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# COMMUNION SUNDAY

## *COMMUNION WITH ONE ANOTHER*

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A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter  
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on February 5, 2017

### INTRODUCTION

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For nearly 2,000 years Christians have celebrated, remembered, and proclaimed the person and work of Christ through the ordinance of Communion (or Lord's Supper). However, it may be that many Christians today are not nearly as familiar with the incredible meaning behind this essential ordinance. In this message, we shall look to a familiar passage that speaks to this subject, and we will focus our attention on the communal feature of Communion. This ordinance was always meant to evoke feelings of unity and mutuality, and we pray for God to form us accordingly.

### **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.

#### THE POINT I'M AIMING AT TODAY:

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**Communion (or Lord's Supper) is a tangible reminder of what a local church is: (1) a body of believers (2) who are united by the Gospel (3) and mutual, thoughtful obedience to Christ.**

#### MESSAGE OUTLINE:

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**(1) CONSIDERING THE CONTEXT**

**(2) WHAT IS THE PRIMARY REBUKE?**

**(3) WHAT IS THE CORRECTION OR COMMAND?**

**(4) WHAT ARE SOME APPLICATIONS FOR US?**

### (1) CONSIDERING THE CONTEXT

- The Letter itself
  - 1 Corinthians is about applying the Gospel
    - Breaking down the letter, Sproul writes,
      - “The gospel not only teaches us to forsake division and disunity, but it gives us the resources to pursue true Christian unity (**chs. 1–4**).
      - The gospel instructs us how and why to be sexually pure and to relate peaceably with our fellow believers (**chs. 5; 6**).
      - The gospel instructs us how to think about singleness, marriage, divorce, and widowhood (**ch. 7**).
      - The gospel helps us think through how to live our lives in the cultures of which we are part... [and it] teaches us how to use our Christian freedom for the glory of Christ and for the edification and wellbeing of His people (**chs. 8–10**).
      - The gospel teaches us how to order our lives together—as husbands and wives (**11:2–16**), in observing the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34), and other occasions of public worship (**chs. 12–14**).
      - [Finally], the gospel gives us a sure hope of life beyond the grave (**ch. 15**).”<sup>1</sup>
- The Situation
  - The Apostle Paul had planted the Corinthian church (Acts 18:8-10).
  - Paul ministered among this church for more than 18 months (Acts 18:11).
  - Rather than being a super mature and exemplary church, the Corinthians are the worst example of a local church in the NT.
    - Paul had received report from others that there were divisions among the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. 1:11).
    - Paul had also gotten a letter from the Corinthian church, asking for his direction on some matters (1 Cor. 7:1; cf. 8:1, 12:1, 16:1).

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<sup>1</sup> Sproul, R. C. (Ed.). (2015). The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition) (p. 2013). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust.

## (2) WHAT IS THE PRIMARY REBUKE?

- First: Note the strong tone
  - “in the following instructions ***I do not commend you...*** when you come together ***it is not for the better but for the worse***” (v17).
    - This is a stark reminder that attendance, and even membership in a local church is not itself the goal.
      - There are instances where “***coming together***” is “***for the worse.***”
        - If you attend a worship service to “do your time”
          - thoughtless participation
          - religious ritual
          - social approval
    - “do ***you despise the church of God...*** Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not” (v22).
      - We are once again faced with the hard words of Scripture, which tell us that our “***coming together***” under “***uncommendable***” pretenses is no neutral issue.
        - Such dull participation is to “***despise the church of God.***”
  - Second: The Rebuke (or rebukes)

### 1) Individualism

- “each one goes ahead with his own meal” (v21). “eats and drinks without discerning the body” (v29).
  - These Christians are gathered together physically, but they are divided in the church along the same lines as the world outside is divided.
    - Each one has his/her own preferences, means, and actions in view.
      - The focus here is socio-economic status

- “One goes hungry, another gets drunk” (v21).
- However, we would be foolish to think that this is the only way individualistic thinking expresses itself.

## ***2) Disunity***

- “I hear that there are divisions among you” (v18).
  - Paul notes that there is a necessary distinction between those who are “genuine” believers and those who are not (v19).
    - But the “divisions” among them were based on worldly distinctions.
  - It seems that Americans are being expected to think in terms of “interest groups” today.
    - There are all sorts of communities: the Latino-American community, the African-American community, the LGBT community, the elderly, the Millennials, the feminists, the liberals, the conservatives, blue-collar, and white-collar.
      - These are all obliterated by the Gospel!
        - You are not a member of an interest group when you are here... If you throw yourself at the mercy of the Savior, then you are a member of His church, His kingdom, His family.

## ***3) Thoughtless Religious Routine***

- “When you come together, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat” (v20).
  - Oh, Christian... Hear this devastating rebuke!

- They were (from their perspective) “eating the Lord’s Supper.” But Paul says, “No, you are not!”
  - Our thoughtless religious routine is disgusting in God’s sight.
    - Hear what God said to His people when they thoughtlessly continued the religious routine:
      - “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.... Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen” (Amos 5:21–23).

**Major Point:**

**Communion (or Lord’s Supper) is a tangible reminder of what a local church actually is:**

**(1) a body of believers (2) who are united by the Gospel (3) and mutual, thoughtful obedience to Christ.**

**(3) WHAT IS THE CORRECTION OR COMMAND?**

**Communion is a tangible reminder of what a local church is.**

- There is so much that I’d like to say here, because I believe the local church is generally taken for granted, ignored, and abused in America today (especially in the Bible belt).
  - People take the local church for granted by treating each one like a shopping center.
  - People ignore the local church until they need something or find themselves in a dire situation.
  - People arrive at the local church with personal expectations, and when those are not perfectly met, they mean-mouth (abuse) the local church among those who know nothing about what a local church actually is or what a local church is responsible to do.

- However, I will stick to what's actually in the text...
  - There is enough here to poke us all in the ribs a little

**Once again, Communion is a tangible reminder of what a local church is.**

**A local church is:**

**1) Not Individualistic, but *A Body of Believers***

- “eats and drinks *without discerning the body*” (v29).
  - This is in the form of a negative (rebuke), but we may understand the positive to be a command that one should “*discern the body*”
    - When we “eat and drink,” we are to be aware of our communal participation.
- “when you *come together as a church*” (v18), “...*wait for one another*” (v33).
  - “when you *come together*” (v17); “when you *come together*” (v20); “when you *come together*” (v33); “when you *come together*” (v34).

Let's consider **3 things** regarding “*come together*” and “*wait for one another*”

- **First**, the “coming together” in this passage makes note of the universal example we have in the OT and NT of the people of God.
  - God's people are NEVER encouraged to be isolated from the larger community (or family of God).
- **Second**, Paul assumes that when Christians “come together” it should be for mutual good.
  - “when you come together *it is not for the better* but *for the worse...*” (v17).
    - This assumes that it SHOULD be “for the better.”
      - Not for the better of Paul, or for the better of God, but *for the better of one another*.

- **Third**, Paul commands Christians (in the context of a local church) to “*wait for one another*”
  - The word connotes *patient expectation*.
    - Patient expectation that others will participate with me.
    - Patient expectation that our mutual participation is not oriented towards my preferences.
    - Patient expectation that I will gladly put another’s needs before my own desires.
  - This carries with it many of the “*one anothers*” found elsewhere in the NT.
    - “*care for one another*” (1 Cor. 12:25).
    - “*comfort one another*” (2 Cor. 13:11).
    - “*live in harmony with one another*” (Rom. 12:16).
    - “*serve one another*” (Gal. 5:13).
    - “*bear one another’s burdens*” (Gal. 6:2).
    - “*forgive one another*” (Eph. 4:2).

A local church is Not **Individualistic**, but ***A Body of Believers...***

**2) Not Divided into factions, but *United by the Gospel* (i.e. Gospel-centered Community)**

- Note how Paul points the Corinthian Christians to the meaning of Communion (or Lord’s Supper) as the reason for their unity:
  - “he [Jesus] 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*" (v25-26).

- **The point is:** "worthy" (v27) participation in Communion (or Lord's Supper) is properly "examining yourself" (v28) to "discern" (v29) whether or not you are participating as part of the body of Christ – particularly expressed in the visible community of believers around you.
  - We could discuss (or argue about) the meaning of verse 30 ("*many of you are weak and ill, and some have died*"), but the more important matter is that the unity of the body is found in the Gospel of Christ.
- **The Gospel is THE message**, the point, the theme, the lens through which we see everything, the humbling truth, the glorious promise, and the barrier-breaking claim upon your soul.
  - If you tire of hearing the Gospel, if you hope to advance to some greater or more relevant point, or if you believe that you have come to a sufficient knowledge of the Gospel, THEN you are in danger of missing the Gospel.

A local church is *A Body of Believers who are not Divided into factions*, but *United by the Gospel and...*

### 3) Not **Thoughtless Religious Routine**, but *Mutual, Thoughtful Obedience to Christ*

- "I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you..." (v23). Jesus said, "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (v25).
  - Christians have an ancient heritage... Just think of it.
    - 1 Corinthians was written around 55 A.D. during Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey (Acts 19:8, 10).
    - Paul had come to live among the Corinthians during his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, and he stayed for 18 months (Acts 18:1-11).

- Paul said, “*I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you...*” (v23). This indicates a ‘tradition’ that was already being passed from one Christian generation to the next.
- This gives us good reason to consider the weight of what we are doing. “*We’ve always done it this way*” has never had such power.
  - Often, however, “*We’ve always done it this way*” indicates a lack of careful attention.
    - Christians in a local church family have several biblical ‘traditions.’
      - Communion (Lord’s Supper)
      - Baptism
      - Sunday morning Worship services
      - Singing together
      - Hearing, reading, considering, and submitting to God’s word
      - Church Membership
      - Corporate prayer
      - Financial giving
    - All of these are good and right, but we are never to participate without mutual and thoughtful obedience to Christ.
      - What does Jesus say about this?
      - Why must I participate?
      - What are the benefits or consequences?

**Major Point: Communion (or Lord’s Supper) is a tangible reminder of what a local church is: a body of believers who are united by the Gospel and mutual, thoughtful obedience to Christ.**

## (4) WHAT ARE SOME APPLICATIONS FOR US?

- Is this true of our church?
  - Are we “a body of believers,” or are we a splintered blob of interest groups?
- Do you have an individualistic perspective of your participation?
  - God help us to understand our relationship with this body.
- Do you see yourself as better or worse than your church family members?
  - God help us to understand our unity in the Gospel of Christ.
- Do you thoughtlessly, carelessly, ritualistically participate in religious routine?
  - God help us to do all that we do out of love and gratitude towards You.

### SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

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*The Gospel at the Table* by Mark Owens

[http://beginningwithmoses.org/download-file/downloads/GOSPEL\\_AT\\_TABLE.pdf](http://beginningwithmoses.org/download-file/downloads/GOSPEL_AT_TABLE.pdf)

*The Lord's Supper: A Study of 1 Cor. 11:17-34* by John Zens

[http://lords-supper.org/resources/zens\\_ls.html](http://lords-supper.org/resources/zens_ls.html)

*How Should I Benefit from Communion?* by Ian Hamilton

<http://www.reformation21.org/articles/how-should-i-benefit-from-communion.php>