

1 Corinthians: A Picture of the Real Church – Remember Jesus – chapter 11

What's the deal with Communion?

1. Every first Sunday of the month, we take a few minutes to take communion together.
2. Twice a year we have a foot washing service that has communion as its centerpiece.
3. Why do we take itty-bitty pieces of bread and drink little bitty cups of grape juice during these celebrations?
4. What's the deal with Communion? ASK: why do you take communion?

Today, we are going to try to answer that question: What is the deal with communion?

The early Church had a lot of things right. In fact, we try to lift up what the early church did and model our church after that. The first century church is our example.

You know, however, that the church in the city of Corinth was a problem church. We might not want to follow in their footsteps. It had some major problems. Over the past few weeks we have been looking at the book of 1 Corinthians. We've discovered that:

- the Church was splintered,
- arguing over who to follow,
- battling over celibacy and marriage,
- suing each other,
- fighting over women covering their heads in worship,
- and having a major battle over meat sacrificed to idols.

Paul once again calls them out about another issue in chapter 11. They were asking, "what is the big deal with communion?" and their nonchalant attitude about communion was causing division once again. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 11:17 and when you get there say, "Amen".

Read Verses 17-22.

- Some were getting drunk on the wine.
- Some were gorging themselves and not caring about others.
- Some were not able to take communion at all because the others were being piggies.

The bottom line to the problem: they didn't understand the deal with Communion. While our church is not divided about communion, there are things here that we each can learn about what it means when we gather around this table. I believe that we can truly learn about an important part of what it means to be a Christian by listening to what Paul says in this text. Paul explains to the Corinthian church that communion was more than a meal, that it was more than a tradition: it was a memorial established by Jesus Christ Himself. PRAY

Paul, right off the bat, takes them back to what Jesus said about communion. He takes them back to the night in which Jesus was betrayed. READ vs. 23-25

Right here it tells us that when it comes time for communion, each of us should:

I. REMEMBER.

- A. Remember what? Each time we take communion we should stop and remember Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples.
1. Let's face it; we each need something to help us remember. I can barely remember what I had for lunch yesterday!
- B. The Lord knew that our memories fade with time.
1. The further away we get from an event the less vividly we recall it. The older we get, the harder it is to remember. We've all been frustrated or embarrassed at times by memory lapses. Haven't we?
 2. God created our memory so that sometimes we'd forget things—it's probably a good thing that we don't remember everything in vivid detail.
 - a. If the memory of a bad accident loomed in our minds perfectly, we'd never get back in a car.
 - b. If the memory of failure didn't fade, we might not be willing to try again.
 - c. How terrible would it be if the memory of a loved one who had died didn't fade a little with time? The grief would be unbearable.
- C. Jesus established a memorial so that we'd remember His death.
1. That which God ordains as holy is never to be blasphemed or treated carelessly. That principle certainly applies to communion. It is sacred because Jesus is the One who is honored by it.
 2. On the night before He was betrayed, Jesus took the unleavened bread that was used for the Passover Feast and said, "When you eat of this bread, remember my body that was broken for you."
 - a. The Bible teaches that not a bone of His body was ever broken. He was a perfect lamb sacrificed for the sins of the world
 - b. But His skin was broken from head to toe.
 - c. When you eat of this unleavened bread—We need to remember His sinless body was broken, stabbed, cut, sliced, punctured, and shattered beyond recognition for you.
 3. Then Jesus took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." When you drink the juice, you are to remember that His blood was shed for you. Remember.

Not only are we to remember, but we are also to:

II. REJOICE (Read v. 26)

- A. Paul states clearly that we should proclaim something. When we take communion: we declare, we make known publicly, we announce the death of Jesus.
1. We are saying to the world, that Jesus died for me. You are saying that because He died, you are alive!
 2. You are saying that because He was slain, He should get all the glory.
 3. In the book of Revelation, the people of God praise Jesus because He was slain. Revelation 5:12 – *In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”*
 4. During communion we should ascribe to Jesus: Power – Wealth – Wisdom – Strength – Honor – Glory – Praise! All of these things, spring from our heart.
- B. We rejoice during communion, because Jesus died for us!

When we take communion, we are to remember, we are to rejoice, and we are to:

III. REPENT (Read v. 27-28)

- A. Paul calls us each to take a hard look at ourselves and why we are at the communion table.
- B. We all know the importance of evaluations.
1. Many of you have annual or semi-annual reviews at your job. You establish goals and then a supervisor asks you to evaluate your performance.
 2. The Lord's Supper is a time of review. It is a time for you and God to work out what is going on in your life.
 3. When you take communion you are to evaluate and rededicate yourself to Christ. You are to take this time to repent and say that you will once again, line your life up to what He wants.
- C. Sometimes when it comes to evaluations, we realize that we have not been living up to our part of the contract. Likewise, there are times when we should not take communion. I want to suggest four times when you should not take communion.
1. Don't take communion if you haven't yet accepted Jesus as your personal Savior and been baptized into Him.
 2. Don't take communion if you have sin that you could care less about. If you're not really repentant of sin, don't take communion.

3. Don't take communion if there is someone in your life, you haven't forgiven.
 4. Don't take communion if you are totally distracted or irritated.
- D. You should know that no one should judge you for not taking communion. Communion is a time between you and God.
- E. I love the Message translation of verse 28 - *Examine your motives, test your heart, come to this meal in holy awe.*

When we take communion, we are each called to remember, to rejoice, to repent, & to:

IV. REDEDICATE (v. 29)

- A. Paul is very serious about communion. He finished this section by saying that we have to rededicate ourselves to the body of the Lord. Read vs. 29.
- B. What does the phrase “body of the Lord” mean?
1. First, it jumps out at me that Paul talks about the body, but does not mention the blood. This might mean that the “body of the Lord” has a double meaning and first, may refer to the church, the local body of believers.
 - a. This means that during communion, we should rededicate ourselves to our church. We should realize that Christ wants to reestablish our relationships with the people of your church. When you take communion, you should really look at how you are connected to your church and rededicate yourself.
 2. Second, however, it is quite obvious that Paul is talking about rededicating yourself also to Jesus Christ Himself. When He says to look at the “body of the Lord”, you can't help but remember what Jesus did on the cross. So, how do you do that? How do you rededicate yourself to the Lord during communion?

The 7 Ups of Communion:

1. Clear up – Get things cleared up with other people in your life.
 - a. Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) - *Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*
2. Shut Up – and let God speak to you
 - a. Psalm 46:10 (NLT) - *Be silent, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.*
3. Fess up – confess your sin to God.
 - a. 1 John 1:9 (NLT) - *But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.*

4. Stand Up – for the things of God
 - a. Ephesians 6:13 (The Message) - *Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet.*
5. Look Up – look to God to handle your problems.
 - a. Philippians 4:13 (NIV) - *I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*
6. Reach Up – for something higher in your life.
 - a. Proverbs 3:5-6 (The Message) - *Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.*
7. Lift Up – your prayers and petitions.
 - a. Philippians 4:6 (NLT) - *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.*

Communion is about you standing before the Lord and letting Him work in your life. Something mystical and wonderful happens in communion. We are probably never closer to Jesus Christ than at the moment we take communion. It's His supper. He promises to be there, and it's an opportunity to reach out and touch Him in a mysterious way. It's communion also with each other. There is something unifying about taking communion together. It reinforces loving relationships. It breaks down barriers that separate people. That's why communion is a very sacred moment in the mind of God and should be to us!

- Today, as we partake of the Communion together...
 - Remember what Jesus went through for you.
 - Rejoice that He died for you and deserves our praise.
 - Repent of any sin that is haunting your life.
 - Rededicate yourself back to God and to any brother or sister with whom you're broken a relationship.