

OPEN YOUR BIBLE

Study Companion

Did Paul Tell Women to Be Silent in Church?

Study Companion • 1 Corinthians 14:26–40

A printable companion for reading 1 Corinthians 14:26–40 in context, comparing chapter 11, tracing the repeated silence commands, testing manuscript evidence, and weighing the major interpretations.

Use this packet with your Bible open. Write what the paragraph actually says before deciding what the passage must mean for every woman, every church, and every ministry question.

Before You Study

Use this companion with your Bible open. Read the whole paragraph before isolating verses 34–35. Then read the whole chapter. Record what Paul actually regulates before deciding what his rule means for every woman in every church.

PASSAGE-STUDY RULE

Before we build doctrine from two verses, read the paragraph. Then the chapter. Then ask why the author put those words there.

What have you been taught that 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 means?

What is your starting conclusion before doing the study?

Map the Gathering

READ: 1 Corinthians 14:26–40

List every kind of speech or participation Paul mentions.

What repeated purpose controls Paul's instructions?

What words or ideas repeat around order, peace, edification, and self-control?

Track Every Command to Be Silent

READ: 1 Corinthians 14:27–35

Person / Group	Circumstance	What Happens Next?
Tongue-speaker	No interpreter	_____
Prophet	Another receives revelation	_____
Women / wives	_____	_____

What does the repeated use of “be silent” suggest about whether silence is always absolute?

Put Chapter 11 Beside Chapter 14

READ: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16

What does Paul assume women are doing in 11:5?

Does chapter 11 describe prayer and prophecy as acceptable, hypothetical, private, or public? What clues influence you?

What must an interpretation of 14:34–35 explain because of 11:5?

Women or Wives?

WORD: γυναῖ — gynē

Possible senses: woman / wife

READ: 1 Corinthians 14:34–35

What relationship language appears in verse 35?

Does “women” or “wives” make better sense in the immediate sentence? Why?

If the command were a universal rule for every female believer, what questions does “ask their own husbands at home” create?

What Speech Is Actually Named?

READ: 1 Corinthians 14:35

What is the only specific kind of speech/action Paul explicitly mentions after the silence command?

Does the text itself use the word “interrupt”?

Does the text itself say “evaluate prophecy”?

Which reconstruction currently fits best, and what part is inference?

“As the Law Also Says”

READ: Genesis 2–3; Numbers 30; 1 Corinthians 14:21, 34

Can you find an explicit Torah sentence saying women must be silent in the assembly?

What scriptural principle might Paul be invoking if this is his own instruction?

In 1 Corinthians 14:21, what passage does Paul call “the law”?

What does that tell you about how broadly Paul can use the word “law”?

One Little Period

COMPARE: two or three Bible translations at 1 Corinthians 14:33–34.

Does “as in all the churches of the saints” attach to God’s peace/order or to women’s silence in each translation?

How does the punctuation change the force of the argument?

The Manuscript Placement Question

FACTS TO TRACK:

- Most manuscripts place vv. 34–35 after v. 33.
- A smaller group of Western witnesses places them after v. 40.
- The verses are broadly present in the surviving manuscript tradition.

What is the textual variation: omission, wording, or location?

Why might a transposition support an interpolation theory?

Why does the widespread presence of the verses make interpolation harder to prove?

EVIDENCE BOUNDARY

The transposition is evidence. Its explanation is disputed.

Test the Quotation / Refutation Reading

READ: 1 Corinthians 14:34–36

OPTION A: Paul gives the command in vv. 34–35; v. 36 challenges Corinthian resistance.

OPTION B: Paul quotes a Corinthian rule in vv. 34–35; v. 36 rejects it.

What supports Option A?

What supports Option B?

What evidence would you want before calling either option certain?

Compare Five Interpretations

Reading	Strongest Evidence	Biggest Difficulty
Absolute silence	-----	-----
No authoritative prophecy evaluation	-----	-----
Disorderly questions / learning interruptions	-----	-----
Corinthian quotation + Paul's refutation	-----	-----
Early interpolation	-----	-----

Which view currently explains the most evidence with the fewest assumptions?

What the Passage Can Prove

Mark each statement as TEXT / INFERENCE / NOT ADDRESSED.

Claim	Category
Paul cares about order in gathered worship.	_____
Women pray and prophesy in the same letter.	_____
The silence must mean women can never speak at all.	_____
Verse 35 mentions questions connected with learning.	_____
The questions were definitely shouted across segregated seating.	_____
The speech was definitely evaluation of prophecy.	_____
Verses 34–35 appear in two locations in the manuscript tradition.	_____
The passage settles who may hold the office of elder.	_____

Build the Passage From the Inside Out

Complete the flow in your own words.

Verse 26: _____

Verses 27–28: _____

Verses 29–33: _____

Verses 34–35: _____

Verses 36–38: _____

Verses 39–40: _____

What single concern holds the paragraph together?

Coffee Break Reflection

Which part of this study most challenged what you had been taught?

Have you ever used verses 34–35 to answer a question the passage itself does not directly address?

Have you ever been tempted to dismiss the verses rather than interpret them? Why?

Your Conclusion

Did Paul tell women to be silent in church? Give a precise answer.

What evidence most strongly supports your conclusion?

What part of your conclusion remains uncertain?

What additional passage should you study next before forming a larger theology of women teaching or leading?

Final Notes

My current interpretation:

Questions I still have:

Passages I want to compare next:

Don't take my word for it—Open your Bible.