

SESSION 1: TRUE FELLOWSHIP

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

1 C orinthians 11:17-26

QUESTIONS

1. Has this session caused you to reflect on the way that you come to celebrate Holy Communion each week? How so?
2. How would you now describe true fellowship? What does it mean to have true fellowship with Jesus Christ?
3. What are the past, present, and future aspects of Holy Communion? How are each of those aspects significant to our lives?
4. The video said, *"Divisions in the congregation also violate the fundamental meaning of celebrating Holy Communion, in that Christ's sacrificial death was and is for all."* What can be done to erase divisions in the congregation?
5. Right before the celebration of Holy Communion, the officiant, per the liturgy, says, "The Lord now invites you to Holy Communion." We are not just remembering a past event; we are invited, by Christ, to participate in the event remembered. Discuss the significance of this invitation.
6. How does our continual participation in the Lord's Supper strengthen our fellowship with Jesus and with each other as fellow believers?
7. One of the blessings said during the celebration of Passover is: *Let all who are hungry enter and eat; let all who are needy come to our Passover feast.* Beyond the celebration of Holy Communion, how may this blessing affect the way you serve your family, your neighbors, and your community?

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8. If you look further at the lyrics of "Were you there when they crucified my Lord," the verse continues with, "Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble." In light of what the video mentioned about Holy Communion, what do these words mean to you?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SESSION 2: FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST & EACH OTHER

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

1 Corinthians 11:27-34

QUESTIONS

1. What feelings arise in you when you celebrate Holy Communion?
2. Paul points out that the Corinthians were not taking the celebration of the Lord's Supper seriously. This can happen to us, too. What steps can we take to prevent ourselves from participating in the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy manner"?
3. *Even before we come to church, we can prepare our hearts through reflection and prayers of repentance.*
 - a. Do you reflect on your sins and repent ahead of Holy Communion?
 - b. How might you do this more intentionally moving forward, and why is this important?
4. When we examine ourselves at Holy Communion, as Paul calls us to do, what specifically should we be examining?
5. It mentions in the video that we should be different following communion, that there must be effects. What are some possible effects that this intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ can have on us?
6. How has your relationship with Jesus transformed your relationships with others?
7. Besides breaking down divisions, what other transforming effects should communion have on a congregation?

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8. Brainstorm ways that you can purposefully focus more on Christ and His sacrifice before Holy Communion this coming Sunday.
 - a. Find a poignant Bible verse to memorize throughout the week, or perhaps some song lyrics that focus your mind.
 - b. Share with the group.

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SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 1: TRUE FELLOWSHIP

For the next two sessions, we'll be looking further at the theme, *Fellowship with Jesus Christ*.

What is fellowship? We use the term for so many things, most often when we talk about eating together. Even the room in our church where we eat together usually bears the name, "fellowship hall." Eating together is not a bad thing, it builds relationships and gives us opportunities to share and spend time together.

However, true Christian fellowship is found with Jesus Christ, particularly in communion with Him.

In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul is addressing this very issue – fellowship in regards to eating, and fellowship with Christ in communion. It seems that over time, the lines began to blur between two. Let's take a look: We can read this rather strong reprimand in the 11th chapter of 1 Corinthians:

Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

Wow – it seems that Paul was rather unhappy with them! Let's explore some historical context to see what is happening here.

In the early church, Christians often celebrated communion in the context of a meal. Large meals were also a place when social statuses and divisions were made very evident. Those of a higher class came to the meal earlier and were served lavishly in the dining room, while those counted less would arrive later, and would be given the leftovers in the atrium or overflow room. Since the poor would only receive what's left, they were still hungry and it is possible that they may have started to eat the bread meant for communion to satisfy their hunger. It seemed the congregation was not mindful of the value of the Lord's Supper or cared about the discord and divisions among them.

With these actions, the unity of congregation was broken and the purpose and meaning of the Lord's Supper was forgotten.

Let's read the explanation of the Lord's Supper as Paul presents it to the Corinthians:

...that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

Jesus established Holy Communion in the midst of the Passover meal, from which it draws some similarities that we can learn from. The Passover meal was a celebration where you **received each other** and shared food and drink **equally** and freely. This division of have and have-nots goes against the very nature of the meal where everyone ate the same things at the same time. Divisions in the congregation also violate the fundamental meaning of celebrating Holy Communion, in that Christ's sacrificial death was and is for all.

Another purpose of the Passover was to bring participants into a personal experience of the first Passover, as if they themselves were coming forth out of Egypt. With the words, *Do this in remembrance of Me...* Jesus calls each of us personally to go back to the night of the Last Supper. The sacrament becomes a living actualization of the past, in light of the future return of Christ.

One of the blessings said during the celebration of Passover is: *Let all who are hungry enter and eat; let all who are needy come to our Passover feast.*

In Holy Communion, Jesus invites us to His feast; His body and blood given for us. This goes beyond just thinking about a past event. Rather it is an invitation to participate in the event remembered.

This perception is so beautifully captured in the old spiritual that asks: *Were you there when they crucified my Lord?* These words implore us to relive the events at the end of Jesus' life. In the celebration of Holy Communion, the Last Supper and Jesus' betrayal, torture, and death on the cross, become real for us.

A further juxtaposition is made with the words: *For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes*. While we are present in the event of the past, proclaiming the Lord's death, we also, at the same time, look to the future – *till He comes*. In this one sentence remembrance and hope come together, not in a wishful sense, but rather hope as the confident expectation of the fulfillment of God's promises.

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 2: FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST & EACH OTHER

Welcome back! Last week we started a discussion on what true fellowship is and explored Paul's communications to the Corinthians on this very topic. Let's recap!

The Corinthians had set the Lord's Supper equal to a regular meal and brought their social divisions into the celebration of this special remembrance. Paul first scolded them for these practices, and then laid out Holy Communion the way that it was instituted by the Lord Jesus.

Today, we're going to look at the end of Paul's response in the 11th chapter, and see what points are relevant for us today.

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

In these verses we can see the solutions to what misguided the Corinthians. Let's pull out a few main points to focus on:

...discerning the Lord's body. In other Bible translations it says *recognizing the body*. There are a few ways that this can be interpreted, of which each is beneficial. First, recognize your fellow Christians as the body of Christ. Through His grace, old divisions break down for we are all one in Him! Second, recognize communion as the body and blood of Christ. The receiving of this gift should humble us – that Christ's body was broken for you. We are broken because of sin, but He allowed Himself to be broken for us, in His love. When we see ourselves participating in the past events of Jesus' betrayal, condemnation, and sacrifice on the cross, we will approach this sacrament with the proper solemnity and thanksgiving. Third, recognize that the Lord's Supper is common to all, because it is His! It does not belong to us, but is shared by all who believe in Him.

Eating and drinking in an *unworthy manner*... We must realize that we are never fully worthy to accept the gift that the Lord has given us. But that doesn't mean we have no responsibility in the way we approach fellowship with Jesus Christ. As we have seen, the Corinthians were not taking the sacrament seriously. How can we do things differently? Through preparation and intentionality. Even before we come to church, we can prepare our hearts through reflection and prayers of repentance. Where and how have I sinned this day? Where are my thoughts and actions in contrast to His? Have I asked God for forgiveness and expressed my remorse to Him? In the divine service, God not only wants to talk to us, but most importantly He wants to have fellowship with us. He has made this available through the sacraments. Holy Communion is the highest moment in the divine service and the whole service points to and prepares us for that moment. When we intentionally focus our minds on this meal and toward the One who has provided it, not only will the sacrament have greater meaning, but our whole experience in the divine service is enhanced, and we are mindful of Christ throughout the week. God has revealed Himself to us and made Himself available to us! The kingdom is amongst us and we are invited to the feast!

But let a man examine himself... This is the last point we'll cover in our study today. Fellowship with Christ leads to transformation. We should be different after communion – there must be effects! We have to *examine* ourselves – have I changed? Is it evident? Fellowship with Christ also transforms our attitudes and behaviors towards each other. Paul says, *wait for one another*. While Holy Communion is the pinnacle of fellowship that we can experience with Jesus Christ, we can also experience fellowship with Him through each other. In our small group discussions, as we talk and learn more about Jesus Christ. As we share our lives together and form strong, community bonds that help us walk as disciples of Christ. Through Him we can experience true fellowship with each other as well.