

Decently & Orderly

by Wayne Goff

“Let all things be done decently and in order” 1 Corinthians 14:40.

The apostle Paul penned these words at the end of his treatise on proper conduct in the assembly of the church (chapters 11-14). It summarizes well the Lord’s intent for how we should conduct ourselves in public worship. But why is it important?

Paul stressed in chapter 14 alone the importance of conducting yourself properly as a Christian in the public assembly for several reasons: (1) edification to others, vv. 3-4; (2) spiritual maturity, v. 20; (3) the influence on unbelievers, v. 23; and (4) orderliness, vv. 27-33. So what does this mean to us today?

First, we should be aware at all times of our own behavior in the assembly and how it influences others either positively or negatively. If brethren seem distracted, or uninterested in the worship, then why should visitors want to come back? If our children are texting on their cell phones, or playing video games, or acting noisily during the sermon, then how can a visitor be expected to listen and learn? For that matter, how can we be expected to listen and learn in such an environment? On the other hand, if everyone is quiet, respectful, interested and participating, then God is glorified and everyone is encouraged!

In the church at Corinth there was apparently disorderly conduct going on. Those who could speak in tongues were doing so at the same time. Those who prophesied with words of encouragement were being pushed to the back of the line. Pride and arrogance were the motivation rather than love. No wonder the apostle Paul wrote with a mild rebuke and with proper instruction. It does matter how Christians conduct themselves in the house of God! (see 1 Tim. 3:15)

Secondly, the assembly of the saints is a spiritual dwelling place for God (Eph. 2:21-22). God is Spirit; He fellowships with our spirits when we provide that dwelling place. In the Old Testament, the Sabbath was called a “solemn rest” (Lev. 16:31). Solemn is defined as “formal and dignified” and a formal assembly is one that is “characterized by deep sincerity.” Do you and I think that our worship to God is anything less than this? I hope not. Brethren, consider your conduct in the public worship and how it affects everyone else.

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