

The True Meaning of Communion

“One day a guy was walking across a bridge and he saw another fellow who looked like he was ready to jump off the bridge. So, he thought he’d try to stall him until the authorities showed up.

So he yelled to the guy, ‘Don’t jump!’ To which the guy replied, ‘Why not? Nobody loves me.’

‘Well, God loves you. You believe in God, don’t you?’ ‘Yes, I believe in God,’ he said.

‘Good. Are you Christian or Jewish?’ ‘Christian,’ he said. ‘Me, too! What kind of Christian?’ ‘Baptist,’ he said.

‘Me, too! Independent Baptist or Southern Baptist?’ ‘Southern Baptist,’ he said.

‘Me, too! New Evangelical/Moderate Southern Baptist or Conservative Southern Baptist?’ ‘Conservative Southern Baptist,’ he said.

‘Me, too! Once Saved Always Saved Conservative Southern Baptist or Lose-Your-Salvation Armenian Conservative Southern Baptist?’ ‘Once Saved Always Saved Conservative Southern Baptist,’ he said.

‘Me, too! King James Only Once Saved Always Saved Conservative Southern Baptist OR Modern Versions Once Saved Always Saved Conservative Southern Baptist?’

And the guy said, ‘Modern Versions Once Saved Always Saved Conservative Southern Baptist,’ he said.

And the other guy said, ‘What??!! You heretic!’ And he pushed him over the bridge.”

Yes, we Christians can disagree on stuff can’t we? But folks,
hopefully there’s one thing we **don’t** disagree on and that’s the Church

ordinance of communion. And I say that because, believe it or not, some Christians actually approach this time with an attitude that **God disagrees with**, and the results are disastrous! But don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34 “In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval.

When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes 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 praise you for this? Certainly not!

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, 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.” In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.”

Now folks, how many of you would say that God takes communion **very seriously!** Uh, huh! People getting sick and some actually dying as a result of their lack of reverence and sinful behavior when taking it? I'd say that's kind of serious! And folks, that didn't just happen back then. Believe it or not, it could very well be happening today **yet** people aren't associating it with communion because of their lack of understanding of communion.

Therefore, if we're going to avoid this same harsh reality of being disciplined by God for have an improper attitude towards communion, I'd say we better remind ourselves what in the world its all about, how about you? Hey good answer!

And people, the Bible is clear. The **1st thing** about communion that we desperately need to understand, if we are going to escape from being disciplined by God, is that **Communion is a Time of Worship**. Oh, it's **all** about worship! You see folks, communion is not just a time when we Christians gather together and go through some dry stale boring ritualistic activity. Are you kidding me? It's not just about standing up, sitting down, doing this, doing that. No! Again, at the heart of communion is **worship!** Worship of **God** and all the wonderful things that He's done for us in our

salvation! And He calls us to enter into this **worshipful attitude** by asking us to **remember two things** during communion.

The **1st thing** He calls us to remember is that **His Body was Broken for You**.

1 Corinthians 11:23-24 “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, 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.”

Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty obvious, the very first thing Jesus calls us to remember and reflect upon with an attitude of worship during communion is that what? **His Body was broken** for us, right? Why? Because when you understand what His Body went through, you can’t help but worship Him! So let’s do that. Let’s **remind ourselves** first just what His body went through on our behalf.

And I think this is part of our problem. We have either forgotten or we have just flat out become numb to what Jesus’ Body went through on the cross. And folks, for your information, the cross is not just a Christian religious symbol to hang around your neck! It was a horrible instrument of suffering and death! When the Bible says His Body was broken **it was broken!** The cross was the firing squad, the hangman’s noose, the gas chamber of our day. It was the means of which to execute the worst of criminals. **Yet Jesus was not a criminal!** He was the Christ, the Messiah,

the Savior of the world. He who knew no sin **voluntarily died** to take away our sin. **Why? Out of pity**, out of compassion, to keep us from getting what we deserve. And lest we think this was an easy thing to do, I'm going to share with you His last minutes on the cross from a medical perspective.

Here's just a little bit of what He went through for you and me. This is how His Body was broken.

“As Jesus slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating fiery pain shoots through His fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain. The nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.

Therefore, as he pushes himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, he places the full weight on the nail through his feet. But this causes a searing agony as the nail tears through the nerves between the bones of his feet.

Then His arms get fatigued, cramps sweep through His muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. And with these cramps come the inability to push Himself upward to breathe. Air can be drawn into the lungs but not exhaled.

So Jesus fights to raise himself in order to get even one small breath. In spasms He's able to push himself upward to exhale and get more oxygen but each time its less and less.

He experiences hours of horrible pain, as the tissue is torn from his lacerated back trying to move up and down against the rough timber just so He can breathe. But then another agony arrives. A deep crushing pain in the chest begins as the area around His heart slowly fills with serum and begins to compress His heart.

It's almost over. The loss of fluids has reached a critical level. The heart is struggling to pump blood as the tortured lungs make a frantic effort to gasp small gulps of air.

He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. And finally Jesus can allow His body to die but not before saying this, “Father forgive them! For they know not what they do!”

Now folks, I don’t know about you. But that doesn’t seem to be a very fun way to die, how about you? I mean, who in their right mind would volunteer to die like that, **especially** for people who sinned against you and hated your guts! But folks, that’s exactly what Jesus did! Talk about the love of God! We all deserve to die and go straight to hell but through the cross of Christ we can be forgiven and go straight to heaven! Can you believe it? And to think that it’s not only free for the asking, but we don’t deserve it! **Now that will inspire you to worship!** And that’s precisely why He tells us to remember that His Body was broken for you.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **2nd thing** God calls us to remember to enter into this worshipful attitude during communion is that **His Blood was Spilled for You.**

1 Corinthians 11:25 “In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My Blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

Now folks, according to our text, the second thing Jesus calls us to remember and reflect upon with an attitude of worship during communion in case the first one didn’t get you, is now that **His Blood was spilled** for us, right? Why? Because again, when you understand what it means that His

Blood was shed on our behalf, you can't help but worship Him! So let's do that as well. Let's **remind ourselves** of what it means to have the Blood of Christ spilled on our behalf.

And again, I think this is part of our problem. We have either forgotten or we have become flat out numb to what it means to have the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanse us from our sins. When the Bible says that God will forgive us of our sins through Jesus Christ, He doesn't forgive us of just some of our sin. He forgives us of all our sin! In fact, so much so, that **right now**, not tomorrow, not in the future, but **right now** God sees us as if we had never sinned. Is that a mind blower or what? One man puts it this way.

"I always had this fear of going to heaven."

You say, 'Afraid of going to heaven?' You bet! In heaven, I had the feeling that they were going to pull down this movie screen and place this video tape of all the sins I've ever committed. And my mother would be there!

Now people, I don't know if they have a tape on me recording all my sins. And I don't know if they have a tape on you recording all your sins. But if there is such a tape, I've got good news for you. Jesus has erased your tape!

Your sins says the Scripture is blotted out, it is buried in the deepest sea, it is remembered no more. And that thrills me, not just to have my sins forgiven, but totally forgotten.

Because that means, one day, I'm going to walk before the Lord and Jesus will be there with all my sins forgiven, forgotten, buried in the deepest sea, remembered no more.

And with a record that is washed clean, with sins that are purged, the Father will embrace me and I can call Him Abba Father.”

Now folks, **is that an amazing kind of love**, or what? I mean, stop and think about it. Put it in its context. Who in their right mind would not only forgive those who sinned against you and hated your guts, but get this, **forgive you so completely** that you will be presented to God the Father as if you never sinned in the first place! Isn't that awesome!

And speaking of Abba Father, that's exactly what God has done for us. Through Jesus we have actually become His **children** and He has become our **Heavenly Father!** We who formerly were separated from Him because of our sin, now have access to His very throne through the **Blood of Jesus** we can actually approach God the Father with **confidence**. In other words, through Jesus we've been brought back into fellowship with God. He loves you. You're his child. He, the Creator of the Universe, longs to hold you in His big strong arms so to speak. Isn't that wild? Remember what He has done. If we have confessed our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, through the **Blood of Jesus Christ**, and cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness. And one day you will hear, “Welcome home My child. Welcome home.” Abba Father. And if that doesn't **inspire you to worship**, you got some serious problems! And that's precisely why He tells us to remember that His Blood was spilled for you.

But that's not all. Speaking of problems, the **2nd thing** about communion that we need to remind ourselves, if we are going to escape from being disciplined by God, is that **Communion is a Time of Unity**. You see folks, the very word "communion" comes from the Greek word "koinonia" which means, "community, fellowship, joint participation." The word speaks of **unity** that we have in Christ because of the Body and Blood of Christ was broken and spilled on our behalf. Paul puts it this way.

Galatians 3:26-28 "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. One of the most revolutionary truths **you will never find in this world** is that the moment you get saved, all gender, all racial, all ethnic barriers are what? They're forever removed, right? We are all **one** in Christ Jesus! Therefore, when we gather together we are not only celebrating the Body and Blood of Jesus and what that has **done for us** but we are also celebrating what it has **made for us**. I.E. a total complete unified Body! Something this world cannot find or experience. We are a body of misfits from all different kinds of tribes, languages, tongues, backgrounds, colors, sizes, shapes, and even pedigrees that actually **get along** with each other!

In fact, so much so that we now passionately **encourage** one another, **serve** one another, **forgive** one another, **admonish** one another, are **like-minded** with one another, **greet** one another, **bear** with one another and of course they actually, get this, **love** one another. Can you believe that? That's what we're celebrating and that's what the word "communion" means! It's a time where we celebrate our "joint participation" in Jesus Christ and what He has made for us, a **godly fellowship** of **unified believers**.

And that's precisely why there's such a strong reaction of God in discipline when we violate this truth. Again, what was happening to some of these Christians in Corinth? Some of them we're getting sick and some even died! **Why?** Because of their ungodly, irreverent attitude when it came to communion. Notice how Paul starts the passage on communion.

1 Corinthians 11:17-18,20-22 "In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes 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 praise you for this? Certainly not!"

Now, notice the **first thing** Paul rebukes this Church for when it comes to communion. They were being **divisive** which is the exact opposite of what the word means! Then they were being **selfish**, they were being

debase, then they were even **despising** the Church by treating each other horribly! They apparently had such a **casual attitude** towards sin that they were actually **sinning while taking communion!** The very ordinance that we celebrate to **remember** how God has **unified us** and **saved us** from our **sins!** Do you see the hypocrisy? No wonder Paul says this at the end of the passage.

1 Corinthians 11:27-30 “Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.”

Now folks, this is an amazing passage. I mean think about what is going on here. God actually disciplined these Christians to the point where some got sick and some even died, just for their divisive, sinful, selfish behavior when it came to taking communion. And if you think that's too harsh, let me see if I can give you an analogy that will help. John MacArthur puts it this way.

“I've been watching from time to time, the recent peace protests that are going in the media and that's coming back.

Flag burning, flag trampling, flag stapling, other desecrations, disintegration of American flags; and when people do that, when they trample the flag of the United States of America they are insulting everything that that flag stands for, and that's what they're doing it for.

They become guilty of not just dishonoring the flag but they become guilty of dishonoring the nation it represents!

They are mocking the leaders. They're treating with disdain those who have fought in the past for our freedoms and those who continue to fight and work for our freedoms, those who give their lives in service to this great nation.

And so it is in the Lord's Table when we trample the symbols of Jesus Christ with the feet of indifference or the feet of pride or shallowness or selfishness or unrepentance. It is to bring dishonor and shame upon the Christ to whom those symbols represent. You just need to think about that.

I dare say that there's probably not a handful of people in here who would even think of burning a flag, and bring dishonor upon this great nation, but who here perhaps regularly brings dishonor upon the Lord by trampling the symbols that represent Him in communion. Don't do that.

How? Verse 28, "Let a man examine himself." Look inside, take a real look at your heart and come in a worthy manner.

Come to really worship God, to be really thankful for the cross, and the Christ who gave His life there. Do it that way, examine yourself, then so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup."

People, think about this. How many times have we gotten sick, how many times did another Christian around us just up and die seemingly unexpectedly, and little did we know, it may very well have been their **sinful attitude** or **behavior** while taking communion. I know that that sounds pretty creepy, but that's exactly what the text says. And so I echo the words of John MacArthur...don't do that!

But that's not all. If that didn't get you, hopefully this last one will. The **3rd and final thing** about communion that we need to remind ourselves,

if we are going to escape from being disciplined by God, is that

Communion is a Time of Urgency.

1 Corinthians 11:26 “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

And so the Bible tells us that communion is not only a time when we gather together and celebrate the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and what it has **done for us**, (i.e. a full pardon of our sins). And that we not only celebrate what His Body and Blood has **made for us**, (i.e a unified community of believers who actually love each other). But according to our text, it’s **also** a time when we remember **that one day He’s going to come for us**...He’s coming back! And **this** should spur on some **urgency** to get our hearts right with Him **before He arrives!**

And people, the Bible is clear! We’re either going to **die**, which can happen at any moment, and we’ll be standing before the Lord, **or** we could experience the **rapture** of the Church and be caught up together with the Lord. Either way, we’re going to meet Him one day. Let’s take a look at that passage dealing with the rapture.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 “According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together

with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

And so folks, can I encourage you this morning? This is serious business. If you were to die right now, or if you were to experience the rapture of the Church today, as a born again Christian, what is your last act going to be before leaving this earth and meeting Jesus? Is it going to be causing division in the Church? Is it going to be sinning in the Church? Is it going to be having a casual attitude towards the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ? What is it going to be? We are taking communion. We are, “proclaiming the Lord’s death **until He comes.**” And so the question is, “Are you ready?” Or will you be left behind, because the very fact that you could give a rip about sin, even sinning while taking communion, is showing that maybe you never really belonged to Him? I don’t know your heart but the Bible is replete with examples of people who make “professions” of faith in Jesus Christ, but they really don’t belong to Christ.

The rapture is not some Christian fantasy. It really is going to happen one day as the Bible says it’s going to happen, **when you least expect it.** And so if you’re reading this today and you’re **not** a Christian, I challenge you, please don’t be left behind! Call upon the Name of Jesus Christ, as Him to forgive you of all your sins and become a part of the family of God before it’s too late! Or if you’re reading this today and you **are** a Christian, I

challenge you as well...**examine yourself**. Are you really ready to take communion in a **worthy** manner? Is your heart right with God and with your brother? Or are you getting ready to be disciplined by God? Let's do it right, amen? Let's pray.

To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

“Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”
