

1 Corinthians When Faith & Life Collide

Study 14

The Gospel in the Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

A. Division in Meetings

1 Corinthians 11:17-19

(NIV)

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.

(ESV)

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. 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, or there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

(NLT)

But in the following instructions, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. First, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that you who have God's approval will be recognized!

1. a) Discussion question. When do Christian meetings do more harm than good?

b) Discussion question. Is there a benefit in divisions?

In verse 19, the divisions highlight who are genuine believers who have God's approval and who do not.

c) Reflection question. How do you feel about a church having non-genuine believers?

Sample:

Relief- "Good to know those who are causing division are not really true believers."

Scared- "Am I a genuine believer? What if I am surrounded by non-genuine believers who will influence me badly?"

B. Food Hogging, Class Divisions

1 Corinthians 11:20-22

(NLT)

When you meet together, you are not really interested in the Lord's Supper. For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. What? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace God's church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this!

2. Discussion question. Who were the ones who were hungry and who were the ones getting drunk?

The poorer workers who have to work longer hours are the ones arriving later and have nothing to eat, whereas those who are more well-to-do arrive earlier and eat and drink to their fill.

C. The Bread

1 Corinthians 11:23-24 (NLT)

For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

3. a) Objective question. Select all that apply. Which of the following is the major Protestant view on what the bread symbolizes at the Lord's Supper?

A. Transubstantiation (Transubstantiation is, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church, "the change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of wine into the substance of the Blood of Christ")

B. Consubstantiation (the doctrine, especially in Lutheran belief, that the substance of the bread and wine coexists with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.)

C. Memorial ("the Lord's Supper" by memorialists) are purely symbolic representations of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the feast being established only or primarily as a commemorative ceremony.

D. Spiritual (The meaning of the "spiritual presence" concerning the Lord's Supper is that Jesus is spiritually (but not physically) present at communion.)

b) Discussion question. According to the video lecture, what is the process of remembrance like?

i) We appropriate what He has done for us by His sacrifice

ii) We affirm our faith in Him

iii) Thanksgiving

c) Discussion question. According to the video lecture, what is another important aspect of the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's supper is meant to be done together in the whole body, it actually symbolizes our fellowship and our unity together so we take it together.

1 Cor 10:16-17 And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

D. The Blood

1 Corinthians 11:25-26 (NLT)

In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

4. Discussion question. According to the video lecture, what is the significance of blood?

- Blood has the symbolic values of life (Lev 17:11)

- When we share Christ's blood, we share in his destiny (Jewish Betrothal Ceremony)

- Blood is used when participating in a covenant (Exodus 24:3-8)

E. Self Reflection because The Lord's Supper is a Serious Matter

1 Corinthians 11:27-34 (NLT)

So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.

But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way. Yet when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

So, my dear brothers and sisters, when you gather for the Lord's Supper, wait for each other. If you are really hungry, eat at home so you won't bring judgment upon yourselves when you meet together. I'll give you instructions about the other matters after I arrive.

5. Discussion question. Read the supplementary reading below, what is the main takeaway for 1 Corinthians 11:27-34 in terms of judgment and the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper should be taken seriously and Christians should consider their own behaviour concerning the poor before partaking in the Lord's Supper inconsiderately

Supplementary Reading

DA Carson commentary from Zondervan:

"examine themselves"

Examine their behavior during the meals of the congregation-meals at which Christians from different social backgrounds ate together-especially their behavior concerning the poor. A more general application refers to self-examination regarding any unconfessed sin before partaking in the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:28

"eat and drink judgment on themselves."

Probably a reference not to the final judgment but to present divine judgment, as in v. 30. Christians who show no regard for the poor in the church and who, more generally, do not stop sinful behavior will be judged by God. 1 Corinthians 11:29

Some Corinthian Christians had fallen ill, and some had even died, because of this specific sin. This underlines the seriousness of Paul's warning regarding God's judgment in v. 29. Not all illnesses are the result of sin, but sinful actions can lead to sickness and death.

Schreiner, Thomas. [2018]. 1 Corinthians. IVP.

The importance of the unity of the church shines through in this text. Believers cannot claim to be honouring the Lord and his death at communion while at the same time discriminating against other brothers and sisters. The self-giving love of the Lord commemorated in his death must be manifested in the way believers treat one another.

Blomberg, Craig. [2009]. 1 Corinthians. Zondervan Academic.

The Eucharist should be a time of self-examination, not so much for past sins, though repentance from them is always appropriate. Rather, Christians should consider their present attitudes toward those more needy than themselves. This would lead to a radically different group of people who ought to refrain from the Lord's Supper than usually appears. All repentant sinners are welcome, no matter how far away from God they may have recently felt. All professing believers who are unprepared to give generously of their wealth to help the poor in their midst, or who treat people of lower classes as second-class citizens, or who simply remain unreconciled with fellow celebrants, should refrain

Takeaway

- A. There were inconsiderate people towards the poor during the time of Corinth when conducting the Lord's Supper.
- B. The Lord's Supper is for Christians to remember our covenant with Christ and should be taken with the whole community with seriousness, reflecting on our behaviour.

Case Study

Case 1 – The Lord's Supper Participation

There are three general ways of fencing the Lord's Table

FENCING THE LORD'S TABLE

Open	• All believers
Close	• All believers properly baptised, and in fellowship with a church of like faith and order
Closed	• Only members of local church... due to discipline matters

1. a) Discussion question. Discuss the differences, or pros and cons of the three different types of fencing the Lord's Table.

b) Discussion question. Can non-believers partake in the Lord's Supper?

2. a) Reflection question. The way most churches conduct the Lord's Supper is during service, so there is no waiting as in the situation in 1 Corinthians. However, this does not mean there

is no division between the poor and the well-to-do in the church. Do you see a division between the poor and the well-to-do in your church today?

Proverbs 14:20

The poor are shunned even by their neighbors, but the rich have many friends.

b) Discussion question. How would you define the poor by today's standards? What are the characteristics?

Case 2 – Refuge Believers

Seng Lat is a Burmese refugee in Malaysia. He has to work 6 days a week and for long hours and only has one day off to do his chores like laundry and groceries. There is a Burmese service conducted secretly in Selayang from 11.30 pm to 2 am on Sunday nights because that's only when most of the refugees can make it. There is only one Malaysian pastor from Second Methodist Church who helps out in this service.

3. a) Discussion question. Put yourself in Seng Lat's shoes. What kind of struggles and considerations would he have?

b) Reflection question. Would you be interested in getting to know Seng Lat as a brother in Christ? To fellowship with him?

c) Reflection question. Would you be interested in attending the Burmese Service and joining their Lord's Supper and encouraging them as a brother or sister in Christ? Why or Why not?

d) Reflection and prayer. Would you be willing to pray to God to open your heart to love the poor among you?