



EKKLESIA

Swartz FBC Leader Discussion Guide



SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

SERIES: Ekklesia

TITLE: The Church and Communion

CIT: Communion is the fellowship of Christ with His people and the unity of His people.

SUMMARY

The New American Commentary on 1 Corinthians does a great job of helping us understand what is going on in this moment in chapter 11:17-34.

“Paul responds to a report of divisions among the Corinthians in their observance of the Lord’s Supper that ran along socio-economic lines. This is the third time in the letter that Paul specifically relates his instructions to oral reports (cf. 1:10–17; 5:1–13). As noted in the introduction to 11:2–14:40, Paul responds to this issue here in the letter for thematic reasons that have to do with concerns regarding the assembled congregation. Paul’s assertion that he has no praise for them (11:17, 22) stands in stark contrast to the praise offered in 11:2 for holding fast to cherished traditions. As in 11:2, Paul recounts a tradition he delivered to them, the Lord’s Supper (11:23–25), but he cannot praise them in light of their behavior that completely contradicted the purpose of the meal (11:18–22), which proclaims Jesus’ death for others (11:26). As in 11:2–16 Paul’s instructions continue to address issues of honor and shame. In 11:2–16 the core issue was bringing shame rather than glory to one’s respective spiritual head. In 11:17–22 the issue is behavior that brings shame on the poor. Paul cannot praise them for behavior that does not imitate Christ (11:1). Since their gatherings did not contribute to the mutual edification of the body, Paul scolds that their “meetings do more harm than good” (11:17). Their factious behavior, which discriminated against the poor, was the very opposite of the essence of the meaning of the meal, the very antithesis of love for one another. Such behavior shows contempt for the church of God (11:22). Paul’s response falls into three parts: (1) He sharply denounces their abuse of others at what they call the Lord’s meal (11:17–22), (2) he recounts the received tradition of the Lord’s Supper (11:23–26), and (3) he instructs the Corinthians to eat the supper in a worthy manner by properly discerning the Lord’s body (11:27–34).”¹

TEXT

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,^[a] 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^[a] you. Do this in remembrance of me."^[a] 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.^[a] ³¹ But if we judged^[a] ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined^[a] so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³ So then, my brothers,^[a] when you come together to eat, wait for^[a] 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.

Head / Heart / Hands

- What does this text teach me?
- What does it tell me to feel?
- What does it tell me to do?

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1. COMMUNION EXPRESSES WHAT WE BELIEVE.

- What is the purpose of communion for the individual and the gathered church?
- What was the problem Paul was addressing in the Corinthian church?
- How is communion (like baptism) a physical representation of an invisible reality?
- Why is it important to participate in communion with the right mind and heart?
- How does communion visibly express what we believe?

Application Question: Is the church your family?

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2. COMMUNION FUELS GOSPEL CENTRALITY.

- What is Gospel Centrality? Why is it important?
- How does weekly communion help us to keep our focus on Christ and Him crucified?
- How does communion help to consistently enhance our relationship with Jesus?
- What is the sermon we preach as we participate in communion? (See verse 26)

Application Question: What message is your life preaching?

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3. COMMUNION REMINDS US THAT THE GOAL IS REPENTANCE, NOT PERFORMANCE.

- What is the difference between repentance and performance? Why is this distinction important?
- Why is self-examination important?
- Why is self-examination in the context of the local church with accountability from others important?
- What is the role of grace in our self-examination?
- How do we help others self-examine with Biblical accountability in a way that builds them up and does not tear them down?

Application Question: Am I repenting or merely trying to perform?

CONCLUSION: COMMUNION REMINDS US TO WELCOME EACH OTHER BECAUSE IN THE GOSPEL, GOD HAS WELCOMED US.