

1 Corinthians 14 (Part 2): 18-40 •

Order in the Church

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1 Corinthians chapter 14. We've been dealing now for a number of weeks with the subject of spiritual gifts. In chapter 12, we saw how the apostle Paul did an overview of spiritual gifts, giving a list of them and so forth. Then we got into the proper usage of spiritual gifts beginning in verse 12 or chapter 13 rather where the apostle Paul said that love is the focus behind the usage of spiritual gifts, and if it's not, then it is a misuse of the gifts.

And then we got into chapter 14 last time; we dealt with the first half of the chapter where the Apostle Paul got into specifics on the gift of tongues, that gift that everybody loves to talk about and is quite controversial. And we got into a lot of details last time concerning the gift of tongues: how it is, what it is, how it should be used, and its various functions and so forth. If you missed that message, I would encourage you to get online to our website at ccontario.com and check it out.

Here in the latter half of chapter 14 in 1 Corinthians, Paul is going to continue speaking somewhat; he'll be mentioning the gift of tongues, but not so much to focus on the gift of tongues. This last half of the chapter in 14 is all about...And if you don't remember anything else that I say today, this is probably what you need to leave with. The last half of the chapter is about order. Order.

Order in the court. You hear a judge say that sometimes on those TV shows. I've never heard it in real life, but I've sat through several court cases. But what they're trying to do is restore order in the courtroom. And what Paul is trying to do in this latter half of chapter 14 is restore order in the Christian gathering, in the gathering of the church.

I want you to think of the Corinthians as people who were really excited about spiritual gifts to the point where their services got out of order. They became chaotic. Have you ever, can you relate? Have you ever been to a church and walked in and things were just crazy? Just wild, wacky, crazy, people jumping up and down and flying all around and Jericho marches around the room, and I've seen it all.

Well, I know I haven't seen it all. I've seen quite a bit, but a lot of weird stuff. Anyway, that was the, those were the Corinthians. They were pretty wild. And it's interesting to me that Paul does not criticize them for their zeal and desire. He doesn't say to them, don't do that anymore.

What he does is he says, listen, you need to be walking in love, and that means caring about people who come into your church that may not understand what's going on. Caring about the person sitting next to you, about how they feel about everything going on and so forth. And then he wants to talk here in this chapter about order, and why that's important. We'll get into that here.

Let's read the passage beginning in verse 18, and then we'll see what the Lord has for us. He says:

"I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, in church (and that's the key) I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

²⁰ Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. ²¹ In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." ²² Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. ²³ If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? ²⁴ But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, ²⁵ the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

²⁶ What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁷ If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰ If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, ³² and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. ³³ For God is not a God of confusion (This is your Bible may say, disorder) but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints,³⁴ the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says.³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

³⁶ Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? ³⁷ If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. ³⁸ If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹ So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But all things should be done decently and in order.” (ESV)

Pray with me.

Father God, open our hearts to the ministry of Your Word. Speak to us today. Teach us, Lord, from the Scriptures through Your Spirit; fill us with light. We ask it, Lord, in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, start, you can see there's a lot of interesting things going on in this latter half of the chapter. And I'm sure you're wondering how in the world I'm going to handle some of these things, but whatever you might think of the gift of tongues—and people usually embrace it or despise it—whatever you may think, it is clear from these verses that the apostle Paul had the gift and he used it a lot.

He starts off this section of the chapter by saying, “¹⁸ *I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.*” And that's, and he's not boasting there. He's simply establishing the fact that he's not against this gift and nor is he asking them not to function in it. But as we've seen in our previous studies, and as I've already mentioned, within the Corinthian church, the practice and the use of the gift of tongues took a place of prominence in their services to the point where it got unhealthy. And so, Paul is letting them know that there are other things that they ought to focus on when they come together as the body of Christ.

And verse 19 tells us what that focus ought to be, look at it with me again, verse 19: “*Nevertheless, in church* (You know what, in your mind with your pen; however, circle those words, even if you just make us in church. Notice what Paul is giving the context of this statement in church.) *I would rather speak five words with my mind* (meaning with understanding) *in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*” All right, stop there for a moment. We've looked at this verse before, but we're going to focus on it again.

And I want to highlight the key word here, which is instruct. Instruct. Those of you who have a New King James (NKJV) Bible on your lap, your word is, teach. Paul says, I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to teach. The ESV says to instruct rather than da, da, da.

Now, this is so important that you and I see what Paul is saying here in this verse. Because seeing and understanding the emphasis here is one of the keys to understanding all of what Paul says related to the gift of tongues, specifically, and the gifts of the Spirit in a general sense, and to understanding what Paul was saying to them about their gatherings.

We've mentioned before, and I, you may not recall, but this word that is translated to instruct or teach, depending on your translation, is the word *katécheó*, and it literally means to teach by word of mouth. Okay, to teach by word of mouth. What is Paul saying when you come together, when we are together, he says, I would rather be limited to five words of teaching than 10,000 words, he says, using the gift of tongues.

And it seems rather clear to me that when we come together—and again, that's the focus, you guys—when we come together, Paul is saying our focus should be instructional teaching. That's what he's saying. I'd rather teach, even if I was limited to using just five words, I would far and away do that, than sit and speak 10,000 words in a language even though it was supernatural that you didn't understand. I would rather do that.

And tongues, it's a wonderful gift. It really is. And I've told you before that I have this gift and I love it. And I use it a lot in my prayer closet and when I'm worshiping. But Paul is saying its function is not best served when we come together. This is Paul's gently saying to the church, guys, this is a wonderful gift but you're misusing really the gift when you make it the focus of your coming together because you're all getting together and speaking in tongues.

We have churches today, they're still like that. I've been in services where the pastor from the pulpit or the worship leader said to the people during worship, alright, now we're all just going to speak in tongues. Every one of us does this all speak in tongues, right now? And it's just blahhh! And Paul's saying, do you understand that's really a misuse to make that a focus of your time coming together? I would rather spend just even a few words instructing and teaching because that's what we're supposed to be doing.

And that's why he goes on in verse 20, he says, “*Brothers, do not be children in your thinking...*” Now, when it comes to evil, fine, go ahead and be children. In

other words, it's okay to be ignorant; it's okay to be naive when it comes to evil. But when it comes to the rest of your thinking, he says, be mature; let's be grown-ups about this.

Verse 21, now this is important: *“In the Law it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.”*” Now, this is really an interesting quotation. Paul is quoting the book of Isaiah here, and he's speaking about the fact that God said to the nation of Israel that people speaking to them in languages they wouldn't understand. He's not talking about the gift of tongues. But he's saying there will come people.

Let me back up. I need to explain a little bit better. The nation of Israel refused to listen to their own prophets who spoke to them in Hebrew. They refused to listen to the warnings that the prophets gave to them about repenting of their sin, putting away their idols, and getting back to worshipping the Lord, their God. They refused.

Here's what God said through Isaiah: Fine, you're not going to listen to me. I'm going to send people to you who are going to speak in languages you don't understand (Isaiah 28:11-12). And He was referring through Isaiah to the Assyrians who were going to invade the land and who were going to take captive the people of Israel, particularly in the Northern kingdom.

And he was... and Paul is referencing this passage in Isaiah to show that speaking in other languages has been used by God historically as a sign of impending judgment. You with me? That's what Paul's saying here. The speaking of other languages has historically been a sign to people who are faithless that judgment is coming, and he quotes Isaiah to prove his point. All right.

Based on that, Paul goes on to say this in verse 22. Look at verse 22: *“Thus (he says), tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers...”* Isn't that interesting? Now, again, he's talking about a public use of tongues, not private, not worshipful. Paul talked a lot about how he worshiped God, sang with his spirit, prayed with his spirit, but that, he's not talking to people. He's talking, he's referring to his own worship to God.

But now he says, in the public setting, okay, he says, tongues are not a sign, a sign for believers, but in fact, for unbelievers. And the sign is not necessarily a good one. It can be if they respond appropriately, I suppose, but historically speaking, Paul says, the speaking of other languages in front of unbelievers has

historically not been good, and it's not meant, historically, as a good sign. It's meant as a sign of impending judgment. It's what he's saying here, right?

He goes on to say, and again, that's another reason why tongue shouldn't be our focus in our services. When we come together as the church, there's always going to be unbelievers among us, always. But technically, fundamentally, when we come together as the church, we're coming together as believers, right?

We're coming together as the body of Christ. We're coming together to encourage one another. We're coming together to get into the word, to be instructed from the word, as Paul said. And to grow in our understanding of the word so that we might be equipped to go out and serve the Lord. That's one of our focuses and goals of coming together on a Sunday morning, a Wednesday night or whatever day of the week we happen to enter and come together. You with me? That's our goal.

You want to, you always want to leave church going, okay, better. I'm better. I'm better than I was when I came in. Not just I feel better, remember that? Don't come up and tell me you feel better. That's not the goal. The goal is to be better. The goal is to be stronger in your faith, your trust, your hope, right? To be encouraged: Yes, the Lord is in charge. Yes, the Lord is good. Yes, the Lord is able, right? That's what you want to walk out of church, saying, I hope you do.

Sometimes you walk out of church going, ouch, I just got spanked. But you know what as Christians even that's good, isn't it? Because when God brings a course correction in our lives through some corrective statement that is even a good thing as well. Paul's talking about when the public use of tongues historically or other languages has been used, it has been for judgment.

He goes on to say in verse 22, we're still in verse 22, “...*prophecy (however) is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers.*” Remember what prophecy is; it's a word from the Lord. And Paul says, that's a sign for us. That's a sign God is speaking to us; He's directing us, He's encouraging us, correcting us, whatever the thing might be. That, that's, that's encouragement and wisdom for us as believers.

Not that it can't be used for unbelievers because it can. As Paul will go on to say in verse 23. As Paul will go on to say, in verse 23, “*If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter (what are they going to think? He says), will they not say that you are out of your minds?*” And this seems to be what was going on in the Corinthian

church, as it is in other churches as well. Paul reminded them that having the entire church speaking audibly in tongues was counterproductive to reaching people for Jesus.

Does it mean that somebody can't possibly come to Jesus? No. Listen, God can use the most crazy things to bring people to faith. But he's saying, ultimately it's and fundamentally, it's counterproductive. He says, if somebody comes in and they don't know what's going on, they've never heard of this tongues business, or maybe they're just a flat out unbeliever, and they come in and the church is just absolutely going nuts, speaking in tongues, they're going to walk in and go, oh, yeah, these guys are nuts, right?

And, but what about prophecy? Remember Paul; Paul loves prophecy. Verse 24, he says, *“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all (Prophecy is a sign for believers, but it can be conviction for an unbeliever. It's good in both cases, he even though it says), he is called to account by all, ²⁵ the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.”* Prophecy can be used in both cases.

See, tongues can really only be used to build up believers who know and understand what's going on. And even then, it should not be used in the public gathering, at least as a focus. It should be used in the private setting. But prophecy can be used anytime. It can be an encouragement and a sign for believers and a conviction for unbelievers.

Okay, so he says in verse 26, *“What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation...”* There's a lot of people who believe that what Paul is saying here is corrective in nature. In other words, he's criticizing them here. He's saying, so then, so what are your services? Like, man, I tell you when you guys come together, I mean, give me a break. Everybody has a hymn. Everybody's got a lesson. Everybody's got a revelation, a tongue and interpret day.

Actually, don't—you don't necessarily have to read it that way. You'll notice Paul doesn't criticize here. He doesn't say, so would you guys just knock it off a little bit? Paul is such a gracious man. He may want to say to them, you guys need to chill a little bit, but he doesn't. What he says is, and it's at the end of verse 26, *“...Let all things be done for building up.”* And that's the goal, you guys. That's the goal: *“... Let all things be done for building up.”* Again, if you don't leave church on a Sunday, Wednesday, or whatever day built up, somehow we haven't done what we should have done.

And again; being built up can even come from a word of correction that sends you out, maybe look in your wounds a little bit, but still you're going to be built up from it. See that's what should be happening in church. That's the goal. That's the guideline. He says, when you come together; whatever you do, whatever you do, let it all be done for building up.

So, to help them reach that goal in their services; of all things being used to build up. Paul, in the following verses, verse 27 and down, is going to give them some guidelines for their services. People; these are guidelines, you ready?

Verse 27: *“If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn...”* In other words, not over the top of one another, right? And then if they do, he says, let somebody interpret. So that people, why? Can be built up. ²⁸ *“But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church (in church) and speak to (who?) himself and to God.”*

Let it be between him and God because that's the focus, that's the aim, that's the direction of the gift of tongues anyway, isn't it? Remember we learned that? Tongues is always this way, never this way. All right?

He says, verse 29, *“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.”*³⁰ *If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent.*³¹ *For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged (or built up),*³² *and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.”*

What he means by that, the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, he means that when a prophet or someone with a prophetic gifting gets a word from the Lord that is subject to them as far as when they give it, or even if they give it.

Did you know that? Do you know that somebody who speaks prophetically, it's not like they just can't help themselves and they're like a marionette or a puppet, and they're like, I got to talk because God's got his hand in my back, like a ventriloquist dummy or something? The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. That means if the Lord gives me a word to say to you guys, like on a Sunday morning, maybe He gives it to me on the Thursday before that Sunday in my prayer time or whatever, that thing—that word is subject to me in the sense that I can wait to give it to you. I can say, I was praying last Thursday while I was out for a walk, and the Lord gave me a word for you guys, and here it is.

I think the Corinthians might've been under the mistaken notion that when the unction or the anointing of the Holy Spirit came upon someone to give a word, that they just, they had no control over when they would say it. And so it's like, well, when the spirit comes upon me, I've got to talk. And so even though somebody is up talking, teaching, sharing, somebody else has a word for the Lord, I have a word for the Lord. And they start just saying it. And so they're interrupting each other and overlapping each other. Can you see what this, that is chaos? This is disorder, right? And it's just, it's craziness.

And this is probably what was going on in the Corinthian church. And it's why Paul is saying the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophet. You know you have control, and what I mean again by control, that means you can even not give a word. I've had people come up to me after a prayer time, even after service, and say, the Lord gave me a word for today, and it was just perfect, and I was afraid, and I didn't give it. See, they can say, nope, not going to do it, out of fear or whatever; we can do that. And that's what Paul's saying here.

Now, verses 27 through 32, again, these are guidelines. Guys, these are guidelines. They're not legalistic requirements for our service, as if we're to say, every service should include two or three people speaking in tongues. What Paul is trying to do here with the Corinthians is limit their activity. Because they probably had 14 people get up and speak in tongues. And they had 16 people get up and give a prophecy. And they had several people get up and give a lesson.

I'm sure their service, if you could go back in time in the first century and sit through a church service when the body of Christ, you'd be shocked, probably resembles nothing of what we do here. We'd say, wow, they sang and they didn't even have projectors. But, I think people just stood up, started talking, and Paul is saying, listen, let me give you some guidelines here so that we might bring order to what's happening in the church.

And order is so important, and he's going to explain in this. And guys, this next verse that we're going to read, the first part of the verse 33, this is so important. This is, in fact, this is so important, I think the Lord's going to have me teach on just this verse next week, just this verse. But this is so key to understanding all of what Paul is saying about spiritual gifts. You ready?

Verse 33: *“For God is not a God of confusion but of peace...”* Now some of you have different translations on your lap and you might have read that verse slightly differently. The word that is translated here in the ESV, confusion, I looked it up in the Greek, in my Greek dictionary, and it means instability.

Think of it this way: God is not a God of instability but of peace. I like the NIV, frankly. I think the NIV translators did a good job with this verse; they said, *"God is not a God of disorder, but of peace."*

Because order is what God, what Paul is calling them to in the church service when they gather. And I think that's a very, a very good word. But the point, okay, this is really important, you guys. The point of striving for order or having order in our church services and the stability that comes from that order is what? So that we can just be cool? So that our church services are comfortable or they make us feel good? No. The desire and the striving for order is that our church services might reflect the character of God.

Because Paul doesn't just say, hey, order is a good thing. He says, no, God is a God of disorder, or I mean, of order, or not a God of disorder, right? The point here is that when this disorder you have in your service is not consistent with the character of God.

We talk a lot about grieving the Holy Spirit. Well, some people do. And it's a big topic at times about grieving the Holy Spirit. I think we grieved the Holy Spirit today. Let me tell you one of the most grievous things to the Holy Spirit is when there's something going on in our church services that is inconsistent with His character. Lack of love is grieving to the Holy Spirit. Lack of forgiveness is grieving to the Holy Spirit, right? Lack of order is grieving to the Holy Spirit. Lack of joy, I mean, you name it. That's what Paul is saying here.

Listen, when you come together as the body of Christ, operate your services in a way that is consistent with God's very character, with His very heart. Why? Just because we don't want to grieve the Holy Spirit? Sure. Because we want to also cooperate with the Holy Spirit. We don't want to put any roadblocks in His path to accomplishing what He wants to accomplish. You see, we don't want it.

We don't want to hinder the Holy Spirit from anything he wants to accomplish. And we can hinder Him by grieving Him, meaning that we're doing things, saying things that are inconsistent with the character of God, right? So, don't fight against His nature. Don't fight against Him. He is a God of order, so, let your services reflect that order and peace. Yeah, that's consistent with His character.

Let's keep reading. Now we come to these great verses here in the middle of verse 33: *"... As in all the churches of the saints,³⁴ the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says.³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let*

them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶ *Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?*” Great verses. Let's close in prayer.

If you take these verses all by themselves, and you take it out of the context of the chapter, and you just quote these verses alone, I guarantee you, you can tell women that they may not open their mouths in church; and they would be probably convinced based on a reading of these verses apart from the context. This is one of those places where context is vital.

What was Paul's context in the last half of chapter 14? Order. Order, remember? It was to bring order where there was otherwise chaotic gatherings. And we can tell by reading these verses, what was causing disorder in the services. What was it? The women were asking questions to their husbands out loud during the service. And it was causing all kinds of distractions and disorder in the service.

Notice what Paul says in verse 35, look at it, read it again, *“If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home...”* Now stop there for a minute. Let me explain something since these early churches were set up by Jews, okay?

Jews who went out into these lands and established these churches. It is very, very possible that what the Jews who started these churches, and Paul who started most of them, did. It's very possible he implemented a traditional practice that the Jews did in their synagogue services, which was separating the women and the men.

That would be like if we came into church, all the men would sit over here, and all the women would sit over here. And the women sat over alone by themselves, and the men sat alone by themselves over on that side.

Now, you can imagine if a woman over here started calling to her husband over here and asking questions, hey, Bob, what did he mean by that? Sort of a thing. Obviously his name wouldn't be Bob. That would be a little distracting, honey, what does that mean? Well, and we don't even know how big the church was. Still, it's very possible they were separating the men and the women because that was the Jewish tradition in the synagogue.

And so, you can imagine how distracting and disorderly it would be to have people talking across the room one to another, and so Paul says, listen, if they want to ask their husband something, let them wait till they get home. Talk

there. This is distracting and it's actually shameful because it does not produce order and it is not consistent with God's character.

Paul ends with these words, verse 37: *“If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. ³⁸If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”* Well, this man's got guts, doesn't he? I mean, it can almost sound a little arrogant. It's like if there's anyone who's really, truly spiritual among you, he'll realize what I'm telling you is the truth. It almost sounds that way, doesn't it?

But Paul is not being arrogant here; he's simply conveying to them his confidence that what he is sharing—and he's talking about all of these things related to their services, the order gifts of the Holy Spirit, and so forth—this is from the Lord. He's speaking from the authority of God.

You see, one of the problems, and I am sure this was a problem in the Corinthian church, one of the problems with a church that believes in prophecy—and by the way, I believe in prophecy, I believe prophecy is still alive and well today, not changing or adding to revelation from the scripture, but all I'm saying is I believe God still speaks, that's all I'm saying, God still speaks—there's a problem with that when you have a church that believes in prophecy, and that is anybody can get up and say, thus says the Lord, and trump what somebody else says simply because I'm now saying, thus says the Lord.

Have you ever noticed when somebody says, well, God told me? That's upping the ante, isn't it, on the thing? I mean, that's like bringing out the ace out of the deck and laying it down and going, yes, you there. Boom. You said that, but God told me. Well, see, that's a problem, especially when the person is just using it to just have their own way.

Paul has to say, listen, if anybody believes that he has the ability to speak according to the authority of God's Holy Spirit, then let him prove it by acknowledging that the things I'm saying to you are actually from the Lord.

Because Paul knew and understood that it would be just, it'd be very easy for somebody to get up in the church and say, thus says the Lord, Paul is full of hot air, or everything he just said to you is a bunch of hooey. Sure, somebody can do that. I mean, what's to stop them, right?

And it's funny; there are people in the church, and I've even met a few, who think they are so spiritual that rules and things don't apply to them, sort of a

thing. And we've probably all met people like that. The apostle Paul, I think, did too. And I think there might've been a few of them in the Corinthian church. That's why Paul said what he said here.

And here are his concluding remarks, verse 39: “*So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy* (I think Paul's made his point. Prophecy is a greater gift when the body comes together. Because it is group related, useful for both believers and unbelievers.), *and do not forbid speaking in tongues.*” Listen, he says, the gift of tongues has its place. We've seen it's a wonderful tool. Wonderful tool. And particularly for personal praise and prayer. Paul says, don't forbid. I'm not saying, giving these corrections so that you'll shut these things down.

Verse 40, and this is the final statement: “*But all things should be done decently and in order.*” Since God is a God of order, since God is a God of peace, it's clear that our services should reflect that very character of God Himself.

Too many times, too many times, I've heard of how believers have gone to a church where there were excesses that were going on as it relates to the gifts of the spirit. And those gifts were discredited in the mind of those individuals as if the value of spiritual gifts and so forth were just not seen in a biblical light.

And that's a shame because the gifts were given to us. I mean, God's intention is obviously for us to use the gifts unto greater fruitfulness in the body of Christ and in the kingdom of God. The gifts were given for us to use, you guys, and to bless the church. But many times, instead of being a blessing, it has become a curse. And that is just a shame.

But let me also be clear about something else. Paul ends this chapter by saying let all things be done decently and in order, but that doesn't mean dead. I mean, there are people who think that an atmosphere of gloom and depression is what Paul's getting at here when he says decently in an order, let all things be done decently in an order. In other words, be quiet. Don't say anything.

We used to have, even when I was a kid, I remember we used to have these ideas about the sanctuary, even if nobody was in there, you'd come into the sanctuary, that church, and there was just this reverence, don't, shh, we're in the sanctuary, don't sit there, that's the altar, don't touch that, as if it were like the Ark of the Covenant, you touch it, you're going to drop dead. It's... we get weird sometimes. It's like, guys, it's a room, it's a room. You know who the temple is, don't you? It's you. We forget that. We start putting our focus on a room. It's you!

When he says, let all things be done decently and orderly, he's not talking about the way I was raised, or maybe some of you were raised in church where, don't walk, don't, or don't talk, don't run, don't touch, sort of an idea. And when we come together, it needs to be just very somber. I had a gal come up to me a number of months ago who'd been raised in a, I won't say which, but in a denominational church where apparently laughter had been outlawed. And she came up to me actually after one of the services and she said, it is so refreshing to realize that you can laugh in church.

Isn't that something? She had never experienced that. Because church was a place of religious sobriety. And we were supposed to, and it's a place where you just, and there's a place for being serious, okay? There's a place for sobriety in the sense of understanding the gravity and the importance of God's Word.

I'm convinced also that God has a sense of humor, a good one. And I don't think it's wrong for us to chuckle and even have a belly laugh in church once in a while. I don't think that is disorderly. I don't think that's what Paul meant when he said things should be done decently and in order. He's talking about other things.

And this idea of order. And I'm not going to—I'll talk about this next time. This goes so far. This is so far-reaching. Order should not only be what we strive for in our services, it should be what we strive for in every aspect of our Christian lives, in our marriages and homes. Order in your finances. Order! Ouch. In your speech. In your thoughts. Order. God's order. You know what the problem is? We live in a world that is rocked by disorder. God put it into order when he made it. Sin put it out of order.