that certain married women were interrupting the public services by speaking out-of-turn. Apparently it involved asking questions which were somehow disruptive to the meeting. Their disruptive speaking was a “shameful” lack of proper submission to God and to their husbands.

Men can certainly be guilty of this as well; but they weren't, not in Corinth. Always think about context before you interpret. Paul was addressing a specific problem in Corinth. He wasn't establishing a gag-the-gals order for all types of speaking for the universal church through the centuries. He was saying, “Quit interrupting with your out-of-order questions.”

1Co 14:36 Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached?

1Co 14:37 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.

1Co 14:38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

We are not at liberty to develop our own principles regarding the exercise of the gifts as if “the Word of God [came] originally from [us].” Regardless your background and experiences with the exercise of spiritual gifts, control **must** be acknowledged and followed. If you have seen or even personally experienced something different, then you must bring your tradition into alignment with the teaching here in chapters twelve, thirteen, and fourteen.



To ignore this instruction is to be "ignorant."

Read the Gospels and watch Jesus as He exercises the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Read the Book of Acts and see the gifts in operation.

There are none of the weird, out-of-control excesses you see in churches today. The only people slain by the Spirit were Ananias and Saphira, and they were killed. The one church that was acting out-of-control, Corinth, was asked to come under control.

1Co 14:39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

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

The gifts - **all of them** - were in operation. They ought still to be in operation. Today there are many who actively, militantly, "forbid to speak with tongues." John MacArthur, for example, equates it with demons. There are no biblical grounds for such a radical denial and despising of the Holy Spirit's gifts.

Control does not equal quenching. **You do not quench the Holy Spirit by remaining under control.**

On the contrary, you set Him free to minister in meaningful ways to those you prefer in the body of Jesus on earth.

We should admit we are creatures of habit. We like things to be set. Thus you will find in many churches, especially Pentecostal churches, that the exercising of gifts follows the same order week after week after week. But that might not be God's leading.



A while back, on Wednesday nights we'd encourage prophecy and tongues; and we were blessed to experience those gifts in some measure, especially prophecy.

Recently we've been experiencing something I consider just as extraordinary: Very young children moved upon to pray. It's so amazing. If I can say this without seeming mystical, I feel God's presence just as strongly as I would if an adult were speaking in tongues, interpreting, or prophesying.

Jane and Michael greeted their father, George Banks, with, "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious."

When they told him it was something you say when you don't know what to say, he proudly quipped, "Yes, well, I always know what to say."

If you think you always know what to say... You don't. We ought to rely more on the indwelling Holy Spirit to minister to others. My knowledge, my wisdom, my experience, are too easily and too often substituted for waiting on the Lord for what He has to say.

Geno made-up a description on Wednesday night as he was teaching the Book of Acts: Conduit-Christians. Be a conduit through which God the Holy Spirit can benefit others with His wisdom, knowledge, and guidance.

