

LEADING COMMUNION IN SMALL GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

Nowhere is the power and glory of God seen more clearly than in the cross. For it was on the cross the glory of God was displayed. This is why we praise Him. This is what we remember. One of the great joys of remembering the cross is the observance of communion. The Lord's Supper stands as a sign of our continuing fellowship with Christ. It is a time of remembering Christ's death and the benefits His death brought to all who believe. It is a celebration of unity and an affirmation of our faith. Communion is a time that we as people of the cross come to revere and honor the power and glory of the cross.

A portion of torn bread—to the first-century Jew, it represented the Exodus. In Jesus' hands, the bread became a symbol of the broken body of the Messiah. God incarnate—"in the flesh". The Son of God takes human form in the God-man, Jesus Christ. Two distinct natures, divine and human, united in one Person. The broken bread signifies Christ, the Bread of Life.

"This is my body...." Consider the magnitude of this idea. God incarcerating Himself in flesh and bones. The invisible made visible—the untouchable touchable. God larger than the universe wraps himself in a woman's womb. Creator of the universe depends on the care of a young girl. God sleeps in a cradle. He becomes weak, tired, humbled, hated. The All-Powerful becomes breakable.

How does considering the Son of God's choice affect your walk with Christ? How do you respond to the humility of Christ's choice? How will His choice change choices in your life this week?

"This is my body which is broken...." This is a paradox we cannot fully understand in this age and perhaps will not through all eternity. In religions of Jesus' day the thought of a god becoming human was repugnant, contrary to any concept of the divine. Yet for Christianity, the incarnation is by far the most amazing miracle in the entire Bible. The fact that the infinite, eternal Son of God could or even would Himself take on human nature remains the most profound mystery in the entire universe.

What does Jesus' choice to become a human being reveal about God's character? How does Jesus' willingness to be broken change your perception of suffering?

"This is my body which is broken for you...." In His death, Jesus experienced every aspect of the curse of sin. Our disease-laden bodies carry the signature of sin. Just think of the multitudes that daily fight terrible disease. From birth we each have carried the marks of sin in our body. The penalty of sin continues to strike our bodies, and eventually results in death. In order for Christ to conquer this penalty of sin, His body was broken: beaten, scourged, abused, pierced with nails and a speared.

How do you experience sin affecting your body? What temptations do you struggle with in your body as a result of sin (gluttony, lust, covetousness, etc...)? How have you seen Christ's redeeming atonement give you victory over the weakness of your flesh?

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It's "for you"—two of the most beautiful words in all Scripture. Jesus gave His body, His entire life, for you. He became a man for you; He suffered for you; He died for you—not for Himself, but for you.

Philippians 2:5 tells us that we should "have this mind" of humility. Does your life evidence this kind of humility? What attitudes and/or actions need to change in your life in order to "have this same mind" of humility?

God's Word on Incarnation:

1. Read John 1:14. Is there something that surprises you about Jesus coming to earth? What is comforting or encouraging about God taking on human form?

2. Read Colossians 1:19-23. Notice the connection between Christ's deity and His humanity. What is the purpose of Christ's sacrifice?

3. Read Hebrews 2:17-18. Why is Jesus the perfect High Priest for us?

4. Read Romans 8:1-4, 20-23. What perspective does this give you about Christ's atoning sacrifice? How do these truths affect your Christian walk?

*"If the [incarnation] happened, it was the central event in the history of the earth."
-C.S. Lewis, Miracles, p. 108.*

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MEDITATING ON THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Silence and meditation are an important part of the Christian life. Meditation is an opportunity to quiet your life in order to contemplate the important things in life. Like Joe said, we tend to constantly fill our mind and 'keep the engine running.' Meditation is an act of worship. It is a discipline of withdrawing to privacy for spiritual purposes. It is the opportunity to be alone with God.

Don't forget to bring the necessary tools. Bring your heart that God might purify it. Bring your head that God might challenge it. Bring your voice that God might receive your praise. Come before the Lord in stillness.

Suffering. "before I suffer..."

Meditate on Hebrews 12:1-3

Ask God to bring sin in your life to your mind and bring it to Him knowing that He will forgive and restore.

Meditate on 2 Corinthians 4:11-18

Incarnation. "this is my body broken for you..."

Meditate on Isaiah 53:1-6 and 1 Peter 2:24-25

Thank the Lord for the amazing sacrifice that He has made for you...meditate on how brutally His body was broken...for you.

Meditate on 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 51-57

Covenant. "the new covenant in my blood..."

Meditate on Jeremiah 31:31-34

Pray that God will bring to your mind ways that you could express your love back to Him in obedience and service.

Meditate on Hebrews 12:18-24

Helpful Hints to Meditating

1. Schedule a specific time to meditate. Be purposeful about a meditation time. Allot enough time in your schedule to have a quality time to contemplate.
2. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. We all know how distractions can quickly arise in our home, office, and even the car. Whether it is a closet, a local park, or the church prayer room, locate a place of silence.
3. Concentrate on the topic. Don't let the distractions of tasks or other thoughts divert you from your purpose of stopping and meditating.
4. Focus on Christ and the Word. Pray passages of Scripture back to God.
5. Bring a notebook. Journaling is an excellent tool to maintain your train of thought.
6. Take one minute retreats. Sometimes you can't get 30 minutes. But you can stop what you're doing in the middle of a hectic day and concentrate on Scripture for one minute of silence. In those few seconds of silence, look to Christ and listen for the Spirit.