

A painting of a church with a bell tower and a cross on top. The church is set against a background of warm, orange and red hues. The entire image is overlaid with thick, dripping paint in various colors: orange, red, blue, and dark brown. The paint drips are most prominent on the left and right sides, creating a 'messy' or 'splattered' effect.

1 Corinthians

MESSY CHURCH
MIGHTY CHRIST

First Corinthians 14 holds an underlying message about God-glorifying beauty in the order, structure, and limits that exist for our corporate worship and service. Today, we'll see four desirable qualities that should mark our worship and service, and that can display order and yield appealing fruit.

1 Corinthians 14:1

Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts...

1 Corinthians 14:40

But everything is to be done decently and in order.

1 Corinthians 14:33

...God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

1 Corinthians 14:7-9

⁷ Even lifeless instruments that produce sounds—whether flute or harp—if they don't make a distinction in the notes, how will what is played on the flute or harp be recognized? ⁸ In fact, if the bugle makes an unclear sound, who will prepare for battle? ⁹ In the same way, unless you use your tongue for intelligible speech, how will what is spoken be known? For you will be speaking into the air.

1 Corinthians 14:13-19

Therefore the person who speaks in a tongue should pray that he can interpret. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding (mind) is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding (mind). I will sing praise with the spirit, and I will also sing praise with my understanding (mind). ¹⁶ Otherwise, if you praise with the spirit, how will the outsider say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?...

¹⁷ For you may very well be giving thanks, but the other person is not being built up. ¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you; ¹⁹ yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding (mind), in order to teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

1 Corinthians 14:26-36

²⁶ What then, brothers and sisters? Whenever you come together, each one has a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Everything is to be done for building up. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, there are to be only two, or at the most three, each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no interpreter, that person is to keep silent in the church and speak to himself and God...

²⁹ Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should evaluate. ³⁰ But if something has been revealed to another person sitting there, the first prophet should be silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that everyone may learn and everyone may be encouraged. ³² And the prophets' spirits are subject to the prophets, ³³ since God is not a God of disorder but of peace...

As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ the women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but are to submit themselves, as the law also says. ³⁵ If they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home, since it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. ³⁶ Or did the word of God originate from you, or did it come to you only?

Self-control is a quality that the Spirit of God cultivates in God's people (Galatians 5:22-23). That means we are given the ability to slow down, to stop speaking, and to submit to others who might have something to say. As God commands in James 1:19-20, we can be quick to listen and slow to speak.

The order and limits put on tongues speakers and those giving prophecy, along with the limit placed on women evaluating prophecy, were all designed to point back to the closing exhortation: when the body is gathered, all things are to be done in an orderly way that reflects our God of order.

1 Corinthians 14:40

But everything is to be done decently and in order.

1 Corinthians 14:23-25

If, therefore, the whole church assembles together and all are speaking in tongues and people who are outsiders or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? ²⁴ But if all are prophesying and some unbeliever or outsider comes in, he is convicted by all and is called to account by all. ²⁵ The secrets of his heart will be revealed, and as a result he will fall facedown and worship God, proclaiming, “God is really among you.”