

# Midweek Bible Study

**Order, Women, and Authority in the Church**  
**1 Cor. 14:33-40**

## Review

### I. **Guidelines for when the church gathers (26)**

- A. When you gather
- B. Individual Contributions
- C. Principle: Let all things be done for edification

### II. **Rules for tongues and prophecy (27-32)**

- A. Tongues (27-28)
- B. Prophecy (29-31)

### III. **Principle: God is not characterized by disorder but peace (33)**

- A. God is not a God of disorder, chaos, confusion – “anarchy”
- B. But of peace

### IV. **Order and Women Speaking in Church (33b-36)**

#### Why this passage is difficult

- 1. Where is the new paragraph?
- 2. The textual variants
- 3. 14:34-35 compared to 1 Cor. 11:2-16
- 4. What does “just as the law says” mean? There is no referent.

#### Helpful contextual clues

Prophets (they judge the other prophets (29)

V. 35 seems very significant

#### A. Silent and submissive (33b-34)

- 1. Paul is laying down a universal principle that is observed by all the churches. 4:17; 7:17; 11:17 –
- 2. Women in the churches are to be silent for they are not permitted to speak
- 3. But let me be in submission
- 4. Just as the law says (34b)  
1 Tim. 2:11-14 helps us here (as does 1 Cor. 11)



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The best solution, given the parallel text in 1 Timothy 2:11–14 and 1 Corinthians 11:3–10, is that Paul refers to the creation narrative in Genesis 2. The leaders in the congregation should be men since (1) man was created first (Gen. 2:20–21); (2) woman was created as man’s helper (Gen. 2:18, 20); (3) the instructions about not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were given to the man (Gen. 2:16–17); (4) the man named the woman (Gen. 2:23); (5) the serpent subverted male leadership by approaching Eve (Gen. 3:1–6); and (6) Adam was more responsible for the sin than Eve since God approached him first, even though Eve sinned first (Gen. 3:10–12; Rom. 5:12–19).<sup>1</sup>

- B. Let them ask at home, not in church (35)  
\*Again, we have a significant clue here as to what the situation was.
1. If they (the women) want to learn (they want to understand)
  2. They should ask their own husbands at home.
  3. For it is *shameful* for women to speak in church

- C. “Do you think you are special?” (36)

*Not only would such a response amount to a claim of original authority; it would also reflect arrogance and pride. Do the Corinthians think they can invent their own rules that contrast with what is practiced in other churches (see 14:33b)?<sup>2</sup>*

## Conclusion

1. It *could* be that women were involved in judging prophecies, maybe even their own husband’s prophecy (message). It could be they were “superseding” prophecies.
2. It seems that the women were being disruptive in the service, challenging the men, or the teaching, or the prophecies, interrupting the church meetings. Paul says this is shameful.
3. Women should be silent in the churches – the prohibition does not extend to praying, singing, but when it comes to authoritative speech, or speech which challenges male authority, women are to keep silent.
4. Women should conduct themselves in church in a way that is befitting to submissive conduct, showing honor to their husbands, and to the teaching of the Word of God.
5. This conduct of women in the church should reflect the creation order, and authority/submission structures, which should be observed in church and home.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 298.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 299.

