

# NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH MEETINGS

## GUIDELINES

## COMMENTS

(1 Corinthians 14: 26-40)

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WOMEN KEEP SILENT	<p><b>“Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak...” (1Co.14:34-35).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unless open, participatory meetings were the norm, these instructions concerning women would be meaningless. Clearly this was an issue for Paul to bring it up. This is intended to be followed “in all the churches of the saints” (1Co.14:33). Also this is not merely Paul’s opinion for he says, “If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized” (1Co.14:38). He clearly says this is “The Lord’s command” (1Co.14:37).</li> <li>• The word “silent” (Greek <i>σιγάτωσαν</i> “let be silent”) here is also used for the tongues speaker keeping “quiet” (14:28) if no interpreter is present, and the speaker stopping if a revelation comes to someone.</li> <li>• This context applies “one at a time” (14:27) and “in turn” (14:31) to the assembly, giving the idea of only one person speaking at a time. Thus, a woman keeping silent may mean she should not be the only one speaking to the assembly. It would not apply to congregational singing, corporate responses, private conversations, or fellowship during the Lord’s Supper (1Co.11:17-35).</li> <li>• Paul does not qualify “keep silent” as speaking in tongues, speaking a prophecy, speaking a judgment, nor speaking a teaching. The text simply says women are not to speak anything. In fact, if they have any questions they are to ask their husbands at home for “It is improper for a woman to speak in church” (1C.14:35). Away from the assembly, a woman can ask at home why certain prophecies went unchallenged (14:35).</li> <li>• 1Co.11:2-16 implies women can pray and prophecy, but must do so covered. To resolve this with chapter 14:33b-35, we take chapter 14 as conditional. That is, women may speak if their statements are “in subjection” (14:34). If their utterances pass judgment upon a prophecy spoken, then under this condition the women must be silent. Thus, women are to be silent in regard to judging prophecies. This seems consistent with other passages telling us that women are not to have authority over a man (1Tm.2:11-13). Women are not to quiz, question, or interrogate the prophets authority or orthodoxy.</li> </ul>
ORDERLY	<p><b>“But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner” (1Co.14:40).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly the overarching idea behind all the guidelines is that, “All things be done properly and in an orderly manner” (14:40). Spontaneity is no excuse for disorder! However, a proper and orderly manner does not mean following a printed bulletin which tends to squelch the Holy Spirit’s leading. 1 Corinthians 14 suggests the norm for church meetings is nothing pre-planned.</li> </ul>

### CONCLUSION

Church meetings should be participatory, and everyone should be allowed to contribute freely and spontaneously to them. Because this seems too foreign to most churches today, many will, no doubt, attempt to ignore 1 Corinthians 14:26-40. Paul anticipates that there would be those who would want to conduct church meetings in ways other than this. His questions are designed to point out to them how presumptuous they would be to ignore his instructions and invent their own customs. “Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored” (14:36-38, NIV).