

1 Corinthians 14D

- There are probably as many ways to conduct a church service as there are churches
 - Styles vary from denomination to denomination
 - And even within a certain tradition, individual congregations will each have their own style
 - Musical styles, the order of events, the approach to teaching, the schedule for the Lord's Supper
 - But despite all our differences, the Christian gathering has maintained a remarkable consistency over the centuries
 - We have songs of praise, whether with instruments or not
 - We have prayers, whether aloud or privately
 - We have the Lord's supper, whether every week or occasionally
 - We have teaching, hopefully from the text of scripture
 - We have recitation of creeds, testimonies, personal confessions, announcements, collections for the saints, hails and farewells, and occasionally something out of the ordinary
 - This pattern is more than habit...it's a fulfillment of the purpose of the gathering
 - We gather for the same reason a sport team practices together
 - We each have a role to play, but our role is meaningless apart from the rest of the team
 - We depend on the gathering for our chance to serve Christ by serving His people in our spiritual gift
- As chapter 14 ends, Paul is ready to leave this church with a prescription for how everyone gets their chance to serve properly
 - Paul wants everyone to play their part, but he also wants every contribution to edify
 - Like a sport team, everyone has to participate in a coordinated, selfless manner ensuring the team is successful

- Church is no place for prima donnas
- The only One in the spotlight is Christ
- We're all supporting cast members, role players
- So to end his discussion on spiritual gifts, Paul leaves correction and returns to teaching to explain how the church gathering should proceed

1Cor. 14:26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

- What is the outcome then, Paul asks?
 - Today, we would probably say something like, "So what?"
 - In other words, after all Paul's said about spiritual gifts, the need to edify and respect the priority of gifts, so what do we do now?
 - How does the body of Christ work together with a diversity of spiritual gifts to edify each other?
 - How do we juggle these priorities?
 - Paul answers his own question by instructing the church on how to conduct a church service properly
 - His solution is deceptively simple
 - It's general enough to allow a wide variety of styles and traditions
 - But it ensure the service will serve its intended purpose of edifying believers and glorifying the Lord
- First, Paul says when you assemble...
 - Paul starts with a simple statement, but take note Paul never prescribes the frequency of assembly
 - Earlier when teaching on the Lord's supper, Paul had said "as often as you gather"
 - In fact, no New Testament writer ever prescribes the frequency of the gathering of the body

- Nevertheless, the expectation is that we gather regularly
- The writer of Hebrews says:

[Heb. 10:24](#) and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, [Heb. 10:25](#) not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

- While no specific frequency for our gathering is prescribed in the Bible, we are called to never forsake the assembling together
 - To forsake means to desert or give up on something
 - It's doesn't mean to miss church occasionally
 - It means to stop going to church services altogether
 - This is not an option for any Christian
- And when we assemble, Paul says each one is to arrive at the gathering with the expectation that they have something to offer for the benefit of other believers
 - Paul says each one has something
 - We shouldn't pass by those simple words too quickly...*each one*
 - Not some, not a few, but each one
 - Everyone should come ready to offer something to the body of Christ
 - If you routinely come to church and leave having given nothing to the assembly, then you haven't met the purpose in gathering
 - Can we go to our workplace and contribute nothing everyday? Can we attend school and accomplish nothing day after day?
 - Even if we assemble for an entertainment event like a concert or a sports game, we still contribute something
 - We contribute our money to fund the event
 - If we gather for a service project, we contribute our labor
 - If we gather at a wedding we bring gifts
 - If we gather at a funeral we bring words of encouragement

- Virtually every gathering of people functions only because of the contributions of the individuals assembled
- Church is no different
 - In fact it's all the more the case
 - Since our gathering has no purpose apart from giving opportunity for us to use our spiritual gifts
 - Therefore, Paul says everyone is to bring something
- Is that your mindset when you leave your home on Sunday mornings?
 - Do you get in your car for the drive to church with the mindset that you're bringing something for someone else?
 - Are you thinking about who you want to pray for or pray with?
 - Do you consider who might need some encouraging words?
 - Do you have a testimony to share? A teaching to offer, whether to child or adult?
 - Are you bringing an instrument to play, a card to give someone?
 - Are you bringing your checkbook or wallet?
 - All of these things and many more are the means by which we edify fellow believers
- But we have to discipline ourselves to think this way about church
 - Otherwise we'll miss the chance to play our part
 - And the gathering is diminished as a result
 - We have a diversity of gifts for a reason
 - So everyone is important
 - Don't ever think your participation or attendance isn't important to this gathering
 - It's eternally important
- As Paul lists examples of different contributions, he includes a wide variety of gifts from across the spectrum of priorities

- He says one comes with a psalm, another with a teaching, another with a revelation, one with a tongue and another with an interpretation
 - A psalm refers to a moment of praising the Lord in worship
 - Today, we'd say a song of praise
 - A teaching refers to any form of instruction, whether at the pulpit, in a class or one-on-one during a conversation in Fellowship Hall
 - A revelation refers to a statement of prophecy or offering someone a word of counsel under the guidance of the Spirit
 - A tongue and interpretation refers to the gift we studied earlier, speaking in a foreign language while another person interprets
- Even though some of these gifts have a greater potential to edify than others, nothing is excluded from the gathering
 - Everything has a place and a reason to exist
 - So long as everything is done for the purpose of edifying the body, Paul says
 - That's our ultimate test as we make decisions about what to include or exclude from the assembly
 - Can we allow drama skits? Solo musical performances? Movie excerpts? Original songs?
 - In every case, the question is did it give someone a chance to use their talent and express love for the Lord and His church?
 - Does it edify the believer and testify to the glory of Christ?
 - These are the tests we should apply
- But they are not the only tests we must apply
 - There is another equally important test for what to include in the gathering and how to orchestrate everyone's contribution

[1Cor. 14:27](#) If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret;

[1Cor. 14:28](#) but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

[1Cor. 14:29](#) Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

[1Cor. 14:30](#) But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent.

[1Cor. 14:31](#) For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

[1Cor. 14:32](#) and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

[1Cor. 14:33](#) for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

- The additional test is respectfulness
 - Are we contributing our gifts in a respectful manner
 - Respectful to the purpose and value of our gifting
 - Respectful to the needs of others
 - Respectful to the purpose of the gathering
 - Respectful to Christ
 - Paul uses some example gifts to illustrate his point, and once again, Paul includes the gift of tongues in his list to correct the church's use of this particular gift
 - If someone in the body has the gift of tongues and intends to contribute with their gift, then it must be done in a respectful way
 - Speaking in a foreign tongue no one understands should only be done in the gathering if someone is available to interpret
 - An interpretation could come from someone with a gift of tongues
 - Or it come come from someone who speaks the language naturally
 - But without an interpretation, the speaker should remain silent jeeping the gift to himself out of respect for the gathering
 - Then notice Paul says that even if interpretation is available, the use of speaking in tongues should be limited to no more than 2 or 3
 - We limited tongues in the gathering out of respect for the limited edification afforded by this gift

- As well because we need to leave room for others' opportunity to contribute
- Furthermore, tongues are to be used only one at a time
 - If two or more people are trying to speak over one another, then we are being respectful to one another
- If you've ever been exposed to the modern version of "so-called" tongues practiced in some churches, then you will notice they typically operate in direct violation of this biblical mandate
 - As I've witnessed it, the room is filled with multiple people attempting to speak in something they think is tongues
 - There are far more than two or three allowed to speak
 - Everyone is speaking at the same time, so it's a confused cacophony of useless noise
 - And of course, no one makes any effort to interpret
 - We need go no farther than v.28 to see that such behavior is unbiblical
 - And if it is contrary to the word of God, than it cannot be the product of the Spirit
- But in case we think Paul is singling out tongues, he gives similar counsel for one of the most important spiritual gifts: prophecy
 - He says prophecy is also limited to 2 or 4 utterances in the gathering
 - And after each person speaks a prophecy, the rest of the gathering is to immediately pass judgment on what is said
 - Passing judgment means to discern whether the word was truly prompted by the Spirit
 - Paul hold prophecy to the same standard as any other gift
 - Is it done with respect to the gathering?
 - And in respect to its purpose?
 - In particular, Paul is concerned about any gift of utterance leading to chaos when used without the necessary respect

- In the case of prophecy, Paul asks that if a revelation is given concerning someone who is seated, then a special test must follow
- He's talking about a situation where someone is standing and speaking to the congregation in some manner
- And while this person is standing, one who is seated, that is someone who did not have the floor to speak, receives a revelation from the Lord
- Paul says that the one who is standing should stop speaking long enough for the one seated to add his voice to the gathering
- Paul's point is that the movement of the Spirit must be respected by all
 - The Spirit may move in a way contrary to our order of service
 - When that happens, we make room for it, but only to the extent that we can discern it is from the Lord
 - The gathering isn't a free-for-all, but it does need to remain flexible
- Paul gives the rule for how speaking gifts operate in the gathering in vs.31-33
 - Paul says that everyone can contribute to the edification of the body by speaking in turn
 - But the spirits of the prophets are always subject to the prophets
 - Paul means that we aren't acting out of control
 - Prophets of the OT weren't robots who acted possessed and spoke without control over their bodies
 - On the contrary, these men were always in full control of their faculties
 - When they spoke, they spoke inspired words, but they never lost control over their mouths or bodies
 - Similarly, Paul reminds the church that just because you have a speaking gift doesn't mean you've lost all self control
 - If you cry out in the middle of a church service, speaking over the top of someone else, you can't claim that the Spirit made you do it

- The Spirit has never worked that way in past, and He's not working that way now
 - We are to remain in control at all times, carefully selecting the opportunity to contribute and always with respect and according to the rules established in scripture
 - If we can't control ourselves in this way, then we are not operating by the Spirit
 - We are indulging our flesh
 - Or worse, we're under the influence of a false spirit
- When it comes to gifts of utterance, Paul says let's be careful to keep everything we do in the gathering sensible, understandable and respectful to the Lord
 - Because God is not a God of confusion
 - In other words, our God doesn't produce confusing, nonsense displays
 - That's not He operates, for it does not glorify Him to do so
 - The implication of Paul's words is that when we see a gathering operating in a fashion contrary to these instructions, we simply can't be watching something produced by the Lord
 - For the Lord is not a God of confusion, so if confusion reigns in the gathering, then the Lord's Spirit is absent
 - He's been pushed to the side, and in His place the flesh has taken over
- To conclude the chapter, Paul gives one additional command to ensure a respectful gathering

1Cor. 14:34 The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

1Cor. 14:35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

- In the context of individuals contributing teaching and revelation to the gathering, Paul commands that women may not speak
 - In modern culture, these command raises concerns

- Is Paul saying that a woman with a speaking gift can never use it?
- Was he a mysinogist? No
- First, let's not divorce Paul's words from the context of this chapter
 - Paul didn't insert these words out of thin air
 - He's in the middle of a line of thought, teaching on how to ensure a respectful, edifying gathering
- Secondly, Paul has just been addressing the use of speaking gifts
 - All speaking gifts work to edify in a similar manner
 - They teach spiritual truths, whether by revelation, or correction or teaching
- So it's in that context that Paul asks that women refrain from contributing to the teaching, because women teaching men is contrary to respect
 - Elsewhere Paul writes:

1Tim. 2:11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

1Tim. 2:12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

- Paul equates a woman teaching a man with a woman having authority over a man
- Anyone who teaches someone else becomes an authority over that person
- And in the proper order of the family and church body, the Lord has appointed men to lead
- Therefore, Paul instructs women not to take a teaching role in a gathering that includes men, because they assume a position of authority over the men when they teach
 - Notice in 1Cor 14:34 Paul says that they should remember that they are to submit to male authority
 - We discussed headship earlier in this book, so I won't repeat the lesson here

- Except to reiterate that this order is God's design and not one we're free to rethink or change in response to culture
- On the other hand, Paul is not prohibiting a woman from using her speaking gift
 - He only asked that it not be used in the context of the main gathering because it challenges male authority
 - Instead, women with teaching or other speaking gifts can exercise their gift through their husbands or fathers in the gathering
 - And they can use them when teaching children or other women
 - If that sounds unfair or limiting, remember that in most churches the women and children constitute the majority of the church body
- We all have plenty of opportunity to edify with our speaking gifts, whether men or women
 - In fact, we can have women speaking during the gathering in a non-teaching role
 - Women could perform scripture readings without commentary, sing worship songs, give mission updates, announcements, and offer prayers
 - These speaking roles don't suggest authority over others
 - But teaching is reserved for times and places where women aren't taking positions of authority over men
- Just in case any husbands are feeling smug at this point, you should notice that Paul called us out also in v.35
 - Paul said that since the wives are called to respect our authority, we in turn need to be ready to answer their questions
 - In other words, men are expected to be the teachers in their homes
 - Husbands, if you desire a godly wife who respects your authority, then you had better give her something to respect
 - We need to know our Bible, for that's our obligation

- Certainly, wives are called to know their Bibles just as much as the husbands
 - But if your wife knows more than you, then you have a problem
 - You need to race ahead, so that as she has questions about scripture during the gathering, she can seek your counsel confident that you'll have something helpful to say
 - Ladies, if you know the Bible better than your husband, don't slow down...keep the pedal to the metal
 - And challenge your husband to catch up and pass you as you both pursue Christ through His word
- When everyone is doing their part in the assembly with respect and according to the word of God, then the gathering functions in a beautiful, balanced way
 - We have latitude but don't have a right to work outside the guidelines of scripture
 - We have an obligation to serve others in Christ, in love and with a desire to edify
 - This is Paul's summary

[1Cor. 14:36](#) Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

[1Cor. 14:37](#) If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

[1Cor. 14:38](#) But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

[1Cor. 14:39](#) Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.

[1Cor. 14:40](#) But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

- Paul asks sarcastically if the Corinthian church was the author of God's word?
 - Or perhaps this church is the only place on earth that knows what God has said?
 - Paul's pointing out that they don't have a corner on the truth
 - That God's instructions came to them no different than any other place

- So Corinth didn't have the right to make up their own rules for the gathering and claim they were operating under instructions from God
- God didn't tell Corinth something different than He told everyone else in His word
- Our brothers and sisters who repeat the Corinthian mistakes in tongues or women teaching men or other guidelines are working against the word of God
 - They can't claim to be enlightened or to have new revelation
 - They can't claim to have a greater portion of the Holy Spirit
 - Or to be more sensitive to His leading
- Just as Paul says, if anyone thinks he is more spiritual than others, then let him show that spiritual maturity by greater obedience to God's word - not less
 - And God's word has spoken on the proper use of the gifts in the body
 - If a brother or sister fails to acknowledge that Paul's teaching is a command from the Lord, then we aren't to recognize them
 - We are to separate from them for our own good and as discipline to them
- Meanwhile, Paul finishes saying desire the greatest gift of prophecy over the rest, but don't despise lesser gifts like tongues
 - Each has its place in the body when used respectfully and in love
 - All things we do should be done properly
 - Everything must be orderly, in control
 - And with a potential to edify believers
 - As we operate under these constraints, we please the Lord
 - And we serve Him as He called us
 - To the glory of His name before the nations