

6.4 Looking, Talking and Acting like Infants

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[0 : 00] But if you've been here recently, you'll know that Josh Johnson has been leading us in sections through Paul's first letter to Corinthians. And last time we were in chapter 14, the first half, a couple of weeks ago there.

And we're coming back to 1 Corinthians 14, and we're going to deal this evening with the second half. So we're going to read from verse 20, and I'm reading from our ESV, our church Bibles.

You may have a slightly different translation. There's quite a few knotty translation issues here, which Josh in doubt will be explained to us. So different versions get different things, sometimes better than others.

And I might indicate one or two as we go through. But we're going to read from verse 20, 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Paul says, brothers, do not be children in your thinking.

Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. Or as the old version says, in your understanding be men.

[1 : 13] There's a great book of that title, by the way, if anybody sees it secondhand. Well worth getting hold of and reading by T.C. Hammond, who was an Anglican minister who went to Australia.

In understanding be men. In your thinking be mature. In the law it's written, by people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people. And even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.

Thus tongues are a sign not for believers, but for unbelievers. While prophecy is not for unbelievers, but for believers.

If therefore the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers entered, will they not say, you're out of your minds?

But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he's convicted by all. He's called to account by all.

[2 : 15] The secrets of his heart are disclosed. And so falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. What then, brothers?

When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue. Or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two, or at most three. And each in turn, and let someone interpret or translate.

But if there's no one to translate, let each of them keep silent in church. Speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak.

And let the others, that is presumably the other prophets, weigh. And there's no what is said. That's a completely gratuitous insertion into the text there.

[3 : 15] It's not about weighing what is said. It's about weighing who speaks. Let two or three speak. Let the others weigh. Let the others discriminate and decide who does get to speak. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent.

For all can prophesy one by one so that all may learn and all be encouraged. And the spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

But God is not a God of confusion, of disorder, but of peace and order. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches.

They are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the law says. If there's anything they desire to learn, let them ask the husbands at home. For it's shameful for a woman to speak in church.

Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it's reached? If anyone thinks he's a prophet or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.

[4 : 27] If anyone doesn't recognize this, he is not recognized. So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy.

And don't forbid speaking in tongues, but all things should be done decently and in order. Amen.

May God bless to us his word. Well, you'll see there that Paul is very concerned that the word of God is clearly heard, that the word of God is clearly understood, that the word of God is learned and builds up the church.

That's the chief focus in the gathering of the church. Well, do turn once again your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 14.

If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it's probably a duck. If it looks like an infant, acts like an infant, and talks like an infant, then it's probably an infant.

[5 : 46] The Corinthian church, the mature church, so they like to think, or the infants.

Well, that's where we're at with the Corinthian church. And of course, we've been here before, haven't we? Back in chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, Paul had said, Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it, and even now, you are not ready. A church's attitude to corporate worship reveals a great deal about its spiritual maturity.

That's really at the heart of 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Is worship a thing for me, for my concerns, for my wants, for my performance?

Well, if that's the case, then that is childish, infant-like. Or, is corporate worship a thing that builds up the beautiful, God-designed body that is any local church?

[7 : 04] Is it somewhere to perform? Or is it somewhere to be formed? Well, as we return to this last part of the section on the spiritual things, Paul is concluding what his teaching means on the ground in Corinth.

Remember back in chapter 12, verse 1, we saw that spiritual gifts is not really a Bible phrase. The footnote there in 12.1 is much more helpful. The spiritual things.

Those two words, spiritual and gifts, don't go together. The Bible doesn't put them together. It's not a category the Bible recognizes. And what we've been seeing is that the Corinthian word, the Corinthian idea, is that they love to talk about what makes them spiritual.

And Paul's corrective is to talk about gifts, grace, things that have been received. Conflicting those two things together is not very helpful at all.

And so Paul's whole concern throughout this section is on the grace, is on the gifts that God has given, not to individuals as such, but to the whole body of the church.

[8 : 18] so that in love for one another they'll be built up. Chapter 13, the much-loved love chapter is the beating heart of this section of the letter.

Love shapes a church. It shapes how a church ministers to one another. Love stops a church thinking only of me when it comes to worship instead of thinking of them.

And so as we conclude this section, we see Paul say three things that flow out of mature love. Now we can't recap all of the first half of chapter 14.

If you missed that, then do go back and listen again. But a quick reminder on some of the things that we did see last time about tongues and prophecy. Tongues more broadly in the Bible we saw were human languages that were intelligible.

Tongues had a revelatory character similar to prophecy and so they were a foundational gift for the church in the age of the apostles. They were intelligible, they had a revelatory character and tongues were a sign of judgment.

[9 : 33] Tongues in Corinth served to expose their worship as self-focused. It exposed Corinthian worship as self-centered worship that hark back more to Babel than to Pentecost because they weren't concerned about people actually hearing and understanding.

Whereas prophecy, as we saw at the start of chapter 14, was other person focused and it was clear and it was for the building up of the people of God by the clear word of God.

Paul's been setting those two things side by side throughout the chapter, tongues and prophecy and prophecy is to be preferred because it speaks to people for their upbuilding, for encouragement, for consolation.

And Paul continues to lay these things side by side as he has done throughout the chapter. The Corinthians prefer tongues because it aggrandizes themselves. It allows their self-worship, their self-assertion.

And Paul is trying to convince them that prophecy is superior because it's clear and it's beneficial for all. And so he says, firstly, mature love prioritizes others in worship.

[10 : 52] Mature love prioritizes others in worship, verses 20 to 25. A truly spiritual church and truly spiritual Christians long for all who gather, believer and unbeliever alike, to be able to take hold of the gospel.

Look at verse 20. Paul says, brothers, do not be children in your thinking. A couple of things to note here. Paul still calls this church brothers.

A few folk have asked along the way in this series how on earth Paul can keep referring to the Corinthians as brothers when they so obviously have drifted from Paul's pattern. How can he treat them like Christians?

Well, when people who belong to the covenant community, then a faithful pastor doesn't try to convince them that they don't belong. He does what he can to make clear the true and proper life that comes from belonging to the people of God.

And that's what Paul's doing here once again. He calls them at one and the same time brothers and infants. But he longs that they would be mature. If you're going to be childish in any way, be childish in doing evil, be unpracticed and unsophisticated and inexperienced in evil, but in your thinking.

[12 : 11] Be mature. It's a salutary thing to think about. Here is a church with what seems a great reputation, a great sense of spirituality, and yet they're childish in their thinking about worship.

It's possible that people who have belonged to church for a long time can think childishly about the Lord and his kingdom or can think wrongly about the Lord and his kingdom.

It's a dangerous thing to come to church Sunday by Sunday thinking you have everything sorted out. Paul wants the Corinthians to be maturing in their thinking. Far better to gather on a Sunday and be stretched and to have to think hard and to sit with minds and hearts thinking they've got little to learn.

But Paul's use of the word infant here is rather deliberate. It does, of course, spell out the reality in Corinth. They were far from a truly spiritual church. They were far from maturity because they were in love with the world and all of its glories.

But Paul talks about them as infants because he wants to crystallize in their minds exactly what it was they were doing when they gathered and engaged in all their self-centered worship as they held tongues highest in their services.

[13 : 36] And the picture Paul is painting by referring to them as infants is brought into fuller focus in verse 21. He says, in the law it is written that is the Old Testament scriptures proclaim by people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people and even then they will not listen to me says the Lord.

Paul's quoting here from Isaiah chapter 28 and it's worth turning back over to that. Isaiah 28 verses 9 to 11. Isaiah asks to whom will he teach knowledge and to whom will he explain the message?

And then he answers his own question to those who are weaned from the milk those taken from the breast. Do you recognize those words?

That idea? children who've been feeding at their mother's breast. Remember how Paul talks about the Corinthians in those exact words in chapter 3. Infants.

And what Isaiah is anticipating is a reality that is now before Paul. The Corinthians self-centered worship was infant-like behavior just like that spoken of by Isaiah.

[15 : 07] And because Isaiah spoke of infants notice how the communication would need to come. Precept upon precept. Precept upon precept. Line upon line. Line upon line. Here a little.

There a little. God would have to speak to them in simple commands. Don't do that. Do do this. Stop at a red light. Say please and thank you.

Don't touch the fire. And then we have the words quoted by Paul. Isaiah proclaims judgment on this people for their folly.

For not listening. And he says for by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to this people. If God's people won't listen when he speaks to them plainly then he'll speak to them obscurely.

Listen to Palmer Robertson on this. He says if you're going to act like a baby then God will speak to you like a baby. And that speaking is not a good thing.

[16 : 11] What does a baby understand of its parents speaking to it? When God's voice when God's clear voice is refused judgment follows.

And few things are so devastating for humanity than when God no longer speaks or no longer speaks clearly. it will be the tongues of foreigners who will signal to God's people that judgment has arrived.

When the Assyrians would arrive speaking their own language that would cry out to God's people and say that this is judgment at the hand of the Lord. it was a return to Babel for God's people then.

And so back to 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Tongues were not a sign of blessing. They were a sign of cursing. When God's spirit was poured out at Pentecost that was a great blessing to the nations that signaled the unleashing of the gospel to the ends of the earth the swinging wide of the gates to welcome the nations in.

But that same sign of blessing to the nations was a covenant curse upon Israel. No longer would God speak to them uniquely.

[17 : 30] Yes some would be engrafted back in but there was a sea change. Their refusal to listen to that which was clear brought judgment.

Pentecost was the point when the gospel went global. And that was judgment on Israel. Now look carefully at verse 22. Paul says that tongues are a sign.

They are a sign and not an end in themselves. Think of when you see a sign up that says something like quiet please performance and progress.

That sign has a very distinct purpose. The performance that's happening will be negatively affected won't be properly appreciated if the sign isn't heeded. Or you might get a rollicking from an officious steward if you don't listen to the sign.

But once the show is over that sign no longer serves its purpose. And tongues are similar. They are a sign. Listen again to Palmer Robertson.

[18 : 37] He says once the world might have presumed that Christianity was a Jewish religion it began with a Jewish Messiah and 12 Jewish apostles but God gave an indicator a sign to the world in the foundational age of the apostles that made it plain that any man from any nation who called on the name of the Lord could participate equally with Israel in the blessings of the messianic kingdom.

At Pentecost God spoke in many languages so that everybody could hear. Tongues illustrated that the gospel had gone global.

They signaled a drastic gear shift. In the first century such a sign would have been desperately needed and so God in his goodness gave it. But who today would think Christianity is only a Jewish thing?

Here's the evidence that tongues have wonderfully served their purpose as a sign. We sit here today as Gentiles and as Christians and so do people all over the world.

Paul goes on verse 22 the sign it's a sign for believers not for believers but for unbelievers. At Pentecost those who could hear all these languages being spoken that weren't the native Israelite tongue they said these men must be drunk.

[20 : 04] they're babbling away but that was them experiencing judgment. And if God would bring such a judgment on his people in the days of the Babylonians and the Assyrians then we can be sure he will bring an even greater judgment on those who won't heed the gracious sound of the gospel in its fullness today under the new covenant.

and so in Corinth the persistent desire to speak in tongues offered only death to those who couldn't understand. They offered a gospel of death and judgment not salvation and life.

In a church that obsesses with self-centered worship where I take all the attention and not us where tongues are preferred to prophecy well then verse 23 the outsiders that is the weak the ungifted and the unbelievers they'll all be left with a sole conclusion these people are mad or to put it another way the outsiders and the unbelievers will be left with only a message of judgment because when they can make neither head nor tail of what is going on when it isn't plain and simple and clear they will have no opportunity to know the solace of the gospel unlike verse 24 when a church prioritizes the them and not the me when it speaks clearly God's word made clear so that God's people can respond to it in faith then look at what happens verse 24 unbelievers are convicted they have their hearts turned out and unbelievers fall on their faces and worship a church that takes seriously the need to build one another up with an unrelenting desire to hear and respond together to God's word that will see outsiders and unbelievers dropping to their knees before the Lord God a church filled with individuals all clamoring to get their way to worship in their way to express their faith to sing their songs to do all this as they feel led that's a church that preaches judgment to those on the outside that's a church that places an obstacle in front of salvation that obscures it it certainly doesn't offer it now of course we know that our gatherings as a church are not geared all for non-Christians our gathering is a gathering of the covenant people of God to be renewed by God himself to be built up to hear and respond to his gracious words of life we don't design our services for the unbelievers they aren't an opportunity for an evangelistic event no they are very seriously about building one another up clear priority is given to hearing and responding to God's word together but when a church models a love of God and his words when a church longs to have

God's word dwelling richly amongst itself then there is no better place for a non-Christian to be we don't need to make a service an evangelistic event tailoring it to that end no nothing is more effective in drawing people to the gospel than a genuine gathering of God's people to be renewed by him hearing and responding together clearly plainly to the word of God last time we looked at chapter 14 I talked through the order of service that we have here and those not in the reformed tradition may well find it restrictive and steal repetitive but it is plain and simple so that all can benefit all can participate in hearing God's word and responding to God's words hearing it in a call to worship in the bible reading and in the sermon and responding to it in praise and prayer and in offerings and we have people in our church with no education who struggle even to read and we have others with

English not as their primary language who can still come and participate in worship of God and who delight to be fed by his words and the reality is that as all of us do that in unison and can do it and want to do it that coupled with the simplicity and clarity of what happens means people can and people do come to faith in our midst we have people amongst our number who have come to faith simply by coming along on a Sunday and being exposed to God's word as outsiders listening in to what we do as the Lord's people we have others amongst us week by week who don't yet believe but listen and engage with what we're doing because it's clear I spoke to someone just this morning who knew nothing about church previously but loves coming along and engages with almost every word of the sermon a church who longed to build one another up whose worship is focused on the whole and not the individual thrives in itself and beckons the unbelievers to come to taste and see that the

[25 : 55] Lord is good the truth is that a church's evangelism will never thrive as the Bible is lessened in its gathering clear plain worship that builds up the Lord's people offers salvation to the outsiders and the unbelievers well that's the first thing that mature love prioritizes the second mature love prioritizes hearing and not speaking in worship mature love prioritizes hearing and not speaking in worship verses 26 to 35 despite what the world might think everybody having their say is not the path to thriving certainly not in the church these verses are all about order and worship perhaps the apostle Paul was the original Presbyterian now I notice that

Paul is talking about the gathering here he said in verse 23 that he's talking about the whole church and now again in verse 26 he says when you come together and I've heard these verses on many occasions being used as a kind of resource from which to pull an order of service so we read verse 26 we should have a hymn but just one a lesson a revelation and definitely a tongue or at least an interpretation and often these verses are cited as the grounds to have all kinds of things in church that actually churches who take the Bible seriously don't really have and don't do but look carefully at verse 26 the issue here isn't the activities that are being done this isn't a prescriptive list of what a service should be no the issue verse 26 is that each one has a hymn each one has a lesson each one has a revelation and on and on

Paul isn't prescribing best practice in church with ordering hymns and tongues and lessons no he's describing what happens in Corinth each one of them all of them come with their own hymns with their own lessons the issue is the same as we've been seeing it's self focused self centered worship all about me my hymns my kind of teaching my language and Paul says no no no let all things be done for building up and so he works through three different issues that seem to be at play in Corinth and he applies a corrective a modification to their practice I find Andy Gamble one of the Cornhill lecturers so helpful here he points out that this section is marked by Paul wanting to move the Corinthians from unintelligible speech to intelligible speech which is throughout the whole chapter as we've been seeing and then particularly in these verses he wants the

Corinthians to move from many speakers to few from chaos to order and possibly from female to male and so it's worth noting that the same thing applies to the different issues at play within these verses about order we see instructions about tongues and about prophecy and about questions from women now we've already looked at the unintelligible to intelligible but let's look at these other things that are present these correctives the many to few well many to few regarding tongues if you look at verse 27 Paul says instead of each one coming with tongues only two or at most three many to few well many to few regarding prophecy verse 29 again instead of each one two or three so even though prophecy is preferable order still demands that there were fewer rather than many many to few regarding questions from women verse 34 instead of asking questions as they arise they're to remain silent not having voices kicking in all the time any time a thought needs to be clarified many to few well what about from chaos to order well from chaos to order with tongues verse 27 we see that two or at most three should take turns they shouldn't all be talking over each other one at a time and there must be translation otherwise they're to remain quiet chaos to order with prophecy verses 29 to 31 if another receives a revelation let the first be silent and prophesy one by one but I think if you look closely at verse 29 it also speaks to this unfortunately as

Willie pointed out this is another unhelpful translation in many translations including the ESV it reads that the prophet should weigh what is said by the other prophets and that seems completely out of kilter with how prophecy and revelation work throughout the rest of the Bible revelation is revelation we don't sit in judgment over whether this is a revelation we should listen to or not a much more helpful way to read verse 29 is to read it as let two or three prophets speak and the other should discriminate the Greek doesn't have the phrase what is said that shouldn't be there and the word translated way or better translate as discriminate is usually used in the New Testament regarding people Paul's used it throughout first Corinthians like that already and so instead of weighing whether something is God's word or not Paul is saying let two or three prophets speak and let the prophets decide who of them should speak this is about moving from chaos to order what about chaos to order in regards to the questions from women instead of interruptions at the meeting verse 35

[32 : 45] Paul says ask questions at home now we don't have time to recap what Paul has already said about men and women there was lots of that in chapter 11 again if you haven't listened to that or you'd like to listen to it again I encourage you to go back and do that it's a really key chapter for life in the 21st century in the west but regarding what Paul says here to women he has already said in chapter 11 that there is order not only in worship but order is written into the fabric of what it is to be human Paul has made clear that men and women are different that shouldn't be a controversial statement and it isn't that some roles are off limits to women and not men it is that the good creator has made us distinct and different for different purposes in the same mission what man lacked for the task of filling and subduing the world women completed now it isn't accidental that

Paul says in verse 33 that God is a God of peace that is who he is and intrinsic to that peace is order very often it is only when order or peace disappear and are replaced with chaos and war or friction and mayhem that we really appreciate just what a glorious thing peace and order are they aren't boring and restrictive they allow life to truly flourish and God's good peaceful order has created men to have prominence as the proclaimers and protectors of truth in the family and in the church Paul may have narrowed in on women here because they were the perpetrators of this particular problem the problem seeming to be asking questions in the middle of the corporate gathering but if a church truly longs for

God's word then the posture when it's being read and taught is one of respect not a posture of being ready to jump on any phrase we want to pick at worship is not a lecture or a seminar where we jump in with questions now there's a danger of reading these words about women solely with contemporary eyes that see only what the world around us despises and it would be easy for us to focus on how this is an anathema to how women are thought of today but that's missing Paul's point notice that all through this section there are the same instructions to all the same instructions in play for prophecy for tongues and for the questions arising from women notice the mention of the law verse 34 women are to be in submission as the law says but they're not the only ones who have to listen to the law are they remember verse 21 the law speaks to all people on this but also the beating heart of this section remember is love the excellent way the greatest thing that will last forever and

Paul makes clear that all are in submission all are under the law and all lay down themselves in love for others notice verse 32 even prophets are to be subject it's not a free-for-all even with a prophet they're subject to one another and so what we see in Paul's instructions and moving from many to few and from chaos to order it's the same prescription the same cure that he's offered the Corinthians throughout the letter it's the cross in worship we lay down self for others love mature love tells the majority to be quiet to bite your tongue to not make the gathering about you Paul adds a few words to the quote in verse 21 from

Isaiah he adds the words and even then they will not listen to me in a church worship for the vast majority of people is about listening and even when we sing together we sing to one another as well as to lords and so we're built up by listening to others singing worship isn't our opportunity to thrive as individuals it isn't your time to shine it isn't about you order in worship facility its love because once again it prioritizes the many and not the few it prioritizes them not me us not I and so Paul says let all things be done for building up not puffing up Paul wants verse 31 all people to learn all to be encouraged now we don't often think of order as a tantalizing and alluring thing but that really is what

[38 : 32] Paul is saying here a truly spiritual church is a church with orderly worship it isn't a cocktail of chaos it isn't a hundred people all babbling together at once it isn't the case of everyone choosing their favorite aspects of worship and and it isn't having everyone up on the stage perhaps the picture you've been sold as the opposite where a church like ours lined up to sit in nice neat rows most of the time and they sit quiet throughout the sides when we all stand to sing and were led corporately by one or two ministers perhaps you've been told over and over that that that is a church without life a church that limits God's spirit or a church without God's spirit and you've been led to believe that a spirit filled church is raucous where as many people as possible are involved where there's no restraint and only freedom to worship as we please casual lively raucous well

I think that's a picture that's alien to Paul a truly spiritual church isn't filled with people clamoring to have their say to be heard and it isn't one that has no structure and new order now no doubt some of the order that we have in our church is culturally conditioned and order in other cultures might look different but as we've seen already in chapter 11 culture matters it communicates it's reflective and whatever order is the order of the day here's a question to ponder what has God's spirit always done he brings order to chaos what's the first thing we read about God's spirit in the bible we read the words that the earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters and then

God began to bring order and fullness or think about when the spirit breathes his life into someone so that they can say that Jesus is Lord what does it look like when the spirit awakens life in those who were dead what is his work he gets to work undoing the mess tidying up the mess of lives that have been swamped in darkness and chaos order is not the enemy of God's spirit it's the effect of him at work and in the church order serves everyone we live in a world that wants everyone to have their say no matter how small a constituency all matter all deserve our time self is king and we're fed all the time that it's good to have a voice and we're told that authority is bad well when it comes to church the best thing for the body is not that we all get a say the best thing for the whole body is an order that may explain

God's word so that all may hear and all may respond and all may benefit believer and unbeliever alike well finally and very briefly mature love recognizes what we have been given verses 36 to 40 mature love recognizes what we have been given the key to real maturity in the faith isn't dwelling on things that might distinguish our own spirituality but in dwelling upon the riches that we have all been given verse 36 Paul says once again to the Corinthians as he has before are you really that special was it from you that the word of God came no so can you really belittle me your apostle or are you the only ones that

God's word has reached no remember at the start of 1 Corinthians Paul begins a letter very pointedly highlighting that all Christians have received everything together in Christ and that's a poke in the eye for the Corinthians because they think they're special and throughout the letter Paul wants the Corinthians to fall into line with what we see in verse 33 all the churches of the saints and so we are left verse 37 if someone thinks that they are spiritual or a prophet he should acknowledge what Paul has said as the very words of God the Corinthians are a church like any church who owe all that they have and all that they are to the Lord Jesus and for the Corinthians that meant owing everything also to the apostle Paul the one who brought

[43 : 55] God's word to them this great section on the spirituals ends with Paul once again saying to them what do you have that you did not receive if then you received it why do you boast as if you did not receive it words he spoke in chapter four but words that carry on throughout this letter a mature and loving church recognizes Paul's words Paul's commands as the very voice of God speaking to them speaking life to them those who don't want them those who won't recognize all that Paul has said those who want to persist in self centered worship well what does Paul say about them they won't be recognized they'll lack the knowledge that really counts being recognized being known by God another phrase that Paul said something very similarly he said earlier in chapter eight if anyone loves

God he's known by God the knowledge that counts but those who want worship to be all about them not about God those who want it to be all about them and not about his body they won't be known and they won't be recognized they're scorning what they've already been given they're rejecting the great gift from the Lord Jesus and so Paul says to the Corinthians prioritize prophecy by all means have tongues but all things should be done decently and in order and he says to us prioritize clear hearing and responding to God's words for the believer primarily but also for the unbelievers and outsiders and he says to us make worship about the them not me the us not I the many not the few he says let all things be done for building up so that all may learn all may be encouraged and he says all things should be done decently and in order that is grown up loving worship well let's pray

Lord God grant us your grace that we might embrace the pattern of the cross in all aspects of life not least in our shared life together and teach us ever more to love ever more to die to self and make us ever more a beautiful body built up by and reflecting your son our savior in whose name we pray amen