

## ***The Lord's Supper: More Than A Meal***

1 Corinthians 11:17–34

**BIG IDEA:** The Lord's Supper is not a casual meal—it's a sacred act of remembrance, proclamation, and examination. When approached rightly, it strengthens our unity, deepens our devotion to Christ, and displays the gospel to the world.

**CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:** Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to address problems that had been reported to him, including factionalism, sexual immorality, lawsuits among believers, and confusion over marriage, Christian liberty, and spiritual gifts. Among those issues, a problem had developed around the Lord's Supper. It was celebrated in the early church as part of a communal gathering, similar to a fellowship meal, and intended to be a moment of worship, unity, and gospel remembrance—a time to reflect on Christ's sacrifice and proclaim His death until He returns. But Paul confronts the Corinthians for their shameful abuse of the Lord's Supper. Instead of a unified act of worship centered on Christ's sacrifice, their gatherings had become marked by selfishness, division, and social favoritism. The wealthier members were arriving early, feasting excessively, and even getting drunk, while poorer believers—likely arriving later due to work—were left out and humiliated. In a city like Corinth, where social status and personal indulgence were prized, these worldly attitudes had crept into the church and were poisoning what was meant to be a sacred act of gospel remembrance. Paul writes to reestablish the meaning and seriousness of the Lord's Supper, calling the church to examine themselves, honor Christ, and approach the table with unity, humility, and reverence. Paul's goal in this section is not simply to correct a ritual, but to call the church back to gospel-centered worship. The Lord's Supper is not about personal indulgence or status—it is about humility, repentance, unity, and reverent remembrance of the cross. Paul urges the church to judge themselves rightly, to come to the table in faith and love, and to wait for each other so that the Supper reflects what it was always meant to proclaim: *Jesus died for sinners, adopted them into one body, and is coming again.*

### **1. What Is True: The Lord's Supper Is a Sacred, Gospel-Centered Act (vv. 23–26)**

#### **A. Instituted by Christ**

- “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you...” (v. 23)
- Directly given by Jesus; it is not optional or cultural—it is commanded.

#### **B. A Memorial of the Cross**

- Bread and cup represent Christ's body and blood.
- This is not mystical magic or routine—it's remembering the gospel.

#### **C. A Proclamation of the Gospel**

- A public witness: Jesus died, Jesus saves, Jesus is returning.

#### **Applications:**

- It is an opportunity to re-center your spiritual life on the cross. Say a silent prayer of thanksgiving —“Thank you, Jesus, for saving me.”
- Parents: explain to your children what the elements mean beforehand

### **2. What to Avoid: Dishonoring the Supper with Division or Disregard (vv. 17–22, 27–32)** *“I do not praise you...for it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.”*

**Key Principle:** *To misuse the Lord's Supper is to misrepresent the gospel—and God takes that seriously.*

#### **A. Division Destroys the Meaning**

- Selfishness at the table contradicts the selflessness of the cross.

#### **B. Disrespect Brings Discipline**

- God takes this ordinance seriously. Casual, thoughtless, or unrepentant participation invites His correction.

#### **C. A Time to Judge Ourselves**

- The table is a mirror: not to shame us but to restore us.
- God's discipline is *loving prevention*, not *condemnation* (v. 32).

#### **Applications:**

- Before partaking, ask: *Do I need to forgive or reconcile with someone? Am I harboring bitterness or division in my heart?*
- Teach your family that the Lord's Table is not about earning, but about honoring. **The Lord's Supper is sacred**, not casual.
- Avoid the Supper as a “spiritual snack.” Treat it as sacred worship.
- Prepare your heart before the Lord's Supper. If you need to abstain for spiritual reasons, do so out of reverence—not guilt.
- Talk to your kids about not participating if they haven't yet trusted in Christ. It is to be observed by believers.

### **3. What to Do: Remember, Examine, and Unite (vv. 23–34)**

**Key Principle:** *The Lord's Supper is a time for honest reflection, joyful remembrance, and Christlike unity. “Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat...” (v. 28)*

#### **Explanation:**

- Paul doesn't tell the Corinthians to stop taking the Lord's Supper—he tells them to approach it rightly. That means looking back to the cross, inward at your heart, and around at your church family. It is a time to renew your faith, restore your relationships, and rejoice in Christ.

#### **Application For the Heart:**

- Let the Supper stir awe for Christ's sacrifice. Don't let it become routine.
- Approach it with **reverence, repentance, and unity**.
- Confess sin genuinely before participating—don't harden your heart.
- Share unworthily, and you risk God's judgment, even death (vv. 27–30)

#### **Application For the Church:**

- Let the Supper renew unity and love. Reconcile & pray for one another.

#### **Application For the Gospel Mission:**

- Let the Supper preach publicly. Use it as a moment to explain the gospel to unbelievers.