

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Orderly Worship In Song

(Jerry Fite)

God is not a God of confusion. He is a God that demands order in worship.

Paul combines this characteristic of God and the spiritual atmosphere for worshippers in I Corinthians 14. The exercise of miraculous spiritual gifts was not just to benefit one; the gifts were designed to edify all gathered worshippers. Self-edification was not the only goal but *edifying the church* was the total focus (I Corinthians 14:4). Specifying order in the employment of the God-given gifts, Paul makes it clear: “Let all things be done unto edifying” (I Corinthians 14:26).

Like a building rising from a firmly established foundation, an edified church was established in understanding what was being taught. For example, when a man revealed a message from God in a tongue or language that others did not know, the church was not edified, because “no man understands” (I Corinthians 14:2). Not knowing the language, “exhortation” or “consolation” was therefore not received. The prophet’s revealed message accomplished these edifying goals because he spoke in a language the hearers could understand (I Corinthians 14:3).

Edification was accomplished through an orderly process. Those who had a message in a specific language, were to speak “in turn” with one interpreting with his own miraculous gift (I Corinthians 14:27). Prophets were to reveal their message “one by one, that all may learn, and all may be exhorted” (I Corinthians 14:31). One distinct message at a time for all to grasp was the order of services in the Lord’s church.

Talented writers of new songs have burst upon the scene the last few years blessing us with new hymns and spiritual songs. Combining the words with new arrangements of notes have aroused fresh feelings for worship. While the words may be scriptural, we must also pay attention to how they are arranged to be sung.

Is our signing orderly? Is there a distinctive teaching being expressed one thought at a time? Some of the new songs are sung by “echoing” a scriptural thought. One part echoes, saying the same thing that has just been said. No one is speaking over another but only repeating or echoing the thought that has just been conveyed. This is decent and in order.

Some of the new songs are designed with broader scriptural themes in mind. In one song, all the beatitudes are addressed. In another song, the commandments of love from three different passages are emphasized. Are we singing a distinct beatitude or command one at time with understanding so all can be edified? Or, does one group of singers concentrate on just one command, and convey a different thought that is being expressed at the same time by others?

Our words in song may be scriptural, but the manner of communicating these words so all in the assembly are edified through understanding is equally important. In choosing songs for our public worship, our song leaders must discern if the song will be sung orderly. If we are singing different commands at the same time, not pausing to “echo” a distinct thought, but speaking a different thought while another is speaking, are we any different than three prophets giving three distinct commands at the same time in Corinth?

Let us follow “the way of love” and seek to “profit” all in our “orderly” song service!