26 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. 27 If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. 33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.  
 Now that Paul has dealt with the purpose of coming together and the reality of the various gifts, the question must be asked, what then? How should services be conducted, then, if this is the reality? Indeed we find Paul expressing this even in this verse.  
 Assuming that as we gather together someone has a hymn, another a lesson, another a revelation, another a tongue, or an interpretation, what then? If there are these various activities within the congregation, and if throughout the week we are experiencing this God and Lord, then how should it be when we gather?   
 The answer is found in what Paul has been arguing since the beginning of the chapter. When we gather it is for the purpose of building up. We do not gather in order to show off our abilities, or to make it about ourselves. The purpose of gathering is for each other to encourage one another especially through teaching, but also through acts of service to one another in love.   
 We also should be cautious about the way we read this too. Some will read that every time we gather everyone will have something to contribute with what is said above. This is not necessarily the case. The list deals with items Paul has been focusing on in this section, and it is not a complete list. Some may come to serve through encouraging another, some will serve by helping. The point is the list here is not exhaustive concerning when we gather but are elements of what occurs when we do. Likewise it may be Paul is focusing on these things because they effect the whole of the service.  
 Indeed, as we consider verse 27 we get this sense. Paul reflects on speaking in a tongue. If there are those who are able to speak in tongues then they may do so during the service. However, it must be done in order. There may only be two or at most three who do speak their tongue, and they are each to speak in turn. Thus they are not to all speak at once.  
 Likewise, there must be someone who can interpret. There is some debate as whether this means the tongue speaker or someone else who is able to interpret the tongue. In either case there must be able to be communicated to the congregation in an understandable way. It cannot be speaking in a tongue and then no one understands what is said. The purpose of corporate worship is to build up the congregation, and it is impossible for this to be the case if what is being communicated is unintelligible.  
 It because of this we have verse 28. If there is none who can interpret the person who is capable of speaking in tongues is to remain quiet speaking to God in silence. Here we find two things. The first is that, again, the purpose of coming together is not our own self but for building up the congregation, and second that tongues in and of itself is not something forbidden by Paul or even seen as something negative. It has a purpose, primarily for the believer and their personal experience with God, but can be utilized for corporate worship assuming everyone can be built up through interpretation.  
 As we saw in the last two verses, Paul encourages two or at most three speakers in tongues assuming there is a translator. He does not give any special precedence for prophecy either. In verse 29 two or three prophets are permitted to speak assuming a prophetic word is spoken. Here we must recognize that while teaching can be prophetic it doesn’t always need to be. Likewise, prophecy can be instructive, revealing something the congregation should do or be doing, but it does not need to be either.  
 But what should really give us pause is what Paul says next, that when the prophets speak others should weigh, or sift, what is said. The truth is, prophets can just as easily cease speaking from God and begin to form their own interpretations, or begin giving their own views rather than a prophetic word. Paul reminds us that it is imperative for us always to be diligent against assuming that because someone claims a prophecy that it is actually a prophecy. The question is whether or not when Paul says let the others sift whether that means other prophets, or the congregation as a whole, or perhaps both and. Regardless the point is the same, we do not blindly follow but are responsible to examine what we say in our congregations.  
 This concept of the prophets, or the congregation in general, continues with a revelation being made to another when the prophet is speaking. If this occurs, then the one who has received a revelation concerning the prophetic word spoken should speak and the first should cease. There are a number of possible reasons for this. The first being encouraging the other to utilize God’s gift within the congregation. The second is that this may be a safeguard against prophets potentially droning on and on. A third, even, as a safeguard for the prophetic word itself that it does not become tainted with continued unnecessary speech. Whatever the reason it is evident that Paul has an order in mind when these occur within the congregation.  
 In verse 31, then, Paul gives the same instruction as with those speaking in tongues. The prophets can speak in turn one by one. They are not all to speak at the same time, as this would lead to an inability for the congregation to learn or appreciate what is being said. For Paul, the whole purpose of congregational worship is to glorify God by building up the congregation especially through verbal communication such as teaching.  
 We then come to an interesting point made by Paul in verse 32. Many believe that speaking in tongues, or giving a prophetic word, means that the person is utterly consumed by the Holy Spirit. The issue with this is twofold. First, the way Paul describes speaking in tongues previously means that the person has the capacity to do so out loud or not, God does not just overwhelm the person so the person ceases to be. The same is true with prophets. The prophet can speak or not speak. The spirit of the prophet is still in control of the prophet, it does not cease to be.  
 We conclude with the first half of verse 33. Here Paul ends the main thrust of the argument by grounding the community and the worship experience in God Himself. God is a God of order and not chaos. We cannot expect our worship services to be times of undisciplined anarchy. Instead, the community is called to mimic God’s own order. It is a reminder that it does not glorify God when all is chaos, thus even with spiritual gifts there is meant to be an order to how they are practiced within the congregational setting. Granted the converse may also be true, that instead of allowing the word to be brought forth from the congregation we stifle it because of our fears and anxieties. Wisdom is needed, as well as due diligence on our part to be faithful.  
   
Main points: The main points of these verses are for Paul to show how corporate worship should be. It should not be anarchic like the cultic religions of the pagans. Instead, there is to be order with the purpose of building up the congregation as a whole. It is not about the prophet, or the speaker in tongues, but on the fact that others can be built up in the truth of God. As such, we see the wisdom in recognizing God is a God of order, and His people can and should be no different.

Application Points  
1). Order over Chaos: This little paragraph has within it a great amount of wisdom when it comes to congregational worship. Indeed, the whole chapter has been pointing to what’s been said in few verses. The lesson of building up the Church, and recognizing the reason for gathering together is not primarily for our own personal benefit but for the benefit of one another is an incredible concept compared to the often self-serving pursuits, and the encouragement to those self-serving pursuits, of today.  
 In the course of this chapter we have seen how the selfish view of corporate worship ends up leading not to genuine worship, but instead to anarchy. If we are all seeking the self above all else, then the only thing that will occur is a free for all when it comes to our gatherings, where the questions are not, “How did I glorify God today? Did I contribute to the service by serving another?” but are instead, “Did I get what I wanted out of the service? Did it touch me? Did anyone meet my needs?” In one paradigm it is focused on God and His calling for the congregation to build each other up, on the other it is all about the self.  
 The question we must ask ourselves is which thought process do we often possess? We must also ask how can we have the right understanding? I cannot answer the first question for you, however I may be able to help with the second. In all and every one of the cases above we find something that is beating in the background of the text. Like a pulse underneath the surface. An attitude, a way of living, which is congruent with the love described throughout the chapter.  
 What is that? It is humility. In humbling ourselves we are capable of overcoming the often selfish urges we encounter from within and without. By remembering that the end goal is not the self, or me, or I, but it is the glory of God it humbles us to seek Him and His ways. In knowing it is all about the cross, all about the full redemption found in Jesus’ life death and resurrection, it reminds us that this life is not primarily about us getting what we want, but how we can best honor God.  
 When it comes to congregational worship, then, it is no different than with our personal devotion to God. When we gather together we should be seeking humility. This can be in respect to how we greet one another, how we talk to one another, how we pray with one another, but it also leads to the corporate understanding of order.  
 How so? Well in humility we are able to know when to speak and when to be silent. We know it is not about us, and therefore we do not need to drone on and on. We can all admit we have been to worship services and prayer meetings where, at times, either we or someone else has continued on and on. Indeed they will spend a lot of time praying, or speaking, and while there may be encouragement and truth to it, it can also be the case that the encouragement and truth ceases to be spoken.  
 Some might find this frustrating, indeed isn’t the Spirit with me, why should I take time to be cautious and consider how I should pray? Isn’t true spirituality spontaneous and utterly in the Holy Spirit? If I am stifled the Spirit is stifled! Well, I can completely agree with the sentiment that we must not stifle the Holy Spirit. However, we must remember that the same Spirit within you is within everyone else, the assumption that we could stifle the Spirit by being thoughtful and concise is somewhat absurd.  
 God is aware of something that we often think He isn’t, and that is our time. In the first century we can have an improper view of how Church services were held. We almost think that they had all the time in the world. This isn’t the case. There we servants and slaves, there were husbands and wives, there were workers, there were people who, essentially, had commitments the same way we have commitments today.  
 They did not meet and then spend hours and hours and days upon days gathering. They needed order as much as we do. Life does stop when we enter into congregational worship. It continues inside and out. Remembering this, taking in mind our finiteness and being humble about it, can help us in our services to not allow the service to be one which is unfruitful for the majority.  
 I know the difficulties of this personally. As a teacher within the congregation it can be hard to know when to stop a sermon. There have been times when I really want to keep going on particular topics, there are times when I could literally drone on and on for hours about this or that passage. However, I also know that time is important. I also know that it isn’t about me and what I want, but about others. Therefore I seek God’s wisdom as to know when to end, when to continue, how much or how little to say, trusting Him to provide what is needed for us.  
 If we can all understand the basic premise, if we can all understand this foundation on humility and love, then it is possible for us to talk about the elephant in the room. Spiritual gifts in general and their role or purpose within the congregation. The question is, does the Spirit still speak through prophets? Does the gift of tongues continue even today?  
 There are those who would say no. There are those who believed that the spiritual gifts have ceased. They will often point to two things. The first is they will pick a miracle that occurred in the past and say, “Well I don’t see others doing that miracle therefore the gifts have ceased.”  
 In regards to this first argument, that, I think, is a mistaken understanding. All because a particular miracle occurred does not mean that the individual could continue to do that miracle. Consider Paul preaching in Acts 20 and the Eutychus falling asleep at the window, falling three stories down and dying. He was revived. Now, do we ever encounter another story of Paul reviving someone from the dead otherwise? No.  
 Does this mean that it did not happen again? No. Does this mean Paul was always able to heal those who died around him? No. It simply means the probability increased for Paul that such a miracle could take place. We often think of the Apostles as a type of Oprah. You get a miracle, you get a miracle, you get a miracle! However, that doesn’t seem to be the case. Yes, there were signs and wonders. Yes there were miraculous events that could only be described as God moving, however it didn’t mean every single prayer, every single event, every single attempt came to fruition. Instead we see the probability increase based upon the faithfulness of the individual.  
 So, imagine if there were a prophet who is gifted. We should not assume that every time the prophet spoke it was prophetic. Nor should we assume that they could just manifest prophetic words out of thin air. Indeed, the reason why God would heal some and not others is really up to God. The real question from this then is would we encounter more miraculous events if we attempted and believed? And does God expect us to be involved by being faithful? I will leave that up to everyone else to consider.  
 For now, I do not believe that because we do not often see miraculous events that they have ceased. It’s just as possible we have been infected with a certain amount of naturalism which has caused us to think less of miracles than we should. While the enlightenment died years ago, it’s effects still seem to live on.  
 Another argument from the cessationist is that since the canon was closed we do not need any other kind of prophecy. Indeed, isn’t the Scripture all we need? This is an interesting observation, but one that is faulty, and a little bit of a trick. For example, I could very easily argue that the Scriptures are sufficient for our understanding of who God is and who we are and our desperate need for Him. I can say that the Scriptures are essential for our understanding and for our foundations in who God is and how we can glorify Him. However, I can also say that there are times when we need more.  
 We still need to teachers to teach. We still need preachers to preach. We still need the various gifts such as giving, and helping, and praying. These things have not ceased to be needed even though the canon has been closed. Likewise, I know of no one who has memorized all of the Scriptures. As such, it may be necessary for the Spirit to move within some in order for them to be reminded of particular Scriptures or to speak of things without realizing that it even relates to a particular Scripture.  
 Likewise it would seem silly of us to read anything extra Biblical, then, in any circumstance. Why read Tertullian? Why read Augustine? Why read Athanasius? Why read Calvin? Why read Luther? Why read Zwingli? Why the Wesley? Why read Spurgeon? Why read Piper, Macarthur, Sproul etc.? Indeed why even come hear someone teach or preach? If you have the Scriptures then that would be sufficient based upon the argument presented. Yet, we do need preachers, and we do need teachers, and we do need to be given wisdom. Thus I do not find this to be a valid argument, though I do sympathize as someone who does believe that the Scriptures are essential for our Christian faith as persons and as a congregation.  
 As it is, I am not convinced of the cessationist arguments. But you might be, and that is fine. There can still be breaking of bread and recognition that salvation is with us both through Jesus Christ.   
 Still, this is only the first half of the equation. Even if one were a cessationist I would expect them to examine it and take into consideration the other side of things and take time to study it.  
 This still leads to another question, and that is what we should do about the Spiritual gifts? Ultimately this comes down to two things. The first is Church leadership, and the second is the congregation. It is always the responsibility of Church leadership to be on guard against false teachings, and likewise to provide an answer when it comes to our congregational worship. That’s why we have leaders to give recommendations and potentially change systems and formats and the order of service for the benefit of the whole. Though this must also take into consideration the whole congregation and the thoughts of the congregation in order to sift what we should be doing.  
 As such, I will not make recommendations from the pulpit other than this. If we should seek these gifts out, as individuals or as a congregation, let us do so for the glory of God, let us do so in humility, let us do so for the betterment of each other rather than ourselves, and let us do so focusing on order rather than chaos.  
 Our God is such a God as this. He is not one of chaos, of anarchy, but purpose and meaning. He does not expect His followers to do or be any less. Let us then continue to seek order within the congregation not in order to constrain the Spirit, or to constrain each other, but in order for us to be concise, in order for us to truly benefit, in order for us to honor God who brings order even to a chaotic people such as ourselves.