

DEVOTE

Acts
2:42

TEACHING | FELLOWSHIP | BREAKING BREAD | PRAYER

DEVOTE : BREAKING BREAD

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DEVOTE
BREAKING BREAD

DEVOTE : ACTS 2:42

BREAKING BREAD

“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

- Luke 22 : 19

This booklet is a guide for Life Group leaders to take their groups through a series based on Acts 2:42, where we see the Christian life as one devoted to the Apostles’ Teaching (the Word of God), Fellowship, Breaking of Bread and Prayer.

This section is on Breaking Bread. This is a practice instituted by Jesus Himself. We want to look at its deeper meaning and its application to our Christian life. We will look at Breaking Bread in five parts with Part One dealing with the many views and practices. 1 Corinthians 11 : 23 - 33 is our key text here and Parts Two to Five glean important teachings from it.

As always, use your own discretion in adapting each part as necessary for your particular Life Group. Your group will no doubt consist of many people from many different traditional, cultural and theological backgrounds and so it’s good to go through all the material. If there is too much information and you have a big group, think of breaking up your group into smaller groups to discuss particular sections; consider going through a section in one week and then using the following week for questions; or other ways to make this practical. Think also of ways to make it interesting – don’t read the book out loud and make this a lecture! Make it interactive and give guys the space to be open and honest.

Please be open to questions and talk to the elders if there’s anything you’re not entirely sure how to answer.

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Part One

Different Views, Different Practices

Matthew 26 : 26 – 29

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

In the above passage we see that Jesus himself instituted the breaking of bread as a key element of Christian church life.

Breaking Bread is also called the following:

1. **The Lord’s Supper / Table**

It’s called this because it commemorates the Passover meal we see above. (Part Two will go into greater detail on the background of this meal.)

2. **Sacrament**

This means an act or rite that represents a visible sign of God’s grace. That’s why Baptism is also called a sacrament. Some churches may have other acts that they call sacraments, particularly the Roman Catholic Church which has seven in total. While what it calls “sacraments” may be important to the Christian life, we believe that the Bible only institutes Baptism and the breaking of bread as sacraments while the others (such as confession and marriage) are contextual. Sacraments are for all Christians, regardless of their context. Baptism and Breaking Bread are ordinances (a rule made by authority) for all Christians.

3. **Eucharist**

This is a more traditional word and comes from the Greek word *eucharisto* which means “giving of thanks.” Together, the church thanks God for Christ’s work on

the cross by partaking of the Eucharist. It's usually called the "Eucharist" when conducted in a church meeting setting.

4. Communion

This word highlights that we 'commune' with God and other believers as we break bread together.

Why do we use the phrase "Breaking Bread" in this book?

This is the literal phrase used in Acts 2 : 42, and we generally prefer to stick to terminology used in the Bible.

Early church practice

In addition to the passage in Matthew 26, we can see that the early church instituted the practice in two other key texts:

Paul spoke about it:

1 Corinthians 11 : 23 - 25

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 you. Do this in remembrance of me." 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."

And then, of course, our key text for this Devote series:

Acts 2 : 42

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

If the early church devoted themselves to this practice, we have to ask how much we are devoted to this practice? This must have been in Acts 2:42 for a reason. But

Christianity isn't about religious acts but rather about a transformed life in the Holy Spirit. So what are we devoting ourselves to when we talk about being devoted to the breaking of bread?

Let's unpack the meaning of Breaking Bread to understand how to devote ourselves to it.

Different views

The practice of Breaking Bread is quite straight forward, as we see from the scriptures above, yet it has been a bone of contention throughout church history. The church has considered why Jesus instituted this practice for quite some time. Many theologians have wondered at what it means and how we should practice it. The result has been several divergent views.

Please note that this section may be somewhat technical, but because many of us come from different backgrounds (Roman Catholic, Denominational and so on) it's good to understand why and how we practice the breaking of bread in Cornerstone and why other churches do what they do.

The Roman Catholic view

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the bread and wine become the *actual* body and *actual* blood of the Lord. (The term for this is *transubstantiation*, which means "a change of substance.") This miracle, as it were, occurs as the priest says, "This is my body."

Over and above this, when the church partakes of the Eucharist, the sacrifice of Jesus is repeated (in a different sense to his time on Calvary) and thus a special, salvation grace is released to the participants.

We do not hold to this view as it presents several problems:

1. The Bible teaches that Jesus ascended to heaven in his human body (Acts 7 : 56). The Holy Spirit is omnipresent and Jesus, being God, is present with us by the Holy Spirit. But Jesus' body is literally in heaven. For the bread and

wine to be the actual body and blood of the Lord, Jesus' human body would need to somehow be omnipresent.

2. Jesus often used figures of speech, such as calling himself the “bread which came from heaven” (John 6 : 41) or “the door [for salvation]” (John 10 : 9) or “the vine” (John 15 : 1). There is no reason to believe that he wasn't doing the same in Matthew 26 : 26 – 29 when he instituted this. He was physically present at the time. It seems odd and incompatible with Jesus' ministry to say that he was also holding a piece of his body when he passed the bread around!
3. It was forbidden for Jews to drink blood (see Leviticus 17 : 10 – 16). If this is what they were doing in Matthew 26 : 26 – 29, there would be problems in Jesus having fulfilled the Old Testament Law and being the perfect sacrifice.
4. The biggest problem, however, is that *this implies that the work Jesus performed on the cross was somehow incomplete*. The logical end of this teaching is that Christians must partake in the Eucharist (usually only in a church meeting setting with ‘qualified’ individuals – priests – able to administer it) to complete their salvation, as it is at this time that a special, salvation grace is released to participants. In practice, we see that many Roman Catholics worry about their salvation if they do not partake of the Eucharist even on their death-beds. For example, if they die instantly in a car crash, there is worry about their final salvation.

The Lutheran view

The Lutheran view shares similarities to the Roman Catholic view but does not teach that the bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Jesus, only that the body of Jesus is present “in, with and under” the bread of the Lord's Supper.

One example is that water in a sponge is not the sponge itself, but yet the water is “in, with and under” the sponge. It is a slight change.

The problems with this view are very much in line with point 1 and 2 above (under the Roman Catholic view).

The Reformed view

This view sees the breaking of bread as a symbolic act, but acknowledges that Jesus is *genuinely* spiritually present in a *special way*. The bread and wine symbolise the body and blood of Christ (they did when Jesus instituted the practice) and they provide a symbolic sign that Jesus is present as he promised in Matthew 18 : 20 - “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” This view is taught by most Protestants (Presbyterians especially).

The Memorial view

This view is much like the Reformed view but is different in that it states that Jesus is not present in a spiritual way but only that those who break bread *in faith* enjoy spiritual fellowship with Christ during the time. It sees the bread and cup as figurative only, a memorial to Jesus’ death. This is highlighted in the continuous statement of, “...do this in remembrance of me.” See also 1 Corinthians 11 :24, 25; 1 Peter 2 : 24; Ephesians 1 : 7; and 1 Corinthians 11 : 26. This view is especially held by Anabaptists.

What does Cornerstone Church believe?

We teach a middle view between the Memorial view and the Reformed view. The Reformer, Ulrich Zwingli affirmed that Jesus’ presence is real in the breaking of bread in a very spiritual, special way, but only for those who *partake in faith*. This can very much act as a bridge between the two. (In some cases, theologians will class Zwingli’s view as the Memorial view, in others not.)

Who partakes of the breaking of bread?

Only those who believe in Jesus Christ should participate in the breaking of bread. Non-believers should not. Some churches teach that only baptised believers can participate, but we do not hold to that. Some churches teach that children may not participate until they have come of the necessary age to have made a real decision for Christ, but we do not teach that. That is up to parents to decide - we are happy to have children participate when we break bread.

Who should administer it?

Scripture provides no explicit teaching around who should administer the breaking of bread, so we are left to decide on what seems appropriate for our local church. There ought to be some administration, however, to ensure that it is not abused, that there is time to consider what it all means, and that we do it in a worshipful attitude and with love for each other.

How often should we do it?

For practical purposes, we do not partake of the breaking of bread together in our larger gatherings very frequently. This is simply because of the size of the meetings.

The encouragement is that we would do this in our Life Group meetings more often and, even more often, at home with our families, together with our friends, and with our guests. We see many references in Scripture when the breaking of bread took place in a home setting, including the time when Jesus instituted it in Matthew 26. (However, there is value in partaking in the breaking of bread in our larger gatherings, which is why we do it.)

Why not real wine?

In our larger, corporate times we use grape juice instead of wine. Whether Christians should or should not drink alcohol is a matter between one and the Lord. Because we hold more closely to a Memorial view, we are happy for the closest substitute to be grape juice as it is merely a figurative symbol.

Moreover, some Christians hold to the view that Jesus did not drink alcohol and the original word for “wine” in the Bible actually means any juice from grapes. We do not wish to argue the point either way as it is not edifying to the church. Grape juice suits the figurative purposes of the breaking of bread just fine.

Lastly, we do have many recovering alcoholics in our midst and we find it is more honouring to them and much more practical to use only grape juice.

The deeper meaning of the breaking of bread

Now that we've laid out the more practical aspects of the breaking of bread, let us dive into its deeper meaning.

Throughout this booklet we will refer to a passage from 1 Corinthians 11 and see how this scripture encourages us, when we partake, to be *Looking Back* (Part Two), *Looking Forward* (Part Three), *Looking Inward* (Part Four), and *Looking Outward* (Part Five).

1 Corinthians 11 : 23 – 33

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 you. Do this in remembrance of me." **[Looking Back - Part Two]** 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. **[Looking Forward - Part Three]**

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. **[Looking Inward - Part Four]** ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgement on himself. **[Looking Outward - Part Five]** ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³ So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— ³⁴ if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgement. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

Discussion questions:

1. Do these views clash with anything you've learned in the past? How is this different? What do you think of the main view presented here?
2. Do you think we attribute enough significance to the breaking of bread in our personal practice?
3. How often do you do it at home or with your friends and why?
4. How do you think you can practice the breaking of bread more?

Part Two

Looking Back

1 Corinthians 11 : 23 - 24

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 you. Do this in remembrance of me."

The breaking of bread is essentially divided up into two parts - the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup, with a prayer of thanks before each.

Luke 22 : 19 - 20

¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is **given for you**. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "**This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.**"

The prayer of thanks usually involves a looking back - seeing what Jesus has done for us in history, and done for us personally. We remember what Jesus did, why he did it, who Jesus is and what all that means for our lives today and the future (looking forward).

The New Covenant

There is a certain significance in the breaking of bread being in two parts - the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup - and Jesus' mentioning of how the cup is the new covenant in His blood (see Luke 22 above). Let's look at Hebrews 8 : 10 (which cites Jeremiah 31) which talks a bit about the New Covenant:

Hebrews 8 : 10 - 12

¹⁰ 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.

And then further on in **verse 12**:

¹² For I will be merciful towards their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.”

There are two things taking place here - the forgiveness of sins (verse 12) and God's laws being placed on our hearts and minds (verse 10). In the New Covenant, our salvation begins with the forgiveness of sins and then moves to us being filled by the Holy Spirit, which is when God writes his laws on our hearts and minds. This is our salvation!

We see the same theme here:

Ezekiel 36 : 25 - 27

²⁵ *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols **I will cleanse you.***

²⁶ **And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.** *And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

²⁷ *And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

We see the two parts - a cleansing (verse 25) and a new spirit (verse 26). The New Covenant includes the promise that God will pour out His Spirit on all people who put their trust in Jesus.

Fallen man essentially has two problems - one, we are separated from God and two, we are dead in our sin. In Jesus and the New Covenant, God comes to restore us in both of these areas. In Christ's cross we are forgiven (his body, broken for us) and then there is a move towards God's "new wine" (the cup), the pouring out of God's Spirit on and into us.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 9?

Matthew 9 : 16 - 17

¹⁶ No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷ Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. **But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.**"

God makes us into new wineskins so that we may be able to have his 'new wine' - His Spirit. There is a representation in the breaking of bread of this promise that we live in today.

It wasn't out of the blue

Jesus didn't come up with this practice of breaking bread out of the blue but it goes back to the Passover meal that the Israelites celebrated around the time of Jesus' crucifixion. In Matthew 26, when Jesus institutes the breaking of bread, he and the disciples are partaking in the Jewish Passover meal, which is observed every year. (Note: this was done in a home in Matthew 26.)

What was / is Passover and why is it important?

Remember the story in **Exodus 12** where the "angel of death" "passed over" the houses of the Israelites? The Israelites were to slaughter a lamb "without blemish" (verse 5) and "take some of the blood and put it on the two door posts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it." (Verse 7.)

Exodus 12 : 11 - 14

¹¹ In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the **LORD's Passover**. ¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the LORD. ¹³ **The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.**

¹⁴ “This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute for ever, you shall keep it as a feast.

Jesus and his disciples were keeping the Passover on the night that he broke the bread in that home. The significance was that *Jesus was to be the lamb whose blood stops the Lord from executing judgement on those covered by it; and whose blood allows us to have God’s very Spirit dwell inside of us.* God instituted the Passover as a sign towards Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Jesus instituted the breaking of bread to remind His people that He is the “true” Passover lamb without spot or blemish. But note the change that Jesus instituted. Rather than the Passover being celebrated every year, we are to do this as often as we can – *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”* (1 Corinthians 11 : 26)

More symbolism

Matthew 26 : 26 - 28

²⁶ *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”* ²⁷ *And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

So just as Passover celebrated the deliverance from slavery in Egypt, so the breaking of bread celebrates deliverance from sin by Christ’s death. Whenever we partake of it, we remember what He did.

Christ’s death

When we break the bread, our actions provide for us a real-life picture of his death for us. It symbolises the breaking of his body. The blood symbolises his blood poured out. This is why it is also a proclamation – for ourselves and for others.

Our participation in the benefits of His death

We each partake, personally. This isn't to be done by someone else on our behalf. We proclaim that we each, in faith, are taking on the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection, that we believe it, and that we will live according to it (looking forward). That we will now live this new life by the Holy Spirit!

Jesus superseded it all

All of the Old Testament laws and ceremonies were superseded by Jesus.

Hebrews 9 : 11 - 14

*¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ **how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.***

Question: Note the last verse - we are set free of dead works! What are these dead works?

Question: Notice that Jesus relied on God's Spirit (verse 14). What does that say about how we should live?

Hebrews 10 : 16 - 18

¹⁶ "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws on their hearts,
and write them on their minds",

¹⁷ then he adds,
"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

In fact, the Israelites were not saved by the blood of animals but were actually saved by Christ. The blood of the animals pointed to Christ's death in a prophetic way. It always was Christ's death that atoned for their sins.

Question: If there is no longer any offering for sin, what does that mean for us practically?

Renewal, proclamation and intimacy

- By remembering what he did every time we do this, at home or in a church meeting, we remember our sins and how we are forgiven in Jesus and covered by His blood, and thus renew our commitment to Christ.
- As the Church, we need to be continually reminded of the foundations of our faith, for we very easily forget and begin to do our own thing or institute our own religion.
- We also proclaim what Jesus did to the world. We are preaching to others, in a visible way, about what we believe and who it is we believe in.
- We also remind ourselves and renew our commitment to the Kingdom. As Jesus' body was broken for us, so we allow our bodies to be broken for others. As Jesus loved and served, so we love and serve each other.
- There is a wonderful sense of intimacy concerning what Jesus has told us to do – eat something that reminds us of his flesh; drink something that reminds us of his blood – poured out and broken for us, to come into right relationship and continual relationship with God!
- We are reminded of our life in the Holy Spirit – that we are now a new creation, that we can live in God's power, that we can bring the Kingdom in His power wherever we go, and He is constantly teaching us to say no to sin (Titus 2 : 12).

Discussion questions:

1. How can we allow our bodies to be broken for others?
2. How can we practically use the breaking of bread for closer intimacy with Jesus?
3. What are the major differences between the Old Covenant and New Covenant?
4. How do we participate in the benefits of his death in a greater way?

Part Three

Looking Forward

1 Corinthians 11 : 26

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until he comes.***

With Breaking Bread, we not only remind ourselves of what Jesus has done, but we also remind ourselves of what is coming – the return of Christ as all the promises given to us come to fruition. We remind ourselves of the promises and our great hope; the consummation of our faith. And we proclaim his death and his resurrection, his return and the judgement to come, every time we do this, at home or in a church meeting.

Living and proclaiming his resurrection

While the breaking of bread usually focuses around the broken body and shed blood of the Lord (looking back) we must never neglect the fact that he was resurrected from the dead and that he defeated death. Sadly, this truth is often neglected as we focus a great deal on the cross, leading many Christians to never move beyond “sin management” and into their glorious new life in Christ, which we live by the Spirit poured out.

We are called to live in the Kingdom of Christ, and the resurrection of Jesus is a historical event that shows the world (and us) of the age of Christ's Kingdom to come. The evidence for it now is our life in the Spirit. The resurrection reminds us on how we are called to live and advance that Kingdom now, in this age, in God's Spirit. Essentially, we live our lives in a way where we pull the future into the now.

1 Corinthians 15 : 14 - 23

¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and

you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ *Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.* ¹⁹ *If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

²⁰ *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* ²¹ *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.* ²² *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* ²³ *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*

Some pointers here:

- The resurrected life of the future is one of healing, reconciliation, life, justice, wholeness, peace and prosperity and so much more. We pull these aspects into 'the now'.
- *We still live in a fallen world* and we still experience many of its fallen aspects (death, sickness, poverty, injustice and so on). But even though we experience these, to varying degrees, we all enjoy a spiritual foretaste (the firstfruits) of the future that will often manifest into the physical (physical healing and so on).
- *The greatest miracle is salvation, which includes God's Spirit* and every Christian enjoys this now - we don't need to wait until Christ comes again to judge the world to know what our relationship with God will be in the future!

Living and proclaiming his return

Through our lives and the act of Breaking Bread, we proclaim (and are reminded) that there is a better way to live and the fallen world will not last forever. All kingdoms of this earth and all kings, presidents, and rulers will bow their knee to Jesus. *Nothing of this world will last forever* except the Church. And from heaven, it is the Kingdom and the King which will last forever.

Living and proclaiming the judgement to come

There is a fiery judgement to come (Hebrews 10 : 27) and we live in a healthy fear of God because our sins are covered in Christ. Through our lives and the breaking of bread, we proclaim (and are reminded) how all can live in this healthy fear and be reconciled, through a simple act of faith and acceptance of God's grace, freely available to everyone.

Unfortunately, we generally don't like to speak of the reality of the judgement to come. Jesus will judge every single person in all of history. Hebrews 9 : 27, 28 says, *"...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."* Jesus will judge with real, true justice. He will judge all appropriately and it is only those who have put their faith in Jesus who can know, right now, the outcome of his judgement for them.

Hell will be a real outcome for many people. We therefore are tasked to tell and proclaim, through our lives, our conduct and our speech, that Jesus is the Judge who will judge one day and he will welcome many into his heaven but also reject many to hell. It is an uncomfortable reality, but it is still the reality.

A history of eating and drinking that continues

It seems there is something about eating and drinking that is important to God. God is a God of celebration. In the next age, there will be no fasting, only celebration.

God put Adam and Eve into the garden with an abundance to eat (except the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). At the time, every meal they ate would have been one where they feasted in the presence of the Lord.

After this was broken, we see throughout the Old Testament that certain meals were to be eaten in his presence (Exodus 24 : 9 - 11; Deuteronomy 14 : 23, 26). These were a partial restoration of the kind of table-fellowship Adam and Eve enjoyed with the Lord. This fellowship comes into greater reality when we break bread together, at home or in a church meeting.

The Old Testament sacrificial meals always pointed to the fact that the people's sins still needed to be atoned for. The sacrifices were repeated every year and in it they looked forward to the Messiah who would take away sin.

Hebrews 10 : 1 - 4

¹ For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshippers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? ³ But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

When we now break bread together, we come with rejoicing, even though we need to come soberly (see Part Four).

But this meal looks forward to an even greater feast in God's presence when Jesus comes again. The fellowship of Eden will be restored, but now God's people cannot sin again. Jesus promises this day in **Matthew 26 : 29** where he instituted the practice of Breaking Bread:

I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

We also see the promise in **Revelation 19 : 9**

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

It would be healthy for us to have a more vivid sense of God's presence at the table of the Lord.

Acknowledging the New Covenant

Breaking Bread is a sign of the New Covenant and this sign has, within it, all the

implications of the New Covenant: its nature, its terms and how we cannot be silent about it. We must deal with its covenant aspect.

We need a clearer view of the incredible future we have with God. Jesus' final return will consummate this current age and there will no longer a separation between man and God! This is why Breaking Bread is also a prophetic act. It speaks of closeness and unbroken intimacy. We are looking forward to Christ's return every time we do this.

And as we look forward to that day, we also look to today, where we live in His Spirit. Each time we eat the bread and drink the wine together, we remember our life in the Spirit (see Part Two).

Jesus said:

John 14 : 16 - 18

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you for ever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

We look forward to His return in the security of His promise to be with us. Breaking bread reminds us to keep working out the implications of living our lives in union with the God who will always be with us.

Preparing for that day

Jesus is preparing his bride for his return.

Ephesians 5 : 25 - 27

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing

of water with the word,²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Revelation 19 : 6 - 10

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah!

*For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.*

*⁷ Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;*

*⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”–*

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Jesus is preparing his bride for his return and we are to make ourselves open to his preparing. This means we also have a responsibility to one another. One of the key ways in which we honour this process of preparation is through our relationships with each other in the Church. You cannot live in a way where we separate ourselves from this.

While we often might break bread alone (which is fine) we never truly do it alone, because we are always a part of the Body of Christ, if we are to be in Christ.

Ephesians 5 : 29 - 30

²⁹ *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body.*

Christ loves his body and so should we. Scripture exhorts us to never to break bread in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11). We shall see that this is primarily referring to our relationships in Part Five.

We must open ourselves to his preparing and this is what we shall examine in the next two parts - first “Looking Inward” and then “Looking Outward”.

Discussion questions:

1. How will we ever be a people who live out authentic Kingdom culture unless breaking bread with the Holy Spirit is our normal and continual experience? How can we make that our continual experience?
2. How can we practically proclaim and live his return in our lives?
3. How ready / prepared am I for his return? If he were to come back today, how would you feel when you see him?
4. Do you fear the judgement to come?
5. Why is the topic of judgement so difficult to share with others?

Part Four

Looking Inward

1 Corinthians 11 : 27 - 28

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.*

We can see that this scripture tells us that we should examine ourselves before we break bread together, at home or in a church meeting. There is an introspection that is required of us here. But whenever we talk of Christian introspection, we must make sure we understand clearly how it is to be done and the context of the scripture we may be looking to apply. Let's do that for this scripture above.

2 Corinthians 5 : 17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

We must remember that we *are* a new creation.

Romans 6 : 22

*But now that you **have been set free from sin** and **have become** slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.*

We have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God. God has already done it. Christian introspection must be done with the full knowledge, assurance and faith that “*there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8 : 1).

The value of breaking bread

When we examine ourselves in the context of breaking bread, we must remember what it's about - that our sins are forgiven in Jesus because of his broken body and shed blood. Our partaking of this act is a reminder to ourselves of our faith in Jesus and in his work. We do not have faith in our own works or our own ability to be right

before God, *but in Jesus*.

We do not look to make ourselves clean from sin before breaking bread but look to use the opportunity as a means of *confessing our sin and repenting* before God. This repentance may include a form of action – for example, setting a relationship right. It is an opportunity to examine our hearts and lives and come to Jesus, not run away from him, or look to make ourselves holy before we can come into his presence. He didn't die for that!

So we can be *introspective without condemnation*. Breaking Bread represents our salvation, not our own perfection. It represents Jesus' perfection.

The context

It is worth examining the context 1 Corinthians 11 to understand better what is meant by '*drinking in an unworthy manner*'.

1 Corinthians 11 : 17 - 22

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,* 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.*

What do we see here?

1. The context is division

The church is meant to break bread as a unified body, not a divided body. Jesus broke his body for *us together* and for us as individuals. As we touched on in the previous part of this book, we are all a part of his body. If we are not living in unity with our

fellow brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers in our local church or in our family, we ought to set this right before breaking bread.

2. The context is snobbery and individualism

Each one went ahead with his own meal. Some got hungry, while others basically 'pigged out' and got drunk.

Here is the background. In those days, when they got together (usually in a home) they first ate supper, which was much like a 'pot luck' supper where everyone had access to the same food. Then, afterwards, they would partake in the Lord's Supper.

But the slaves could only arrive afterwards, given their practical work-load and commitments. So some of the more affluent Christians would go ahead of the others. The slaves would arrive only after all the good food and wine was gone. So, by their actions, the affluent Christians didn't think of the slaves as part of the Body of Christ! They were being snobs!

As the Bible affirms, there is neither slave nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus! (Galatians 3 : 28) This reality was being ignored.

3. The context is selfishness and inconsiderate conduct

Paul rebukes them for not seeing themselves as one body but being selfish and inconsiderate to each other. The Corinthians appeared to have an understanding of what Breaking Bread meant, but the problem was that they did not understand (or live out) the commandment to love one another and to be as one body, not divided!

There are no second class Christians! We are not divided on economic, racial or any other grounds whatsoever!

A Christian introspection and outworking

With this context in mind, breaking bread in an *"unworthy manner"* has to do with relational sin. We need to think of our relationships with others when we break bread. We'll look at this again in the next part of this book.

So when we come to the Lord's Table, we remember the following:

1. This is the Lord's Table, not ours

Jesus instituted this, not man. This is not a religious ceremony but a reality.

2. We remember the reasons for the Supper

Looking forward and looking back.

2. Every Christian is equal in the body. We are one body

As covered above. Remember this is also for families!

3. We affirm those partaking of the meal with us and wait for them

When we come to any meeting, we come to a holy assembly of God's people and we must deal with relational issues. We must acknowledge, every time we get together, that this is Jesus' people and His life. We can't just be casual about this. There needs to be a thoughtfulness to all we do. A *seriousness*, but not a *sombreness*!

Practically, no one should be isolated. In our meetings, look for others standing around doing their own thing and invite them to break bread with you and your group. See where they're at and if you can find a way to integrate them into church life.

In a family setting, it's good to use this opportunity to affirm each other as well. If we're doing this with friends or guests over dinner, affirm each other.

4. We remember that if we come in an unworthy manner, we can bring judgement upon ourselves (1 Corinthians 11 : 29)

If we judge ourselves, it spares the Lord the necessity to judge us. When we break bread there is a grace and means to deal with things that we must deal with. There may also be other sin issues we need to deal with, besides any relational sins, and we can deal with these here. What's going on in your heart? What are the issues, concerns, things you're not releasing? Think about these things and speak to the Lord about them. Let him speak to you. Deal with these issues.

7. We come to Jesus to forgive our sins

Not to anyone else or anything else, including ourselves!

5. We resolve to sort out relational problems or even go ahead and sort those out, if possible, before partaking

This is a love feast. This is where love is personified. This is community (our church, our family, our friends at the table) which is in “communion”. When we remember Jesus, we are sharing this together and there will be a natural response to affirm each other.

8. We come with expectancy, knowing that Jesus will be real to us

It’s good to not only deal with any inward issues but also understand the inward, spiritual process that happens as we do this.

Let’s look at this scripture as a base for looking at this:

John 6 : 53 - 58

⁵² The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” ⁵³ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live for ever.”

So what do we see here?

1. We receive spiritual nourishment

As food nourishes our physical bodies, so we can experience a nourishment in the breaking of bread. We come with an expectation and even physically (prophetically) take the benefits of Christ’s work and apply it to ourselves. We enter into an intimacy and are reminded of the intimacy we can enjoy any time, anywhere, all the time.

2. Christ affirms His love

The breaking of bread is a vivid reminder (a visual reassurance) of Jesus’ personal love

for us as individuals. He invites us to do this again and again and invites us to abide in him. That very invitation, coupled with what the breaking of bread represents, reassures us of his personal, unconditional love. This reassurance can be experienced and felt.

3. Christ affirms Kingdom blessings

At the Lord's Table we enjoy a foretaste of the great banquet with the King. There is an experiential foretaste - we are seeing it, we are thinking about it, we are anticipating his return. We each come as members of his eternal family. Here we are reminded and assured of God's blessings to us and the many still to come, including the eternal age. A place has been reserved for each of us at the wedding supper of the Lamb! We can experience something of an assurance and peace.

4. We affirm our faith in Christ

We admit, once again, how much we need and trust Jesus. We are coming to him to bring life and health to our souls, for only through his broken body and shed blood can we be saved.

What if I don't experience anything inside?

That's okay. But this doesn't negate the fact that there is something that we can experience, spiritually, at the Lord's Table. We won't experience this every time (and if we have relational problems, we probably won't at all!). But we can always come with the expectancy that Jesus will meet us in some special way as we break bread together. We do this regularly in a response of obedience to Christ, not for an experience, but we can experience something during this time and we shouldn't forget that.

Discussion questions:

1. How can we value Breaking Bread more?
2. When we break bread do we constantly remember these things? Do we treat it with the kind of seriousness we should?
3. Do you derive your assurance of salvation that the Lord intends when you come to the table? Do you find that breaking bread is helpful in your assurance of salvation in Christ?
4. When you've sinned, do you feel as if you can't break bread? If so, how do you

think you can move beyond that?

5. How often do we ask the Lord to highlight things in our hearts when we do this?
6. If the Lord reveals a relationship issue when we do this and they're in the assembly, do we go and make things right? How can we do this? How can we do this in a family setting or with friends at home?
7. How do you feel about God's readiness to always forgive us? How does that translate into how we should live?

Part Five

Looking Outward

1 Corinthians 11 : 27 - 32

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*

...

For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgement on himself. ³⁰ *That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.* ³¹ *But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.* ³² *But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

We do not build fences

Unfortunately, the word ‘unworthy’ has been misunderstood in this context (we examined the context in the last part) and in the ESV version we see above, this has been more accurately translated in part using the phrase ‘unworthy manner.’ A misunderstanding of what ‘unworthy’ means in the scripture’s context has led to the following problems:

1. Some avoid the breaking of bread, feeling they are not worthy enough (we covered this in Part Four).
2. Some use this opportunity to be self-righteous, saying that they are ‘worthy’ to partake in it.
3. Some are kept from partaking by church leaders as these people have been judged to not be ‘worthy enough’. This has often been called ‘fencing the table’ but there are problems with it:
 - Paul says a man ought to examine himself (1 Corinthians 11 : 28). It appears that it is not up to others to judge whether we can break bread. 1 Corinthians 11 : 31 also affirms this (“*If we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgement.*”)

- The phrase ‘*unworthy manner*’ is better – it means coming to the table without proper reverence or in a dishonouring way. We covered this in Part Four.
- The context, as seen in Part Four, was about prejudice and snobbery.

At Cornerstone Church we believe that if you love the Lord Jesus, you’re free to eat, and we do not build fences around the table. But, it’s better that those who do not have a basic understanding of Breaking Bread do not partake (this would mostly be referring to people who don’t know Jesus). That is the only way it is ‘fenced off’, but we do this to protect those who do not believe.

If you have relational issues, do not break bread unless you repent and sort the issue out. If the issue cannot be sorted out (in your heart or in person) quickly, then rather refrain from breaking bread until you sort it out. Try not to be concerned with what other people may think - this is a personal matter. Rather focus on honouring God and His Word.

If you need to make up with your spouse, do it. Breaking Bread is a reminder to do this quickly and keep a short account. This is the ordinance that brings you to your senses. The more we do this, the shorter our accounts will be. That’s why doing it at home is a very good idea.

You’ll need to judge each situation and decide if it’s necessary that you talk with the other person on the issue or not. The bottom line is: be sensible when you approach the table and be serious about it.

We build relationships

We have a responsibility to be building up, not just repairing our relationships!

Matthew 18 : 15 - 20

¹⁵ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever

you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ *Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.*

²⁰ *For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”*

As we saw in Part Four, unity is a huge part of what it is we are doing when it comes to Breaking Bread. We must resolve our differences with each other and move our relationships to a level of partnership (see DEVOTE: Fellowship, Part Four).

The above scripture provides a way in which we resolve our differences.

- **We do not gossip**

We sort out our problems with each other directly. Coming to the table is not an opportunity to gossip, as some might make it! If we are sharing a meal together, we have an opportunity to examine ourselves, think of what Christ has done and look forward to what He will do.

- **We work out our differences to ‘gain our brother / sister’**

We do not work out our differences to be holy and self-righteous. The point is to gain our brother / sister / spouse / children / friends etc. This means we approach this humbly, ready to apologise if we are, in fact, in the wrong!

- **We recognise the presence of Jesus in the body**

Where two or three are gathered, there Jesus is. We are living our relationships out in the presence and sight of the Lord. This is His bride, His body, His church. We ought to love and respect each other appropriately! Would you gossip and slander someone else’s bride, especially in their presence? Well, we are always in the presence of the Lord.

Breaking Bread puts a responsibility upon us to make sure that we live in relationships that honour Jesus’ process of preparing his bride (see Part Two). We’re called into a special relationship with each other in anticipation of our greater, special relationship with Jesus that is still to reach its consummation. This body of Christ is a special family and reminds us of our relationship with Jesus.

The church isn’t a club or something we go to. When we come to this body of Christ, we come to a holy family.

Ephesians 5 : 29 - 30

²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body.

Likewise, this is how we treat the body of Christ. We nourish each other.

What else does the breaking of bread show us in our relationships?

Galatians 6 : 1 - 10

¹ Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbour. ⁵ For each will have to bear his own load. ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

1. We look to the needs of others

As we saw in Part Four, the context of eating in an 'unworthy manner' was prejudice. That was the negative side. The positive side is that our eating together and celebration of the Lord gives us an opportunity to look to the needs of others and see how we can love them and help them.

2. We look to help each other with sin

As we look inwards, so we encourage others to do so, and encourage them gently and help them in their area of sin. (Verse 1 above.) We encourage them to (a) come to Christ, no matter what their sin and (b) not grow weary of doing good.

3. We emulate Jesus's sacrificial love

Luke 22 : 19

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

As Jesus' body was broken for us, so we allow our bodies to be broken for each other in remembrance of him. What he did for us and the great promises we have, serve to encourage us to sacrifice ourselves for each other in a healthy, loving way.

1 John 3 : 16 - 18

¹⁶ *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.* ¹⁷ *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?* ¹⁸ *Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

Love is action

The famous **John 3 : 16** says, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* God's love is one of action, not warm, dreamy feelings.

Christian love is one of action. We love through our actions, even when we don't feel like it! We can't wait to feel like loving first before we love - we love first, as Jesus loved us first. This is the end result of the meaning and practice of the breaking of bread. Faith without works is dead, after all (James 2 : 14 - 26). And as we see in 1 John 3 above, *"let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."*

Discussion questions:

1. When God highlights a relational issue, does it always mean going and speaking to that person? Can we resolve it in our heart? How do we know what to do?
2. How can we practically make a decision in our hearts to remember our relational responsibility every time we break bread?
3. Are we our brothers keeper? Is our culture's individualism healthy? What is God's way of seeing things? See 1 John 4 : 20: *"If anyone says, 'I love God', and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen."*
4. How ready are we to ask one another for forgiveness? What does all this mean to our pride and how do we deal with that?



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