

Starting Off on the Right Foot
Essential Commitments of a God-honoring Church
Committed to Community
1 Cor 11:17-34

Community is talked about a lot these days; Question is, is it . . .
Authentic or Artificial? Real or Imaginary? Fact or Facade? Genuine or Bogus?

What is community?

Fellowship we have in the church, the body of Christ
Belonging together in mutual partnership – Act 2:42
Family; Bond; Team mentality; Tie we have because the HS is in us and among us

Paul addresses the lack of community in Corinth, in 1 Cor 11:17-34
Because of their lack of love for one another, and Paul's indictment of it . . .
We're able to determine what it means to be committed to community
And how to be committed to community in our day, our church

I'm committed to community when I . . .

Set aside personal preferences (v 17-19)

This is the last thing the church in Corinth did

17 – *But in the following instructions I do not commend you*

I commend you in living out your roles as men and women in marriage and in the church, but not when it comes to this stuff

17 – *for the worse*

You're detracting from the unity/community you should have, instead of building on it

18 – *there are divisions among you*

Divisions regarding who they were going to follow and who they were going to associate with

They had personal preferences for who was the best teacher, the most charismatic leader, who had it going on – threatened to consume them (1 Cor 1:10-13)

They got caught up in the personalities of man instead of the person of Christ

Here, the divisions were along economic lines

The wealthy were oblivious to the plight of the poor

19 – *there must be factions among you . . .*

What other explanation would there be for the divisions?

Nothing like disagreement to highlight the sharp contrast between genuine believers and those who are faking it; those mature and those immature

When disagreements arise – real, genuine believers will always rise to the top

Though God uses even divisions to refine his people, it's little consolation for the lack of community

We need to set aside personal preferences for the sake of unity in our church

Petty ones like . . .

Color of the carpet; Choir robes or not; Equal number of boys/girls toys in the children's ministry

Serious ones like . . .

Preferences based on looks, education, dress, perceived income

Some of personal preferences come from who we are

Others come from great experiences in the past and wanting to duplicate them

Others come from bad experiences that we project on everybody else in our desperation to avoid them

Not all personal preferences are bad in and of themselves, but if they are a barrier to authentic community among us, we need to set them aside

One of the tangible ways we commit to community at Harvest, is through membership

Bible doesn't say much about formally expressing our commitment to community

When done publicly, it solidifies and deepens that commitment and love for one another

Such a genuine expression of commitment requires that we set aside personal preferences for the sake of the body and the gospel we proclaim

Think of others first (v 20-22)

20 – *it is not the Lord's supper you are eating*

I don't know what *you* think you're eating, but it's definitely *not* the Lord's Supper

The LS I told you about was intended to be an intimate time of unity/bonding

Backs up his rebuke with several reasons . . .

21a – *Each one goes ahead with his own meal*

They could have cared less about anybody/anything else; Wanted to stuff their bellies

They were *selfish*

21b – *One goes hungry, another gets drunk*

Did their own thing; Basically saying to each other – I don't care about you!

They were *self-centered*

22 – *What!* – Are you kidding me?! Are you out of your mind?!

You have a place (home) and the means to satisfy your hunger . . .

You don't need to satisfy it at the expense of others

22 – *do you despise the church of God?*

You show so little respect for God's people and place of worship that you don't think twice about humiliating or shaming those who have less than you

Less money, less biblical knowledge, less spiritual maturity

Mature believers speak with little sensitivity for the new, less knowledgeable believer

Our commitment to community shows its true colors in how we treat others

Starts with being intentional about noticing people

We're in an auditorium, yes – but we don't have to act like it

It's not a movie theatre/play where you never speak to or look at the person next to you

Lonely in Church (adapted) – H.B. London, Jr.

Last Sunday, I visited a church in our community for the first time. I didn't know anyone, I felt like a stranger, and it was scary. After getting inside and enduring the suspicious glances of regulars, I passed up several rows with open seats due to a few over-protective people seated on the aisle, and finally found one in the middle of a row near another lonely soul. I managed to reach my seat having made no eye contact with anyone.

At the appropriate time, we were encouraged to greet those in our vicinity (including the other lonely person) — limp handshakes all around. I was inundated with announcements I had already read, the pastor preached, we sang again, and then the final prayer. I waited my turn for the aisle to clear, and then walked to my automobile wondering what had just happened. No one had said a word to me. Lonely in a crowd is how I felt.

When we're committed to community, we think of others first

Remember what it's all about (v23-26)

I've already told you about this!

It's time to re-focus and get this community this right

To remember what this church thing is all about in the first place

24 – *This is my body which is for you*

This broken piece of bread *represents/symbolizes* the sacrifice of my body, for your sake

25 – *This cup is the new covenant in my blood*

This cup *represents* the salvation that my shed blood, the sacrifice of my life, secured for you

Some say that the elements are not symbolic, but actually *become* Christ's body and blood

Others, that the elements *contain* Christ's body and blood

4 Reasons the elements are symbolic

1. It's the most *natural* sense of the statement

When he first said it, he was holding the bread in his hand, distinct from his physical body – the reasonable way to take that is symbolic

Like holding up a picture of myself and saying, "This is me" (Show license)

2. It's the most *consistent* way to interpret the passage

Nobody believes the *cup* is the actual new covenant (our salvation)

If consistent with the literal interpretation of the previous statement, you would

Rather, the cup represents the wine, which represents the blood of Jesus that secured the new covenant/our salvation, that we enjoy through faith

3. Jesus said similar things that were clearly symbolic in nature

I am the vine (Jn 15:5); *I am the door of the sheep* (Jn 10:7)

I am the living bread which came down from heaven (Jn 6:51)

4. Jesus was explicit that his words were spiritual, not literal

Regarding the eating of his flesh/drinking of his blood for eternal life, he says . . .

The words that I have spoken to you are spirit – Jn 6:63

Not only are the elements symbolic, but the *act* of taking them does not sanctify/save you – that's works

There's no automatic/magical benefit from eating and drinking

There IS a deepening of your relationship with Christ/other believers (1 Cor 10:16b-17)

Because when we're committed to community and remember what it's all about, we . . .

Reflect on Christ's sacrifice for our sins – not just an intellectual recalling of events, but a heart ache/feeling for what happened

Savor the relationship with Christ himself – just as you savor the elements

Treasure the bond with each another in our church

Proclaim the essence of the gospel – Christ died for our sins, rose again, and is coming again to receive us unto himself

We're going to do exactly that in a few minutes

But in order to remember in a God-honoring way, we need to examine our lives for sin

Examine my life for sin (v 27-34)

Why? Because wrong participation brings discipline and judgment from God, and that affects all of us – we all hurt, we're less effective

Paul talks about the implications of a lack of commitment to community . . .

27 – *unworthy manner*

In a way that your heart, motives, or life don't match the holiness of the act

This is why it's for believers only

27 – *profaning the body and blood of the Lord*

Treating something that is holy and sacred, as common

Shows disrespect and irreverence toward Christ's sacrifice; It's trivial; No big deal

28 – *examine*

Assess the purity of your heart; Measure the godliness of your conduct

29 – *discerning the body*

Recognizing your bond with your brothers and sisters in Christ

Being sensitive to their lives and situations

Putting them first despite your personal preferences

29 – *judgment* – punishment

30 – *many of you are weak or ill, and some have died*

Your lack of commitment to community has serious, tangible ramifications

31 – *judged ourselves truly*

Honestly evaluated our lives for sin and righteousness

32 – *disciplined* – punished for the purpose of righteousness, growth, and maturity

Not *condemned* for the purpose of death, banishment

That's grace!

Do you see what's at risk here when we're not committed to purity in our church?

Judgment/Discipline; Health/Well-being

This isn't some voodoo stuff – God's not waiting to poke us with the needles of sickness out of glee

But he is so passionate about his own glory and honor as shown through our commitment to community, that he will stop at nothing, not even death, to bring it about

Lord's Supper

As you come to the Lord's table this morning, make sure you're committed to community

Keep in mind – it's a table of grace

God doesn't expect you to come perfect, he expects you to come clean

Feeling unworthy is the point! It should make you run TO the table, not away from it

If you've embraced Jesus as your Savior, if he is Lord of your life – this is for you

Examine your life/heart for sin
Reflect on Christ's sacrifice for your sins
Savor your relationship with him
Treasure the bond with one another here at Harvest

If haven't confessed your sin to Jesus and embraced his gift of life forever and life to the full, what are you waiting for?
Pray now; embrace him and the forgiveness he offers

If you're not there yet, if you haven't made a commitment to follow Jesus as Lord of your life, let the bread and cup pass
Otherwise, by participating, you're saying something *outwardly* that is not true
inwardly – participating in an *unworthy manner*
Treating something holy and sacred, as common
Risk bringing judgment on yourself

HOW
Right after we pray, ushers are going to pass out elements while the worship team plays
Spend some time before the Lord
When you feel led, take the bread on your own, as a testimony of your individual and personal relationship with Jesus, and then join the worship team in singing
Then we'll take the cup together as a testimony of the community we have in Christ

PRAY
Stir our hearts and reveal sin
Impress on us your grace, mercy, steadfast love, and forgiveness
Sensitize us to your Holy Spirit
(Lead a prayer of salvation)