

Is there a **CHIASM** in 1 Corinthians 14, and who is silenced?

Yes, and it's beautifully complex! The linguistic structure named after the Greek letter *chi* "X" shows symmetry of concepts (i.e. ABBA or ABCBA or ABCCBA). Paul addressed confusion and disorder in the church of Corinth. Observe Paul's structure of 1 Corinthians 14:34-40.

Key Term
<h1>chiasm</h1> <p>A-B-C-C-B-A</p>



Hand—A
 Elbow—B
 Shoulder—C
 Shoulder—C
 Elbow—B
 Hand—A

- 14:26 Introduces main point – “All things to strengthen the church”
- 14:28 Tongues *silenced* A
- 14:30 Prophets *silenced* B
- 14:33 Re-iterates main point – “God is not for confusion, but peace”
- 14:34 Women *silenced* C
- 14:36 Women *free to speak* C
- 14:37-38 Re-iterates main point – “Lord’s commands, don’t be ignorant”
- 14:39 Prophets *free to speak* B
- 14:39 Tongues *free to speak* A
- 14:40 Concludes with main point – “All things in an orderly manner”

PAUL REPEATS THE MAIN IDEA 4X... ORDERLY WORSHIP.

Paul silenced three groups — correcting the Spirituals

The church in Corinth had many problems, and Paul brought correction to each faction. First he addressed those known as Spirituals, who promoted freedom for anyone to speak at any time. This freedom caused great confusion and disorder. Paul gave rules for the proper time and limits of tongues, prophecy, and certain women speaking. Paul used the same word for them all — *sigato*. Because they caused disruption, Paul told all three groups to “be quiet!”

Paul freed three groups — correcting the Ascetics

On the other side, the Ascetics wanted to restrict any bit of freedom. They wanted to stop tongues, restrict all prophecy, and they thought that women speaking was shameful! So Paul brought strong correction to the Ascetics. He freed up women in v.36, by saying to the Ascetics, “What! Did God’s word originate with you? What! Are you only people it has reached?” He then freed up prophets and tongues speakers to complete the chiasm in v.39.

Structure powerfully demonstrates the overall intent

Paul saw the disorder in the church of Corinth and introduced an organized system. Tongue speakers (both men and women) had limits, prophets (both men and women) had limits, and inquisitive, disruptive women had limits. The framework holding it all together was God’s intent — a strong, peaceful, knowledgeable, and orderly church.

Conclusion

Paul structured this chiasm to help display unity and peace in the church of Corinth. Paul corrected the chaos caused by two main groups — Spiritual indulgers and Ascetic legalists. Paul first corrected the expressive Spirituals by limiting tongues, prophets, and inquisitive women. Then he corrected the Ascetics by setting free the same three groups.

4 Crucial Questions
1. What does this teach us about GOD ?
2. What does this teach us about PEOPLE ?
3. What command should I OBEY ?
4. With whom can I SHARE this?