

38. Learning Why We Both Learn and Encourage

In our last topic, we saw the first part of the way that God wants to use a worship service of the whole church to develop and equip Christians to share the Word of God. We saw that when we gather in a worship service God is the audience and we are the participants. Since we are the participants, we saw that we are given several ways to share the Word of God as we participate and that as we share the Word of God our goal is always to build up every Christian. Today, we are going to see that the Lord gives us several other instructions about the way that the Lord uses the worship service to build up and equip Christians for ministry to others.

In the early church, it was common for two or three to explain the Word of God in a worship service of the whole church. 1 Corinthians 14:29-31 says, “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” Peter explained the ministry of the prophets in 2 Peter. In 2 Peter 1:19-21, he said that they wrote the Old Testament as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Then, in 2 Peter 3:1-2 we read, “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.” In these verses, we see Peter explained that the prophets gave the Old Testament and the apostles gave the commandments of Christ in the New Testament. That is why Paul said, in Ephesians 2:20, that the apostles and prophets were the foundation of the church.

The book of Acts also speaks of a number of prophets. We will mention two places where men are called prophets. Acts 13:1 says, “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” Then, Acts 15:32 says, “Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.” Here, we see that various people who explained the Word of God are called prophets. In the same way, in 1 Corinthians 14:29, we see the word “prophets” talks about people who explain the Word of God to other Christians.

Here, we see that Paul told the Corinthians that two or three prophets could explain the Word of God in a service. Since the New Testament was not yet complete, the others were to judge (listen with careful discernment) and make certain that the things taught were in agreement with the teachings of the apostles and the Old Testament. The others were to listen with careful discernment to recognize if something did not agree with the teaching of the apostles or the Old Testament. If one recognized a teaching that did not agree with what the apostles or the Old Testament taught, that person was to explain what was taught. In this way, the entire congregation would learn to evaluate all teaching to make sure it was in agreement with the Word of God. Since these were all fairly new Christians, this was the way to make certain that the teaching of the apostles and the quotes from the Old Testament were in agreement with what was being taught.

In verse 31, we also see that all were allowed to have opportunities to share the Word of God in

the worship services. In this way, each person was becoming equipped to teach and explain the Word of God wherever they went. We see the results of such development in Acts 8:4 where we read, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” Today, many Christians do not get opportunities to share the Word of God publicly with other Christians listening so they never learn to explain the Word of God wherever they go. We also see that when all share the Word of God all learn and all are encouraged. The one who is sharing the Word of God usually learns the most but all can learn from what the person shares. The Word God will also provide encouragement to all the Christians.

1 Corinthians 14:32-33 explains why the ones who speak will learn the most. Those verses say, “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” Here, we see that the spirits of those who share the Word of God are to be subject to the prophets. In John 14:26, Christ told the disciples, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” As those who are preparing to speak the Word of God yield their human spirit to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will help them learn and grow in their own understanding.

We also see that the Holy Spirit does not produce confusion. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” As they yield their human spirit to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will help those who are preparing to speak to compare other passages from the Word of God. In this way, the Holy Spirit guides the human spirit so that the spirits of those who speak are subject to the speakers. As we yield our human spirits to the Holy Spirit, Philippians 4:7 promises, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” We can trust the Lord to guard our hearts and minds as we yield to Him while preparing.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 goes on to say, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.” Here, we see that in the worship services of the whole church, God says that the men are to both teach others and also protect their wives. In Genesis 3:6, we read, “So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Here, we see that Adam was with Eve and he failed to protect his wife from deception. In worship services, the women are to be submissive and place their full potential at the disposal of their husbands by asking their husbands questions at home. Men will have to learn and remember if their wives are going to ask them to explain more at home.

However, women are also given a great teaching ministry as a part of the church. Titus 2:3-5 says, “The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to

love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” Here, we see that the older women are to learn how to teach the younger women at a separate time and not in a worship service that involves the whole church.

Paul concludes his discussion of a worship service of the whole church by giving a couple of key instructions. 1 Corinthians 14:36-38 says, “Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached? If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.” Since there were serious problems in the church at Corinth, Paul asked them if they were the ones that were originally given the Word of God. He asked if their church had received special instructions that had not been given to any other church.

Paul said that those who spoke the Word of God and those who were spiritual would recognize that the things that Paul was writing to the church at Corinth were the commandments of the Lord. Those who were spiritual would also choose to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord. In contrast, those who were ignorant would continue to be ignorant. 1 Corinthians 3:3 says, “For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?” In this verse, Paul had said that many of the Christians in Corinth were walking like those who were not even Christians. This had produced envy, strife and divisions. Paul said that such Christians might choose to hold on to their own opinions and not recognize that the things Paul wrote were the commandments of the Lord. Paul said that if such individuals chose to be ignorant to let them continue to be ignorant.

Then, in 1 Corinthians 14:39-40, Paul said, “Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.” The two things that could be most easily misused in a worship service were speaking the Word of God with a wrong attitude or speaking the Word of God in another language. That is why he gave special instructions about these two things. Paul said that they were not to forbid someone from speaking in another language as long as there was an interpreter. He told them to desire earnestly to prophesy. This meant that they were to be eager to speak and explain the Word of God as long as their human spirit was under the control of the Holy Spirit both in their preparation and also as they spoke. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of these commands.

We are to help our children learn to do all things in a decent and orderly manner so that other Christians are helped in their spiritual growth. As Paul said, in Colossians 2:5, “For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.” May the Lord richly bless you and fill you with joy as you help your children do things in a good order so that they continue to learn themselves and also help others learn and be encouraged.