



TABLE MANNERS

OPENING COMMENT

Celebrating the death of Christ by symbolically partaking in his flesh and blood would probably come across as odd and morbid to any newcomer to the Christian faith, yet we practice it with regularity. Communion has been so consistent within the Christian church, that those who have been around for a while can participate in the ritual without serious consideration of the gravity symbolized in the elements. It is this familiarity that can breed boredom, passivity, and abuse of a sacred moment where we remember the cost of our adoption as sons and daughters of the king. This is precisely the indifference Paul is challenging in the Corinthian church.

READ THE TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

¹⁷ But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ¹⁹ for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. ²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in



my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.³³ So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—³⁴ if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. In this portion of the letter to the Corinthian church Paul's concern is clearly stated. What is his concern? (vs. 17)
2. Why is the gathering together as a church a detriment instead of an encouragement in this case? (vs. 18)
3. Paul briefly indicates a positive outcome to the divisions in the Corinthian church. What is the benefit found in the factions? (vs. 19)
4. Some of those in the community of believers were showing up early and eating and drinking without regard for those who would arrive later. What is the result of the Corinthian church's disregard for the Lord's Supper? (vs. 22)
5. Verses 23 - 26 are very familiar for those who have been in the church for a while and can be easily taken for granted. What is it that we celebrate by participating in the Lord's Supper? (vs. 26)
6. What are the results of participating in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner? Which of these results should we be most concerned with? (vs. 27 - 30)
7. What is the purpose to the judgment outlined in verses 31 - 32?
8. What is the posture Paul advocates for at the conclusion of this section? (vs. 33 - 34)

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. Paul talks about "factions" in the Corinthian church serving as a way to determine who is genuine and who is not. It seems clear that his criticism is towards those who are self interested and disregard the needs of others. How does this manifest generally in the church today? How might it manifest more specifically in the practices around communion?



2. Our current practices around the Lord's supper mitigates against drunkenness being the problem. What might be the "drunkenness" in our context that causes us to participate in an unworthy manner?
3. We take great joy in the resurrection of Christ because it secures our eternal home, but why is it significant that we celebrate the Lord's death? Why is the celebration of death odd in our cultural context?
4. It is so easy to trivialize self examination and skip over it while we sit in the pew and listen the these familiar verse prior to communion. How might we push ourselves to deeper examination and judgment to produce heart rending repentance and remorse as we consider the cost of the cross?
5. This passage indicates that our disposition towards others says a lot about the genuineness of our faith and the need for temporary (and possibly eternal) judgment. What practices and habits can we implement to have our hearts and minds oriented towards others, even as we participate in worship?

BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Exodus 12 - the implementation of passover, a foreshadowing of the work of Christ in his death.
2. Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 - a prophecy of the work of Christ through his suffering and rejection.
3. Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-23 - Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper with the disciples.
4. John 6:22-71 - Jesus is the bread of life. Unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood we will not be born again. A teaching that divided his hearers and drove many away.

CONCLUSION

Paul chastises the Corinthian church for turning the Lord's Supper, a tool of remembrance and reverence, into an occasion of drunkenness and selfishness. Instead of reverently gathering around the table to reflect on what Christ had done for the church collectively, it was used to create division and humiliation. The danger of a regular ritual is that it can become rote and meaningless and turn into a way to focus solely on our own needs and desires. Instead, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to examine themselves before participating, reflecting on the grievous consequences of their sin and the willing sacrifice of Christ on their behalf, in order to avoid using the meal as a means of self gratification. As we corporately, equally, and with unison participate in the ritual of remembrance, our hearts should explode within us at the incredible cost and wide reaching effect of the Cross.



SHARE & PRAY

LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

