

SERIES: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A HEALTHY & HOLY CHURCH:
A Study in 1 Corinthians Applied To The Church Today
III. MAINTAINING PROPER DIET & EXERCISE
C.) TRAINING ETTIQUETTE (Instructions for Worship)
“CORPORATE NUTRITION” (1 Cor. 11:17-34)

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INTRODUCTION:

George F. MacLeod: *“The Bible is all about community: from the Garden of Eden to the City at the end.”*

Jean Vanier: *“A community is only a community when the majority of its members are making the transition from 'the community for myself' to 'myself for the community.'*

With these principles in mind, let us turn back to the Scripture and it's instructions for Worship regarding our approach to Communion.

PRAYER

I.) THE PROBLEM - **DIVISIONS** (vv. 17-22)

- *“... you come together not for the better but for the worse.”*
- Returning to our fuller context of this situation and writing, the Apostle Paul is telling the Corinthian Church that they are abusing their freedoms to Christ's disgrace.
- Rather than choosing that which is helpful, beneficial, and edifying, they are choosing that which is simply permissible and self-benefiting.
- Rather than choosing that which most glorifies God, some are choosing that which most pleases themselves and their clique.
- Not everyone is doing this, and not all who are doing it are doing so for the same reasons or in the same way. The church is beset by *“divisions”* and *“factions.”*
- *“There must, indeed, be factions among you, so that the approved among you may be recognized.”*
- A very interesting statement and truth that should not be missed!
- Though that which leads to divisions and factions (ungodly attitudes, sin, wrong doctrine, selfishness, emotionalism) is dishonoring to God, they are nonetheless to be expected and certain in the Church.

Whoa, can that be right?

- Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit declares it to be so. Jesus, in keeping with Jewish teachings, also proclaimed this to be true – and increasingly so as the End approaches.

Why?

– As a tool to identify the true believers from the false. Those who trust in God's revelation (Scripture) from those who trust in their own understanding. The approved (of the LORD) from the dis-approved. The good fruit from the bad. The genuine from the pretenders.

- Dr. David Gill explains: “*The 'test,' and thereby 'God's approval,' is adherence to Paul's teaching as an apostle. The implication is that within the Corinthian Church there are some who do not accept Paul's apostolic authority.*”

(Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, pg. 160)

- “**Therefore . . .**”
- When you come together, you do so with the wrong attitudes, motives, and actions.
- You come prepared to make sure that YOU & 'YOURS' benefit - without regard to others.
- It's not enough for you to act like this in the privacy of your own homes, but you choose to bring it into the house and community of God as well.
- For “**this**” - imposing of your own values, habits, and indulgences – there can be “**NO praise**”!
- “**You are proud of yourselves for attending the 'love feast', but you where is the love? You care for yourself and those in your 'circle', but not anyone else. If all you're coming together for is to lavishly enjoy yourselves, hold on to your wants, be entertained, and/or impress and support only those of your 'circle', do that at home. When you come to God's house, then come for full Christian fellowship. Be prepared and willing to share, mingle with and love everyone!**”

What, then, is God-honoring, beneficial and wise?

II.) THE **MEANING** OF COMMUNION (vv. 23-26)

- The meaning of Communion is that which Christ Himself gave it, NOT what we desire to make it - to be maintained according to its original form and without change.
- And, it “**was given on the night He was betrayed.**”
- On the cusp of betrayal, but only after the betrayer was dismissed, Jesus instituted and explained this memorial that the faithful may be unified.
- As Ironside expresses: “*Why does the apostle slip in the expression, 'In which He was betrayed,' if not for us to realize that the Lord's Supper was meant to appeal to the hearts of His people and so to remind them that in that very night when our blessed Saviour was to know to the fullest the untrustworthiness, the wickedness, the treachery, the perfidy of the human heart, He gave this feast in order that His people might have before them the continual expression of His loving heart in giving Himself for them.*” (pp. 346-347).

A.) **Life** (vv. 23-24)

- In the Passover celebration, this was known as “the Bread of Affliction” (Dt. 16:3).
- Jesus takes what was “the Bread of Affliction” for a people without a Savior and infused it with a new meaning for those who would partake of it after He laid down His life and rose from the grave as the Savior!
- In Jesus and through His sacrifice and resurrection, what was certain to be a life of affliction has been transformed into a life of continual sustenance and blessing – empty of sin.

Give us today our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11)

For the bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then they said, "Sir, give us this bread always!" "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again. (John 6:33-35)

Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. (John 6:57)

B.) Death & Transfusion (vv. 25-26)

- A minister was responding to a Red Cross appeal for blood donations. When he didn't come home by the time his young son expected him, the boy asked his mother, "Is Dad going around visiting all the sick people?" His mother replied, "He's giving blood." "But we know it's really grape juice, don't we, Mom?" (Priscilla Larson)
- Next, Jesus took the "Cup of Blessing." Its contents represent sacrificial blood. Up until Christ, it was a reminder of God's promise to someday bring the blessing of redemption through a perfect and infinite sacrifice. Christ, however, made the point that His shed blood is the actualization and beginning of the New Covenant between our Holy God and His people who have through the Savior truly been redeemed.
- Please, be very careful to make the important distinction that this is not just static or created blood. This is Jesus' blood that was poured out, shed, as a sacrifice of His life.
- The shedding of life means the end of a life. Jesus died that there may be an end to our old (sinful, selfish) life of the flesh. There can be no new life until the old has died. There can be no transfusion of pure blood until the impure has first been removed. [Ask Sarah & Emma Eddington about this.]

"I assure you: Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop. (John 12:24)

- As Ray Stedman writes: "The emptiness of the old life is poignantly captured in the image of a seed that abides alone – a lonely and miserable abiding. That is the life that is lived for one's own wants, needs, and rights. The Christian life is a life freely surrendered. . . . When we partake of the cup we declare this beautiful truth." (pp. 161-162.)

III.) PRESERVING COMMUNION (vv. 27-34)

A.) Keep It Worthy (v. 27)

- Read carefully. This is not a requirement to be worthy in and of yourself (none of us ever are), rather it is about us approaching and keeping our communion in a worthy manner.
- That is, a manner which reverently remembers and honors what He did for us and what this means to us – both individually and corporately.

B.) Examine Thyself (vv. 28-32)

- Seth, a curious 5-yr-old, couldn't keep his eyes off his parents as they were taking communion. At one point, his mom took a quick peek and saw Seth watching his daddy at prayer after receiving the elements. "Good parental example," she thought. That is, until Seth leaned over to her and whispered: "What's in that stuff? You eat it and go right to sleep." (Sherri Yates)

What, really, should be our focus during this time? We should examine ourselves . . .

1.) In Relation To His **Body** (vv. 28-29)

a.) According to **Flesh**

- Respecting the physical Body of Christ that was pierced and put to death for our sake and salvation.

b.) According to **Blood**

- The Corporate Body of Christ, the Church. Those who have been made new and made into One Body, according to His gracious sacrifice, and with Jesus as the Head.

2.) In Relation To **Judgment** (vv. 29-32)

- There are two options, and ONLY two options.

a.) **Escape** (v. 31)

- We judge ourselves before we participate in Communion.
- If we do so earnestly and before the Lord, He will reveal our sins (attitudes, thoughts or actions) and present us the opportunity to receive His grace and forgiveness.
- If so, we 'escape' His righteous judgment.

b.) **Condemn** (v. 32)

- Or, we choose to ignore, skip, or be disingenuous in doing (a) and will face God's judgment apart from Christ's sacrifice.
- The only result, then, is condemnation.

C.) Participate In **Unity** (vv. 33-34)

- “*brothers . . . come together . . . wait . . . one another*”

RESPONSE:

- *A young boy spent some time with his grandparents. While visiting, they took him to church. Afterward, he asked them what Communion was all about. Grandpa replied, “That was Jesus' last supper.” The boy remarked, “Boy, they didn't give him much, did they?”* (Elaine Borchert)

What, really do we both accept from and give to Jesus and we celebrate communion?

- Ironside illustration, pp. 350-355).