

Understanding 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

- **The Context of 1 Corinthians 14: Tongues and Prophecy**
 1. Context of the Letter: A Response to a Question about Spiritual Gifts (Chapters 12-14)
 2. Structure of Chapter 14 (Fee, 652-653)
 - Issue of Intelligibility (14:1-25)
 - Issue of Edification (14:26-40)
 3. Key Terms in Chapter 14
 - "Tongues:" chapter 14 contains 14 of the 19 occurrences in 1 Corinthians.
 - "Prophecy:" chapter 14 contains 8 of the 11 occurrences in 1 Corinthians.
 - "Prophecy:" chapter 14 contains 2 of the 5 occurrences in 1 Corinthians.
 - "Prophet:" chapter 14 contains 3 of 5 occurrences in 1 Corinthians.
 - "Edification" is mentioned 7 times in chapter 14 (14:3, 4 [2x], 5, 12, 17, 26).
 4. Key Features of 1 Corinthians 14:26-40
 - Note the inclusio (bracket) in 14:26, 40 ("Let all things be done ...").
 - Note the number of commands (14:26, 27, 28 [2x], 29 [2x], 30, 34 [2x], 35, 37, 39 [2x], 40; fourteen in fifteen verses).

- **An Outline of the Text**
 - I. Tongues and Prophecy: How to Edify the Church (14:26-35)
 - A. Theme (14:26)
 - B. Use of Tongues (14:27-28)
 - C. Use of Prophecy (14:29-35)
 1. General directions for orderly use (14:29-33)
 2. Specific directions to women for orderly use (14:34-35)
 - II. Concluding Remarks (14:36-40)

- **General Instructions for Tongues (14:27-28)**
 1. Number: "Two or at most three" (v. 27)
 2. Manner: "In turn" (v. 27)
 3. Accompaniment: "Let one interpret" (v. 27)
 4. Modification: "If there is no one to interpret" (v. 28)
 - "Let each be silent" (v. 28).
 - "Let each speak to himself and to God" (v. 28).

- **General Instructions for Prophecy (14:29-33)**
 1. Number: "Two or three" (v. 29)
 2. Accompaniment: "Let the others weigh" (v. 29)
 3. Modification: "If a revelation is made to another" (v. 30)
 - "Let the first be silent" (v. 30).
 4. Manner: "One by one" (v. 31)
 5. Purpose (v. 31)
 - "All may learn" (v. 31)
 - "All may be encouraged" (v. 31)
 6. Argument for Self-control (vv. 32-33)
 - "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (v. 32).

- Reason: "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (v. 33).

- **Links between 14:34-35 and the Immediate Context**

1. Be Silent (14:28, 30, 34)
2. Speak (14:27, 28, 29, 34, 35)
3. Be Subject (14:32, 34)
4. Learn (14:31, 35)

- **Four Options for the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35**

1. A Quotation
 - + The passage reads smoothly.
 - + Paul quotes the Corinthians elsewhere (1:12; 15:12), especially from their letter to him (6:12, 13; 7:1; 8:1, 4; 10:23), and indicates other sources of information available to him (1:11; 5:1; 11:18; 16:17).
 - + There are no problems reconciling 1 Corinthians 11.
 - No other quotation in 1 Corinthians is this lengthy.
 - The traditional reading of 1 Timothy 2 is still an issue.
2. Not a Part of the Text (An Interpolation)
 - + The passage reads smoothly.
 - + Some Greek manuscripts move 14:34-35 after 14:40.
 - There is no textual basis for the omission; that is, *no* manuscript omits the 14:34-35.
 - The text can be read coherently *with* the passage.
3. A Rule for All Time
 - + The passage reads smoothly.
 - + It fits with the traditional reading of 1 Timothy 2.
 - The prophesying by women in 1 Corinthians 11 is a problem, not to mention other passages regarding women in general (e.g., Gal 3:28). Women speak (e.g., as prophetesses) elsewhere in the OT and NT and in the immediate context (14:26).
 - Given the mention of "husbands" in 1 Cor 14:35a, the restriction on speaking would apply only to "wives."
4. Specific Instructions for a Specific Problem
 - + The passage reads smoothly.
 - + It fits the closer (1 Cor 11) and wider (Gal 3:28) context of Paul's instruction and thought elsewhere.
 - The traditional reading of 1 Timothy 2 is still an issue.

“Even as the law says” (1 Cor 14:34b): An Allusion to Miriam (Num 12)?

I. Why might there be an allusion to Miriam?¹

A. In general, she is a prominent figure—a prophet and leader of Israel.

- Eight women are mentioned in 3 OT books.

- Two women are named in 4 OT books.

-Miriam is the only woman named in more than 4 OT books (Meyers, *Women in Scripture*, 11; cf. unnamed in Exodus 2:1-10; a possible allusion in Jeremiah 31:4).

- Exodus 15:20-21 Prophet
- Numbers 12:1-15 Prophet
- Numbers 20:1 Death
- Numbers 26:59 Genealogy
- Deuteronomy 24:9 Alludes to Numbers 12
- 1 Chronicles 6:3 Genealogy
- Micah 6:4 Leader

B. She is the first female prophet mentioned in the OT.

C. She is an example of a disruptive female prophet in Numbers 12.

II. Why might there be an allusion to Numbers 12?

A. Numbers is one of the five books of the “law” (cf. 1 Cor 14:34).

B. 1 Corinthians 13:12a alludes to Numbers 12:8.

C. 1 Corinthians 14:5 probably alludes to the passage about prophets in Numbers 11:29.

D. Is there any other language in Numbers 12 that reflects the situation in 1 Cor 14?

- “Speak against” (Num 12:1, 8; compare 1 Cor 14:36-38)

- “Shameful” (Num 12:14; compare 1 Cor 14:35)

III. What would an allusion to Miriam in Numbers 12 mean?

The import would be something like this: “Female [prophets] are not permitted to keep on speaking, but they should be subject to themselves (14:32), as the law says [about disruptive female prophets like Miriam in Numbers 12].”

¹ See C. Holladay, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, 189-190.