

# The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on June 3, 2018

## What's the best meal you've had recently?

Personal examples:

- SoPo Memorial Day Picnic
- LeMoine's taking us to Harry's

## What makes for a good meal?

- Quality food and drink
- Abundance
- Relationships
- Everyone is enjoying the meal!

## What comes to mind when you think about the Lord's Supper (Communion, Eucharist)?

Personal examples:

- Baptized when I was seven. I remember the little wafer and thimble of juice.
- Taking the Lord's Supper with guys I lived with in college.
- My relative drinking from the common cup when the bread was supposed to be dipped in.
- Taking the Lord's Supper with different leaders at New Hope in 2014.
- Passover Seder meals celebrated different years right before Easter.

Let's consider the situation with the Lord's Supper in the church of Corinth. We want to spend some time teaching on the Lord's Supper early on in the life of Tallgrass Church. So here we go.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Pray!

**1 Corinthians 11:17-22** <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. <sup>20</sup> When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. <sup>21</sup> For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. <sup>22</sup> 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.

## 1. What's the problem? Division!

- Ever since the first meal we have recorded in Scripture, there has been great division between humans.
- Division is a problem that Paul addresses throughout 1 Corinthians.
- Paul doesn't rail on their ritualistic correctness with the Lord's Supper but rather rails on problems they had with their gatherings.
- In fact, you may get the ritual absolutely correct on the outside (as if we would even know what that means) but that doesn't mean anything if the inside isn't right.
- Another way to put this is that there could be correctly-appearing external conformity as it pertains to the Lord's Supper while the interior life of the church body is disastrous.

## Two huge problems with their gatherings: Cliquishness and Indifferent Self-Indulgence!

### 1. Cliquishness (vv. 18-20)

- There is a socioeconomic division happening in Corinth but deeper than that is the division into cliques. A clique is a small group of people with shared interests, who spend time together and exclude others.
- Watching cliques emerge with our kids is super painful. But it happens with adults too. It's not like all adults actually grow up. We just get more subtle in the way we form cliques.
- What is more painful than not having enough to eat? Eating with those who have so much and could ease your pain easily but instead think of themselves first and go ahead and eat everything up before you arrive. The pain of being alone in poverty is much greater than the poverty itself. Wealth is relative.
- The wealthy could show up at gatherings earlier, or maybe they were the ones hosting. The poorer probably had to work late and by the time they showed up the wealthy were already trashed. Not a good situation!
- *Illus*: Beautiful picture at our SoPo Memorial Day Picnic where people are bringing together whatever they got and just sharing it with each other. Some brought cheap hot dogs and others brought amazing ribs and everyone shared with everyone. That's the opposite picture of what's occurring here at Corinth.
- Getting socioeconomic classes together in church gatherings in a vibrant way is extremely challenging.
- This is why we don't break up into specific affinity-based type groups. Come one, come all!
- We have a lot of work to do to make sure that people of all socioeconomic backgrounds can join us at Tallgrass Church. For example: Childcare is expensive. Eating out at some of our After Parties is expensive.
- We need to battle human tendency towards cliquishness by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and the community He wants to form among us!

## 2. Indifferent Self-Indulgence (vv. 21-22)

- Our problem is probably not related to people getting drunk at our meetings and eating up all the food...although that has been a problem at times.
- The problem is when we think that church exists to provide a service to consume.
- For what do you show up to consume? Food? Alcohol? Musical experience? Biblical teaching? Childcare? Social needs? Guilt alleviation? Something else?
- Our problem is related to this question which is the core issue in the Corinthian church: Are you coming to self-indulge or to serve? Are you following worldly wisdom or godly wisdom when you gather together as a church family?
- Indifference to those around you hurts pretty bad. I've seen this dynamic play out among kids and adults. I've been guilty of it and I've been a recipient of it. It's all not good.
- How often does this play out in church gatherings, the very place where we are to be seen, known, enjoyed, and loved?

### ***Do you show up to self-indulge or to serve?***

- Get filled up at home so you can come together not to consume but rather to serve.
- Eat at home so when you come here you don't come to merely consume food and alcohol at the expense of those who are well less off than you.

***Do you even show up to church gatherings?*** For most in our culture just showing up is the victory. But that's not enough. Paul says it's better if you don't even meet if you don't come together to serve one another.

- There are 3 groups that show up to Christian meetings: Non-Believers (Seekers), Immature Believers, Maturing Believers
- Stages toward maturity (serving, giving)
  - Maturity is moving from worldly wisdom (which is self-seeking) towards godly wisdom (which is self-sacrificing – serving love).
  - Paul planted the church in Corinth 3-5 years before this. He expects them to be maturing believers and they're not. That's a problem.
  - Tallgrass Church was planted two months ago. Many of us have been walking with God for decades. We should be maturing.
- The problem is cliquishness and indifferent self-indulgence. Big problems need big solutions.

## 2. What's the solution? So why serve?

What's our impetus to serve? Why move towards sacrificial servanthood? Just do better, Corinthian church! Do better, American church! Do better, Tallgrass Church! Do better, Ben! How do we fix these types of problems in the church? Who's our example? Paul stated the problem and now he gives the solution.

Short answer, THE GOSPEL!

[Break the bread and pour the cup at this time.]

**1 Corinthians 11:23-26** <sup>23</sup> 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, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is (broken) for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> 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." <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- GOSPEL
- So, why serve? Because when Jesus gathered in community He came to serve. He showed up at gatherings to serve those around Him. He's our example!
  - **Mark 10:43b-45** <sup>43b</sup> But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
- Jesus came to break His body so that He could build His body...
- "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." What is *this* referring to?
- **The Passover**
  - *Summarize the story of the Passover...*
  - The Jews were enslaved by the Egyptians with no hope for deliverance anywhere until God did for them what they could not do for themselves. And they had to receive God's help. And walk across the dry land.
  - **1 Corinthians 5:7b** For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.
  - The Lord's Supper is about remembering that what we could not do for ourselves, God did for us. That's what the Passover was about and that's what the Lord's Supper is about. You could not pay for your own sin. Jesus did that for you. The Jews could not deliver themselves from Pharaoh. God did that for them.
- "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." What is the new covenant?
  - **Hebrews 8:10-13** (quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34) <sup>10</sup> "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>11</sup> And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. <sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." <sup>13</sup> In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Hebrews 9:15; 12:24)
  - When we gather together with fellow believers what is our purpose in gathering? To remind each other of the broken body of Jesus on our behalf and on behalf of many who don't yet know Him. To remind each other of the New Covenant we live under. To proclaim the death of Christ. To spur one another on to love and good works. For how long do we do this? Until He comes again!

### ***Are you living under the New Covenant this evening? Do you know Christ?***

The Good News is that the New Covenant is for each and every one of us who comes to Jesus in repentance and belief. That can be you this evening for the very first time if you want! Just proclaim the death of Christ on your behalf and look forward to when He comes again!

### 3. How do we get there? How do we get to sacrificial service?

#### Self-Examination and the Discipline of the Lord

**1 Corinthians 11:27-32** <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

#### Rituals Related to the Lord's Supper

- “Rivers of blood have been shed [throughout church history] over the doctrinal intricacies related to Holy Communion.” – Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, p. 192
  - This is so ironic and terribly sad since the Lord's Supper was designed to foster unity within the body of Christ. And it's become such a divisive issue.
  - This specific passage is hotly contested throughout church history.
- I mean no disrespect to those who hold these views but I do want to challenge us to think critically about the Scriptures and what they mean. Everyone and every church has good reasons for why they do what they do.
- **So, how exactly should we do the Lord's Supper?**
- How often should we take the Lord's Supper? Every Central Gathering on a Sunday morning? Once a week? Once a month? Quarterly? Annually? Every time we gather? Does that include one-on-one gatherings? Every LIFE Group?
  - Is there a rule? Does Scripture tell us how often to observe the Lord's Supper? No!!!
  - <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
  - Is there freedom to do any of the above? Yes!!! At Tallgrass Church we currently take the Lord's Supper monthly all together.
- What kind of elements should we use to take the Lord's Supper?
  - Bread – leavened or unleavened? Gluten free ok? Does it matter?
  - Cup – wine or juice? Does it have to be grape juice because that kind of looks like blood but not really? Perhaps we should use that thick berry blast healthy drink but then again that costs more. Does it matter?
- How should we take the Lord's Supper?
  - Common cup? Everyone drinks from the same cup and takes the bread separately hoping no one is sick. For some reason, all Protestants I've met are terrified of this method.
  - Intinction? Partly dipping the bread into the wine/juice before consumption. I call this the “rip and dip” method. Jesus said to drink the cup, not just dip bread in it.
  - Individual cups? You get your own chalice or vial of juice and either wafer or piece of bread to go with it. This kinda reinforces our individualistic culture.
- What order should we take the elements in? The order of the elements doesn't seem to be important.
  - Bread first, then meal, then cup—1 Cor. 11:23-26—Do we have a full meal together? Love feast!
  - Bread first, then cup—Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25
  - Cup first, then bread—Luke 22:14-23
  - No reference to the elements—John 13-17
- Who can administer the Lord's Supper? Must it be a clergy person or can a lay person give the Lord's Supper?
- Who can take the Lord's Supper?
  - Can non-believers? How do we know for sure if someone's a believer or not?

- What about Judas? I'm pretty sure Jesus knew what was in his heart when he offered him the bread and wine...
- "Judas was present at the inaugural Eucharist. John tells us that during the meal Jesus broke off a piece of bread, dipped it into the common dish and offered it to Judas (Jn 13:26). This is the traditional Middle Eastern act of friendship often used by one person to express deep friendship to another. The piece of dipped bread is usually offered with the accompanying phrase, 'Eat this for my sake.' Jesus extended this friendship ritual to Judas, who refused it and then withdrew from the table... In spite of everything, Jesus singled out Judas and extended to him a profound demonstration of costly love. Judas preferred his chosen path of deception and death." – Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, (p. 320)
- Judas ruled himself out. Jesus didn't.
- In one denomination of the church I read about 61 laws related to taking the Lord's Supper, laws which actually count me out of participation. That's difficult to experience.
- House church meeting where I couldn't take the Lord's Supper because I was a member of a church that wasn't approved. We couldn't get a hold of the pastor at the church that was approved so I couldn't take it.
- Answering these specific questions aren't nearly as important as addressing the hearts and actions of those who are showing up to the meeting!
- In fact, Paul seems tougher on the Corinthian church for their religious formalism than their immorality. If you take the Lord's Supper but don't love Jesus and who He loves than its just religious ritual that is empty and it would be better to not even meet together.
- Don't be a guy with bread in your mouth but no faith in your heart and acts of love within the body to back it up.
- Paul is not concerned with instructing the Corinthian church on the particulars of how to do the Lord's Supper. Paul is concerned with how they are treating one another. That's the important thing!
- We want to value Relationship over Ritual—Family over Formalism. And we'll seek to put in place traditions that cultivate community and participation in gatherings.
- I look forward to when Christ comes again to get rid of all cliques and bring unity among all brothers and sisters.

### ***So, what makes the Lord's Supper the Lord's Supper?***

It's not the answers to these questions of how to do the Lord's Supper. **Unity in the body makes the Lord's Supper the Lord's Supper.**

We are to gather together as Jesus gathered with His friends – to serve them!

### **1. Self-Examination**

- "...discerning the body..."
- "In the light of the broken nature of the fellowship that Paul is addressing, 'examine yourself' is related to 'discerning the body.' This surely means: 'Remember that you enter into this gathering as a part of the body of Christ that has come together for healing, restoration, proclamation and empowerment.'" – Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, p. 324
- "It is not merely a social occasion to pass the time with select friends. There is no audience watching a performance. Leaders and led are all participants. They have come together as the body of Christ to remember the saving events that created them as a body and to proclaim that salvation to the world." – Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, p. 324
- "Each worshiper is intimately connected with the other worshipers, and the struggles, joys, fears and failures of all are known and shared. All come as sinners in need of grace, and in that shared awareness there is openness to receive needed healing. The only believer who is unworthy to receive the Holy Communion is the person who thinks that he/she is worthy to receive it." – Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, p. 324

- So examine yourself. Are you recognizing your utter need for the Gospel again and again...even today?
- What does “body” mean? Discerning the “body”?
  - Discerning the body means discerning the body of Christ, the church body that you are a part of.
  - How does Paul use the word “body” throughout 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians? In reference to the body of Christ, the many members who make up the one body. You learn what the word means by reading in the context. See 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 12:12-13, 27.

## The Discipline of the Lord

- “...weak and ill, and some have died.” Weakness and illness and death are not always directly related to the discipline of God but sometimes it is. Listen, if you drink too much and/or eat too much you are going to have physical consequences.
- “But when we are judged by the Lord...” This judgment is not concerning our eternal state. This can’t refer to eternal damnation for believers. That’s impossible. Jesus died to secure your abundant life both now and forevermore...
- “...we are disciplined...” This is discipline from God.
- ***Is God disciplining you this evening?***
- If so, great! He disciplines those He loves! He’s our good, good Father. He disciplines His children to help them grow up. (Hebrews 12:6)
- Respond to this discipline from God! Discipline from our heavenly Father is good!
- Paul comes full circle here with his last words of this passage.

**1 Corinthians 11:33-34** <sup>33</sup>So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— <sup>34</sup>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.

- GOSPEL BEHAVIOR
- Wait for one another—Welcome one another (CSB)—to receive, to watch for, expect, wait for
  - Much more proactive verb here than we’re thinking. See John 5:3; 1 Cor. 11:33, 16:11; Heb. 11:10; Acts 17:16; 1 Pet. 3:20.
  - Watch for one another, expect one another—Come to the meeting looking to bless/serve!

## Instructions:

- We’ll have a time of discussion and sharing around the tables before taking the Lord’s Supper together.
- Taking the Lord’s Supper is all of the following:
  - A time of reflection on the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf
  - A celebration of the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf
  - A time of thanksgiving for the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf
  - A time of discerning the body we’re a part of and how we can serve one another
- All are equal at the Lord’s Supper. The Gospel unites people from diverse backgrounds. The thing that unites us is that we are all in relationship with our Creator based on the life, death, and resurrection of the historic person, Jesus Christ.
- If you don’t believe the Gospel, that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose from the dead three days later, then take this time to reflect on what you’ve heard this evening. Feel free to say, “Pass!” and not partake with us. That’s totally ok. We are so glad you’re here. In fact, we are more glad you’re here than you realize.
- If you are making that commitment to follow Christ right now then you are welcome to join us in proclaiming the death of Christ until He comes again.
- We’ll take the Lord’s Supper together. After everyone who is taking the Lord’s Supper at your table does so then someone please pray and give thanks to God for the sacrifice of Christ and His upcoming return. Then we’ll sing together...and then we’ll feast together on breakfast for dinner.

## In light of Jesus' broken body for you...

1. What is Jesus trying to speak to you this evening?
2. How is your loving Father disciplining you? How will you respond?
3. How can you build the body by showing up to serve? At a Central Gathering? At a LIFE Group gathering? At a one-on-one meeting? Within your family?

## Look...

- back—to Christ's death
- in—self-examination
- up—fellowship with God
- around—fellowship with one another
- forward—to Christ's return
- outward—to proclaim God's word to others

## Have someone pray!

### Showing up to Serve:

- Write down one thing that the Spirit is prompting you with right now. Because Christ came to serve you with His life, death and resurrection you can serve one another...
- **Pray** on the way to the meeting...by yourself...with a friend...with your spouse...with your kids.
- **Feed yourself with the Word** throughout the week.
- **Connect with God** in an ongoing way.
- **Invest relationally** outside of the Central Gathering, LIFE Group, Guys/Girls Group, etc.
- **Proactively consider how and who to serve.**
- Budget for meals with people.
- Ask for input from others on how you impact and interact with people in meetings.



# Chopping Block:

## Footwashing:

- What about foot washing? Why isn't that a sacrament of the church? John 13:14-15, 17 "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you... If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."
- Why do we treat the Lord's Supper as a sacrament but not the Lord's Foot Washing? Many denominations in the Christian faith do in fact have foot washing as a third ordinance in addition to the Lord's Supper and baptism. Why or why not? How do churches make decisions? Tradition!!!

## Re: Transubstantiation:

- <http://shamelesspopery.com/very-early-church-fathers-on-the-eucharist/>
- Justin Martyr—<https://www.wordonfire.org/resources/blog/st-justin-martyr-on-the-eucharist-and-the-ancient-mass/4780/>
- (For example, in the 1983 Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church, Book IV ((The Sanctifying Office of the Church)) there are 61 rules related to the celebration of the Eucharist. That is a lot of things to get right to take this thing properly. These rules are not in the Scriptures at all. The Lord's Supper is a meal where we remember Jesus and His work. Let's not work too hard at it...)
- **What's the history of the Lord's Supper?**
  - "For the early Christians, the Lord's Supper was a festive communal meal. The mood was one of celebration and joy. When believers gathered for the meal, they broke the bread and passed it around. Then they ate their meal, which then concluded after the cup was passed around. The Lord's Supper was essentially a Christian banquet. And there was no clergyman to officiate." – Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, p. 192
  - "Today, tradition has forced us to take the Supper as a tongue-tickling thimble of grape juice and a tiny, tasteless bite-size cracker. The Supper is often taken in an atmosphere of solemnity. We are told to remember the horrors of our Lord's death and to reflect on our sins. In addition, tradition has taught us that taking the Lord's Supper can be a dangerous thing. (1 Cor. 11:27-33)" – Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, p. 192
  - "The Love Feast" – Early Christians celebrated the "love feast." They took the bread and cup in the context of this festive meal.
  - Around the time of Tertullian (church leader who died in 225 AD), the bread and cup began to be separated from the meal. Eventually the love feast was prohibited among Christians.
  - With the meal gone, the terms *breaking of bread* and *Lord's Supper* also went away and were replaced with *Eucharist*.
  - Irenaeus (church leader who died around 200 AD) was the first to call the bread and cup an offering instead of something received. It began being called the "offering" or "sacrifice."
  - By the fourth and fifth centuries this "sacrifice" was now a somber event marked by an increasing sense of awe and dread.
  - The usage of the word "body" changed in Christian literature.
    - The church
    - The bread of the Eucharist
  - I'm not really addressing why this happened but just the trajectory through history...
  - The church began teaching that the bread and wine literally becomes the body and blood of Jesus. Transubstantiation started setting in. (Why? Superstition and power and control perhaps?)
  - This led to greater fear. Don't screw this up! You don't want to drop Jesus' body or spill Jesus' blood.
- What happens to the bread and wine or juice?

- By the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century a full blown view of transubstantiation had set in on the church.
- Transubstantiation? The bread and wine literally becomes the body and blood of Jesus. However, it still smells and tastes like bread and wine. This is a mystery that cannot be explained but it happens.
  - Is Jesus re-sacrificed?
  - Did Jesus drink His own blood and eat His own body at the Last Supper?
  - Will He drink His own blood and eat His own body in the future?
  - Are we drinking each other's blood and eating each other because we too are part of the body of Christ?
- In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Reformation began to happen...
- Consubstantiation? The bread and wine retain their physical properties but also add the spiritual presence of Jesus. Martin Luther said that Christ's body and blood are present "in, with and under" the forms of bread and wine. There were various forms of this viewpoint.
- Memorialism? Finally, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), leader of the Reformation in Switzerland) stepped in and said, "This is my body..." "Is" means "signifies" not literally "is." "Do this in remembrance of me."
  - I am the Bread of Life (John 6:35)
  - I am the Light of the World (John 8:12)
  - I am the Gate (John 10:9)
  - I am the Good Shepherd (John 10:11)
  - I am the Vine (John 15:5)
- The Reformers discarded the superstition of transubstantiation but continued to embrace the form of the Lord's Supper. In other words, the Reformers didn't reform the church enough. Why not take the Lord's Supper back into the home around the communal meal?
  - **The Reformers didn't reform the form of the Lord's Supper enough!**
  - We're still left with a ritual that doesn't move us towards one another with the relational message of the Gospel...
  - So examine yourself.
  - *Do you discern the body of Christ that you are a part of?*

## Then. Now. Next. A Biblical Vision of the Church, the Kingdom, and the Future

By Dr. David McDonald

- "The Moravians were effective missionaries, mainly due to their close knit communal atmosphere and their "love feasts," which feature entertaining music and culinary treats like sticky buns, milky tea, and good beer. That sounds like a decent life to me, the kind Jesus described in John 10 as 'life more abundant,' or as I like to think of it, the best quality of life now and forever more." (p. 73)
- "...the communion table was never meant to be a thimble-full of grace, but a second helping of friendship with God among his people." (p. 74)

## ***Pagan Christianity? Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices***

By Frank Viola and George Barna

Chapter 9—Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Diluting the Sacraments

The Lord's Supper (p. 192)

- "Rivers of blood have been shed at the hands of Protestant and Catholic Christians alike over the doctrinal intricacies related to Holy Communion. The Lord's Supper, once precious and living, became the center of theological debate for centuries. Tragically, it moved from a dramatic and concrete picture of Christ's body

and blood to a study in abstract and metaphysical thought.” – Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, p. 192

- “For the early Christians, the Lord’s Supper was a festive communal meal. The mood was one of celebration and joy. When believers gathered for the meal, they broke the bread and passed it around. Then they ate their meal, which then concluded after the cup was passed around. The Lord’s Supper was essentially a Christian banquet. And there was no clergyman to officiate.” – Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, p. 192
- “Today, tradition has forced us to take the Supper as a tongue-tickling thimble of grape juice and a tiny, tasteless bite-size cracker. The Supper is often taken in an atmosphere of solemnity. We are told to remember the horrors of our Lord’s death and to reflect on our sins. In addition, tradition has taught us that taking the Lord’s Supper can be a dangerous thing. (1 Cor. 11:27-33)” – Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, p. 192

Truncating the Meal (p. 193)

- “But around the time of Tertullian, the bread and the cup began to be separated from the meal, By the late second century, this separation was complete.” (p. 193)
- “With the abandonment of the meal, the terms *breaking bread* and *Lord’s Supper* disappeared. The common term for the now truncated ritual (just the bread and the cup) was the *Eucharist* (means ‘thanksgiving’). Irenaeus (130-200) was one of the first to call the bread and cup an offering. After him, it began to be called the ‘offering’ or ‘sacrifice.’” (p. 193)
- “Previously, Christian writers used the word *body* to refer to one of three things: (1) the physical body of Jesus, (2) the church, or (3) the bread of the Eucharist. The early church fathers saw the church as a faith community that identified itself by the breaking of bread. But by the tenth century, there was a shift in thinking and language. The word *body* was no longer used to refer to the church. It was only used to refer to the Lord’s physical body or the bread of the Eucharist.” (p. 194-195)
- “Consequently, the Lord’s Supper became far removed from the idea of the church coming together to celebrate the breaking of bread. The vocabulary change reflected this practice. The Eucharist had ceased to be part of a joyful communal meal but came to be viewed as sacred on its own—even as it sat on the table. It became shrouded in a religious mist. Viewed with awe, it was taken with glumness by the priest and completely removed from the communal nature of the ekklesia.” (p. 195)
- “All of these factors gave rise to the doctrine of transubstantiation. In the fourth century, the belief that the bread and wine changed into the Lord’s actual body and blood was explicit. Transubstantiation, however, was the doctrine that gave a theological explanation of how that change occurred. (This doctrine was worked out from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries.)” (p. 195)
- “While contemporary Protestant Christians have discarded the Catholic *notion* that the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice, they have continued to embrace the Catholic *practice* of the Supper.” (p. 195)

Summary (p. 196)

- “As one scholar (Barclay) put it, ‘It is not in doubt that the Lord’s Supper began as a family meal or a meal of friends in a private house...the Lord’s Supper moved from being a real meal into being a symbolic meal...the Lord’s Supper moved from bare simplicity to elaborate splendor...the celebration of the Lord’s Supper moved from being a lay function to a priestly function. In the New Testament itself, there is no indication that it was a special privilege or duty of anyone to lead the worshipping fellowship in the Lord’s Supper.’” (p. 197)
- “When Israel had departed from God’s original thought, the prophet cried: ‘Thus says the LORD, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls”’ (Jeremiah 6:16, NASB). In the same way, can we shun the vain traditions of men and return to the ancient paths...those holy traditions that were given to us by Jesus Christ and His apostles?” (p. 197)

## ***Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes***

By Kenneth Bailey

- “Judas was present at the inaugural Eucharist. John tells us that during the meal Jesus broke off a piece of bread, dipped it into the common dish and offered it to Judas (Jn 13:26). This is the traditional Middle Eastern act of friendship often used by one person to express deep friendship to another. The piece of dipped bread is usually offered with the accompanying phrase, ‘Eat this for my sake.’ Jesus extended this friendship ritual to Judas, who refused it and then withdrew from the table. John reports ominously ‘and it was night’ (Jn 13:30); indeed it was! In spite of everything, Jesus singled out Judas and extended to him a profound demonstration of costly love. Judas preferred his chosen path of deception and death.” (p. 320)
- “In the light of the broken nature of the fellowship that Paul is addressing, ‘examine yourself’ is related to ‘discerning the body.’ This surely means: ‘Remember that you enter into this gathering as a part of the body of Christ that has come together for healing, restoration, proclamation and empowerment.’ Paul’s readers were asked to remember that this is not one more Greek drinking party.” – Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, p. 324
- “It is not merely a social occasion to pass the time with select friends. There is no audience watching a performance. Leaders and led are all participants. They have come together as the body of Christ to remember the saving events that created them as a body and to proclaim that salvation to the world.” – Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, p. 324
- “Each worshiper is intimately connected with the other worshipers, and the struggles, joys, fears and failures of all are known and shared. All come as sinners in need of grace, and in that shared awareness there is openness to receive needed healing. The only believer who is unworthy to receive the Holy Communion is the person who thinks that he/she is worthy to receive it.” – Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, p. 324

## **Life Together**

By Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- “It is not simply to be taken for granted that the Christian has the privilege of living among other Christians. Jesus Christ lived in the midst of his enemies. At the end all his disciples deserted him. On the Cross he was utterly alone, surrounded by evildoers and mockers. For this cause he had come, to bring peace to the enemies of God. So the Christian, too, belongs not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes. There is his commission, his work. ‘The Kingdom is to be in the midst of your enemies. And he who will not suffer this does not want to be of the Kingdom of Christ; he wants to be among friends, to sit among roses and lilies, not with the bad people but the devout people. O you blasphemers and betrayers of Christ! If Christ had done what you are doing who would ever have been spared?’ (Luther).” (pp. 17-18)
- “‘I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries’ (Zech. 10:9). According to God’s will Christendom is a scattered people, scattered like seed ‘into all the kingdoms of the earth’ (Deut. 28:25). That is its curse and its promise. God’s people must dwell in far countries among the unbelievers, but it will be the seed of the Kingdom of God in all the world.” (p. 18)
- “The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer.” (p. 19)
- “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity.” (p. 21)
- “The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother’s is sure. And that also clarifies the goal of all Christian community: they meet one another as bringers of the message of salvation. As such, God permits them to meet together and gives them community. Their fellowship is founded solely upon Jesus Christ and this ‘alien righteousness.’ All we can say, therefore, is: the community of Christians springs solely from the Biblical and Reformation message of the justification of man through grace alone; this alone is the basis of the longing of Christians for one another.” (p. 23)

- “Those who love their dream of a Christian community more than they love the Christian community itself become destroyers of that Christian community even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest and sacrificial. God hates this wishful dreaming because it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. Those who dream of this idolized community demand that it be fulfilled by God, by others and by themselves. They enter the community of Christians with their demands set up by their own law, and judge one another and God accordingly. It is not we who build. Christ builds the church. Whoever is mindful to build the church is surely well on the way to destroying it, for he will build a temple to idols without wishing or knowing it. We must confess he builds. We must proclaim, he builds. We must pray to him, and he will build. We do not know his plan. We cannot see whether he is building or pulling down. It may be that the times which by human standards are the times of collapse are for him the great times of construction. It may be that the times which from a human point are great times for the church are times when it’s pulled down. It is a great comfort which Jesus gives to his church. You confess, preach, bear witness to me, and I alone will build where it pleases me. Do not meddle in what is not your providence. Do what is given to you, and do it well, and you will have done enough.... Live together in the forgiveness of your sins. Forgive each other every day from the bottom of your hearts.”
- “God hates visionary dreaming; it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own law, and judges the brethren and God Himself accordingly. He stands adamant, a living reproach to all others in the circle of brethren. He acts as if he is the creator of Christian community, as if his dream binds men together. When things do not go his way, he calls the effort a failure. When his ideal picture is destroyed, he sees the community going to smash. So he becomes, first an accuser of his brethren, then an accuser of God, and finally the despairing accuser of himself.” (pp. 27-28)
- “Even when sin and misunderstanding burden the communal life, is not the sinning brother still a brother, with whom I, too, stand under the Word of Christ? Will not his sin be a constant occasion for me to give thanks that both of us may live in the forgiving love of God in Christ Jesus? Thus the very hour of disillusionment with my brother becomes incomparable salutary, because it so thoroughly teaches me that neither of us can ever live by our own words and deeds, but only by that one Word and Deed which really binds us together—the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. When the morning mists of dreams vanish, then dawns the bright day of Christian fellowship.” (p. 28)
- “A pastor should not complain about his congregation, certainly never to other people, but also not to God. A congregation has not been entrusted to him in order that he should become its accuser before God and men.” (p. 29)
- “When a person becomes alienated from a Christian community in which he has been placed and begins to raise complaints about it, he had better examine himself first to see whether the trouble is not due to his wish dream that should be shattered by God; and if this be the case, let him thank God for leading him into this predicament.” (p. 30)
- “Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate. The more clearly we learn to recognize that the ground and strength and promise of all our fellowship is in Jesus Christ alone, the more serenely shall we think of our fellowship and pray and hope for it.” (p. 30)
- “Because spiritual love does not desire (eros) but rather serves, it loves an enemy as a brother. It originates neither in the brother nor in the enemy but in Christ and his Word. Human love can never understand spiritual love, for spiritual love is from above; it is something completely strange, new, and incomprehensible to all earthly love.” (p. 35)
- “Speak to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...” (p. 59)
- “Let him who cannot be alone beware of community... Let him who is not in community beware of being alone.” (p. 77)

### Quotes related to John 13:34-35:

Bruce Milne, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of John*

- “This commandment is *new*, not because it is intrinsically different from the law of love of the Old Testament. Nor is it new because of Jesus’ redefining of ‘neighbour’ (Lk. 10:29-37), though that is certainly significant. The ‘newness’ lies rather in its being the law of the ‘new covenant’ which Jesus is to establish through his death, and which he has so recently proclaimed during the supper they have shared. The new covenant brings with it the new life in the Holy Spirit which will as never before enable the fulfilling of the law. It is ‘new’ also in the sheer depth and demand of the summons to love which Jesus issues. In the light of the cross all other descriptions and definitions of love pale into insignificance. Here indeed is love ‘so amazing, so divine’ (Isaac Watts). Yet according to Jesus this is the norm for Christian community.” – Bruce Milne, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of John*, 206.
- “We also note *the evangelistic power of love*. A loving community, says Jesus, is the visible authentication of the gospel. Love is the ‘final apologetic’ (Francis Schaeffer). Jesus places no limit on this demonstration; *all* will recognize and know it. Unlike other associations which are based upon common interest or outlook, the church is to be marked by an inclusiveness which echoes the universal appeal of Jesus. It is designated as a community which welcomes all people, irrespective of background, age, gender, colour, moral history, social status, influence, intelligence, religious background or the lack of it. To love like Jesus is to love inclusively, indiscriminately and universally. When that kind of love flows within a congregation the world will take note that ‘they have been with Jesus’. Nor need this standard daunt us. Tertullian reported in the late second century the comment of the pagans in his day: ‘Behold, how these Christians love each other! How ready they are to die for each other!’ Their mutual love was the magnet which drew the pagan multitudes to Christ. It has the potential to do so still.” – Bruce Milne, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of John*, 206-207.
  - If you want to love your neighbor well then love your brother and sister in Christ well. That’s how your neighbor will know you follow Jesus.

#### D.A. Carson, *John*

- “The new command is simple enough for a toddler to memorize and appreciate, profound enough that the most mature believers are repeatedly embarrassed at how poorly they comprehend it and put it into practice: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. The standard of comparison is Jesus’ love (cf. v. 1), just exemplified in the footwashing (cf. vv. 12-17); but since the footwashing points to his death (vv. 6-10), these same disciples but a few days later would begin to appreciate a standard of love they would explore throughout their pilgrimage. The more we recognize the depth of our own sin, the more we recognize the love of the Saviour; the more we appreciate the love of the Saviour, the higher his standard appears; the higher his standard appears, the more we recognize in our selfishness, our innate self-centredness, the depth of our own sin.” – D.A. Carson, *John*, 484.

#### Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: John*

- “Jesus’ ‘new command’ to his followers to love each other as he has loved them constitutes the third major topic. This will be the mark of his disciples (cf. Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 8:37; Rev. 1:5). The command to love one’s neighbor was not new. Love within the community was also highly regarded at Qumran (e.g., 1QS 1:10; cf. Josephus, J.W. 2.8.2§119), and neighbor love was emphasized by the first-century rabbi Hillel. What was new was Jesus’ command for his disciples to love one another as he has loved them—laying down their lives. This rule of self-sacrificial, self-giving, selfless love, a unique quality of love inspired by Jesus’ own love for the disciples, will serve as the foundational ethic for the new messianic community.” – Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), pp 423-424.

#### D.A. Carson, The Supremacy of Christ and Love in a Postmodern World at the Desiring God 2006 National Conference

- The “world” is all that is anarchic in the human domain, all that rebels against God. For God to love this world with the love that he has for his eternal Son is simply past finding out. The love of the Son for the Father, though we understand so little of the Trinity, is comprehensible enough. But for Jesus to say to us, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my

disciples, if you love one another” (13:34–35) — this is simultaneously incomprehensible and incalculably wonderful. We fall at his feet in adoration and worship; we are hushed, convicted, lifted up; we know ourselves to be immeasurably privileged, nothing other (to use Paul’s expression) than the sons of God by adoption.

- Doubtless many who read these lines are aware that much contemporary scholarship on John’s Gospel views this Gospel as irremediably sectarian. The dominant reason that is advanced is this: In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus’ disciples are told to love their enemies (Matthew 5:44), while here in John they are told to love each other, and the enemies are not mentioned. Surely (it is argued) this reflects a community that has turned in on itself, a community that must therefore be labeled sectarian. But since our love for one another within the church is to be modeled on the intra-Trinitarian love of God, would anyone be so bold as to suggest that God’s intra-Trinitarian love is sectarian? Contemporary sociological categories come nowhere near understanding what Jesus says in this Gospel.
- Or consider what many ecumenical voices say about John 17. These voices tend to read a selection of lines from this chapter, and then say that if we do not sign on to the ecumenical movement, bury all differences of doctrine, and simply love each other for Jesus’ sake, Jesus’ prayer will never be answered. We have an obligation, they say, to ensure that Jesus’ prayer is answered, “that they may be one.” Otherwise Jesus’ himself is frustrated by unanswered prayer. Such exhortations rarely wrestle with what this chapter says about God, about Christ, about Christ’s mission, about the place this chapter has on the way to the cross, resurrection, and vindication of the Son, about the nature of the love between the Father and the Son.
- Moreover, Christians reading these words toward the end of the first century, when this Gospel started to circulate, were not wringing their hands and wondering how they could help poor old Jesus by encouraging the ecumenical movement along. They were exuberantly thanking God that Jesus’ prayer was being fulfilled before their eyes, as men and women were being converted from many tribes and tongues and peoples and languages, and were loving one another for Jesus’ sake.
- Of course, this love is still far from perfect: nothing in these dimensions is perfect until the consummation. But Jesus’ glorious prayer “that they may be one” is manifestly being answered to a superlative degree in the confessional church around the world today, as Christians bask in God’s love and understand that all of our love is but a grace-driven response to the intra-Trinitarian love of God which has issued in the glorification of the Son by means of the cross, in the Son’s perfect obedience to his Father, all the way to the cross.
- Or what shall we make of postmodern voices that, in the name of love, deny the exclusive role that Jesus plays in mediating God’s love to us? Will their siren tones increase love, or even our understanding of love? Sadly, no: they merely restore idolatry under a new guise. These voices are among the least tempered and least loving of our time, especially with those who do not agree with their vision.
- Christian love is anchored in the Godhead, anchored in eternity, anchored in Christ, anchored in the cross. Other New Testament Christians, apart from the initial readers of the Gospel of John, understood these things, of course. “I live by faith in the Son of God,” Paul writes — and then he cannot restrain himself, but adds, “who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Again, we read, “We love, because he first loved us” (compare 1 John 4:7–12).