

Jesus' Church

g r o u p s t u d y

5

Lesson 5
The Bread

this book belongs to

date

Make the Most of this Study

The following recommendations will help your Jesus' Church Study Group experience the intended outcomes:

1. Each lesson builds upon the previous lesson, so work together and find a way to cover all seven lessons in as close to seven weeks as possible.
2. Invite everyone to bring their Bibles and pens.
3. If possible, sit at a table to be able to read, write, snack, and be closer to one another.

** Supplemental teaching videos and downloadable booklets are all available through the BFAM App. Visit: <https://bit.ly/BFAMapp> or scan the QR code.*



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Though the ESV and certain English versions do not capitalize divine pronouns, they have been capitalized in this resource.

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"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and the fellowship, to

the breaking of bread

and the prayers."

Acts 2:42

05 | The Bread

Welcome to Lesson Five of the Jesus' Church group study! This is a special lesson because we'll end by receiving Communion together. Let's open in prayer and ask God to teach us today about Jesus' Church. [Open in prayer.]

Before we begin this week's lesson, let's each take no more than 30 to 60 seconds to share something we received from this past week's scriptures. [Invite everyone to share.]

Thanks to each of you for sharing. At the end of this lesson, you'll find this week's 7-Day Plan. Once again, we'll take 10 to 15 minutes a day to read a short Scripture passage, write the answer to a question or two, and pray that God will use us that day to minister to people.

The Priority of "The Bread"

Okay, let's begin Lesson Five. So far in the Jesus' Church group study, we've learned about "The Foundation," "The Power," "The Teaching," and "The Fellowship." Today's lesson is about the second of the four priorities of the Acts 2 church which we've simply called "The Bread."

The word "bread" has been used as a general term for food or provision for thousands of years, and that was certainly true for people in New Testament times. For example, Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3), and He taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

Provision was a struggle for many Jews in those days, but it was a significant struggle in the Acts 2 church. Along with severe persecution and exponential growth, they had many migrant believers beginning on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5). Though securing employment in Jerusalem was difficult for them, they would stay because this was the only place to learn from the 12 apostles.

With this in mind, let's read Acts 2:44–47, and notice how many practical needs were generously being met by the early church members:

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God.”

Since bread was the most common food in ancient times, “break bread” was a term used for sharing a normal meal with someone. However, in the New Testament, the terms “break bread,” “breaking bread,” or “breaking of bread” are not used in reference to a normal meal. Instead, these terms describe a particular practice that was unique to believers in Jesus.

Let's review Acts 2:42 once again, the verse that lists the four priorities of the Acts 2 church:

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

As with the other three priorities of the early church, the use of the definite article “the” before “breaking of bread” tells us that the members of the Acts 2 church were devoted to a specific practice of breaking bread, a practice that continues to this day. It's commonly known as “Communion” or “Holy Communion” (1 Corinthians 10:16, KJV; NKJV), “the Lord's Supper” (1 Corinthians 11:20), and the “Eucharist,” meaning thanksgiving.

the Acts 2 church were devoted to a specific practice of breaking bread

Though the Lord's Supper was typically practiced during a regular meal, the term “breaking of bread” specifically referred to the Lord's Supper portion of the meal. Let's read Acts 2:46 in the New Living Translation:

“They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity.”

It was natural for the Lord's Supper to be observed during a meal because it started during a meal—the Passover meal.

The Prophetic Prelude

The Passover meal was the prophetic prelude to the Lord's Supper. In Exodus 12, just before God executed the tenth and final plague on Egypt (the death of the firstborn), He commanded each household of the children of Israel to take a spotless lamb, kill it, drain out all its blood, and smear some of the blood outside on the two doorposts and over the door. By doing this, the destroying angel coming later that night with the last plague would see the blood of the spotless lamb and not enter that house but instead pass over it. Once the blood was in place, God commanded that they roast and eat the flesh of the lamb quickly, being fully dressed and prepared to leave Egypt. And that's exactly what happened. God not only protected them from the destroyer, but He also delivered them from slavery. God commanded them to celebrate the "Passover" on that same day every year with a commemorating meal.

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The Prophetic Fulfillment

Unlike days on the secular calendar, which officially begin at midnight, a new day on the Jewish calendar begins at sundown. One evening, as the Passover holiday in Jerusalem had just begun, Jesus sat down with His disciples to eat the Passover meal. Every person at the table understood that the purpose of this meal was to remember what had happened over a thousand years earlier. But what they were about to learn that night was that the Passover meal was also given to their people as a prophetic promise of a deliverance still to come. They still needed deliverance from the plague of spiritual death, the bondage of sin, and eternal judgment.

Why did they still need deliverance? Let's read Hebrews 10:4:

■ *"It is impossible for the blood of [animals] to take away sins."*

You see, the lambs they were sacrificing could not pay for their sins. The Passover meal included a spotless lamb to remind them that they needed the blood of a completely innocent human being and one who would be willing to allow their blood to be poured out for the sins of others. The problem was no one on earth had innocent blood. So what did Jesus do? About 33 years before that Passover night, Jesus, because of His love, demoted Himself and became a human being. He did this so He would have a human body with innocent blood.

Jesus ate the meal with His disciples that night, knowing that the Passover lambs would not begin to be killed until the next afternoon at about 3 pm, still on Passover. That was when everyone else in Jerusalem would celebrate this holiday. Jesus had to observe it the evening before because He had a prior commitment during the daylight hours of Passover: to fulfill the prophetic promise by being killed as the long-awaited, spotless, human Passover Lamb. This was to be the Passover of all Passovers. Why? Because Jesus would not only fulfill the prophetic promise of deliverance for the people of Israel, but He would also fulfill it for the entire human race.

John the Baptist predicted that in John 1:29, when He looked at Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

And the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

Jesus was indeed spotless. He was born of a virgin, and therefore the sin of mankind did not pass down to Him, so He was born spotless. As a man, He resisted every temptation to sin (Hebrews 4:15), so He remained spotless. And then, He was accused in multiple trials, yet pronounced guiltless, so He was declared spotless. There was absolutely no reason for Jesus to be killed.

On the other hand, you and I were born with the sin of mankind, so we were born sinful. We continued sinning throughout our lives even after learning right from wrong, so we remained sinful. And when God's Word came, the truth exposed our sin, so we were declared sinful. There are many reasons why we should be punished for our sins and be separated from God in an eternal place of torment called hell, but something happened on that special Passover day:

*"God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ."
2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)*

And thankfully, that warranted a new meal of celebration. Let's read Matthew 26:26–29:

"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.'"

Simple Meal, Profound Messages

Though the messages conveyed by this meal are profound and impactful, the meal itself is astonishingly simple. Communion, the Lord's Supper, consists of only two elements: Bread and what Jesus called "the fruit of the vine."

Let's walk through what Jesus did and said:

"As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples" (verse 26)

Interestingly, the Holy Spirit did not inspire any of the authors of Scripture to mention what kind of bread Jesus used, nor what kind should be used. This tells us that the type of bread we use is not as important as what the bread symbolizes. What does seem important is that Jesus began the conversation with unbroken bread, a whole loaf.

The words Jesus used to bless the bread are also absent from Scripture. This tells us that the words of blessing are not as important as the words He spoke about the bread.

Jesus broke the loaf of bread as they watched. This is where the term "the breaking of bread" comes from. This was to symbolize what would soon happen to Jesus' physical body; He would be pierced and killed like a Passover lamb.

As the loaf was divided into pieces, the disciples saw a demonstration of how the physical body of Jesus would be broken and then become a spiritual body divided into many parts.

He would be killed like a Passover lamb.

"Take, eat; this is My body." (verse 26)

Like the flesh of the Passover lamb, Jesus commanded them to eat the bread. It's one thing to hold a piece of the loaf in your hand, but it's another thing to eat it. If the bread does indeed represent Jesus' physical body, then does eating it represent cannibalism? No, eating the bread carries three significant truths: First, as a piece of Jesus' body comes into us, we receive what His broken body paid for, such as healing, wholeness, restoration, and protection. Second, with the piece of His body now in us, we understand that we are now a piece or part of His body. And third, since this is a covenant meal, we are accepting the terms of the New Covenant.

“He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, ... ‘This is my blood ... which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” (verse 27)

Just as Jesus began with a whole loaf of bread, so now He begins with a single cup. This one cup represented one human body that contained all the innocent blood in the world.

Again, the words that Jesus used to give thanks are absent, which tells us that they are not as important as the words He spoke about the cup and its contents.

Just as the blood of the spotless Passover lamb was poured out, Jesus said that His blood would be “poured out.” He would be crucified at about 9:00 am the next morning and hang on the cross for six hours while bleeding out. As Jesus held the cup, He wanted to make sure that everyone understood why He would allow that to happen. He said, “My blood... is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

“For this is My blood of the covenant.” (verse 28)

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This one cup represented one human body that contained all the innocent blood in the world.

“Drink of it, all of you.” (verse 27)

The disciples of Jesus drank from one cup. One way to demonstrate this today is to pour from one cup or pitcher into the number of cups needed while rehearsing how Jesus' blood was poured out for us. As we drink and swallow that which symbolizes the blood of Jesus, we should consider that His blood not only washes us from physical sins but also cleanses our hearts and minds. And being a covenant meal, receiving His blood, albeit symbolic, makes us one with Him.

Paul's Teachings

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 11:25 that Jesus also included the words, "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." So Jesus wants us to receive Communion often.

Paul's letters teach us a lot about how the breaking of bread should be practiced and why it is so meaningful when it is practiced correctly. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul shares an insight that unveils a truth about this practice that is sometimes overlooked. Let's read 1 Corinthians 10:16:

"The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation [koinonia] in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation [koinonia] in the body of Christ?"

Paul told the Corinthian church that the Lord's Supper is not only to remember how Jesus lived and died sacrificially for us but also that we are now participants of His koinonia fellowship. Then, in the next chapter, Paul explained that their current approach was unacceptable because they were being selfish and not loving and caring for one another. They weren't recognizing that the body of Jesus was now the people sitting all around them, so they were mistreating Jesus by the way they treated other believers. He warned them that if they didn't judge themselves and change their ways, their observance of Communion would bring guilt and judgment on them instead of forgiveness, blessing, healing, and deliverance.

*Jesus instituted Communion in a house, and
the early church observed it in homes.*

The Lord's Supper in Homes

Some people think that Communion should only be observed in a church building, but the Bible doesn't give such instructions. In fact, Jesus instituted Communion in a house, and the early church observed it in homes. And to observe the breaking of bread the way Jesus did is a lot easier to do in a home with a smaller group of people.

Wouldn't you love to have been in one of the homes of the Acts 2 church when they broke bread? You may have experienced something like this:

The home was much smaller than you expected but well organized. The older kids were straightening up a bit, and the mom was preparing something to eat, and it smelled so good. She was singing a little chorus as she worked, and the words sounded exactly like Psalm 23, "He prepares a table before me ... He anoints My head ... my cup overflows." And you keep noticing her adding the word Yeshua (Yeh – shoo – ah) here and there, the Hebrew pronunciation of Jesus. She didn't seem to be preparing anything fancy, just a meal for the family.

And then other people began to arrive, and the voices got loud with greetings and laughter. They also had food dishes and were setting them on the table as if they'd done it a thousand times. You notice that one lady who walked in had a strap missing on one of her sandals, making it difficult to walk in them, but she had a big smile on her face and had also brought a dish of food. There were now several conversations going on at once; the ladies were talking near the oven about someone who'd been healed that day. The men were by the table discussing a co-worker that had been baptized that morning. And the kids were listening to one of the young men tell how another believing family sold one of their milk goats and brought the money to his father so he could replace a tool that had broken.

Then, just before sitting down to eat, a man walked in who spoke a different language. He obviously had a hard-labor job because he looked exhausted and was still quite dusty. Immediately the father of the house embraced him and asked him to sit down. Then kneeling down in front of him, he removed the man's sandals and washed his feet. There wasn't enough room at the table for everyone, so the children and a couple of younger adults sat on the floor but close by. Then, after thanking God, everyone began passing the food to one another and resuming their conversations. They talked about stories the apostles told about Jesus, how they needed to pray for rain to come for the farmers, about the food they were eating, and how someone made their meal with a different spice than normal. But no one complained. Instead, they only spoke encouraging words to each other.

And then, at a certain point, you see the father of the house uncover the breadbasket and pull out what looked like a large pita that had been placed at the bottom of the basket. Without the man saying a word, the others noticed, and the conversation soon descended into silence as they watched the man with the bread.

When everyone had given him their attention, including the kids, he said, "Let's prepare to receive the Lord's Supper." And that's when you notice everyone humbling themselves before God and praying. Then the man lifted his eyes toward the ceiling and blessed the bread. And looking around the room, he said, "On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread and said, 'This is My body which is broken for you.'" The man had no script, but he clearly understood what he was saying.

Then as everyone watched, he began to break off pieces of the bread and hand one to each person saying every time, "the body of our Lord Jesus." Then at a certain point, he looks at you, hands you a piece of bread, and says, "the body of our Lord Jesus." When everyone was served, they begin to eat and share, one by one, how thankful they are for Jesus, for the Holy Spirit, and for one another, the body of Christ.

As you chew the bread and begin to swallow it, you realize that Jesus' body really was broken for you, and that you really are a part of Him. And then you have another thought. The body of Jesus is sitting all around you in the form of these humble people. When everyone had shared, the same man lifted up a cup he had just filled and blessed it. Then looking around, he said, "Jesus said, 'This is My blood that was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins, and it's the new covenant sworn in My blood.'" Then he looked directly at you and passed the cup to you saying, "the blood of our Lord Jesus."

One thought after another races through your mind ... first, of the sins you've committed, then of Jesus being punished for them, and then how much Jesus must want you to be forgiven and free from guilt. So you drink what represents the blood, but as you feel it flowing down your throat, you imagine how Jesus' real blood washes and completely cleans your heart. Then you hand the cup to the person to your right and say, "The blood of our Lord Jesus." The room is now being filled with praises to Father God and to the Lord Jesus. People are thanking Him for forgiveness, mercy, healing, provision, protection, restoration, and His steadfast love.

And then, while the cup was still being passed, the lady who had the broken sandals lifts her hands and begins to sing words from Psalm 118, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let Israel now say, 'His mercy endures forever ... Let those who fear the Lord now say, His mercy endures forever. I called on the Lord in distress; The Lord answered me ... The Lord is on my side; I will not fear.'" As soon as she started singing, others began to join in, lifting their hands and singing with joy. After singing it a couple of times, they begin to pray.

They pray for believers they knew who were now in prison for proclaiming Jesus, and for their families. They pray for the apostles. They pray for their own families. They pray for new disciples, they pray for rain, and then they pray and prophesy over one another, and then over you. It was clear that no one was trying to look good but rather to pray and speak the things that the Holy Spirit gave them. And that's when you realize more than ever before how Jesus had surrounded you with Himself, His own body, and how He was strengthening you—and everyone—by the Holy Spirit's power through His body.

Soon it was time to go, and one by one, they embraced each other as they walked out and spoke blessings to each other like, "The grace of God be with you," and "May the Lord strengthen you" or "give you rest." And then the mother of the family said, "Oh wait," and she quickly walked to the only other room in the house and shortly came back with a used pair of sandals, in good condition, which she gave to the lady who sang. The lady looked at the sandals and then back at the host with an expression of gratitude for such a sacrifice. Then sitting down quickly, she strapped on the new sandals. When she stood back up with tears in her eyes, she smiled, nodded at the host, and left without saying a word.

And that's when you think, how could this happen? There is no stage, no sound system, no lights, no screens, no church building, and no professional church leaders, and yet you may have just experienced the most meaningful church gathering of your life.

Then down in your heart, you hear the Holy Spirit say, "Welcome to Jesus' Church!"

Welcome to Jesus' Church!

Why Break Bread

Many people don't realize that Jesus led the breaking of bread a second time, on the very day He was raised from the dead. It happened in a village called Emmaus. Luke 24:30–31 says:

"He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. 31 And their eyes were opened."

These disciples had walked with Jesus for about three hours but never recognized Him; their eyes were restrained (Luke 24:16). But the moment Jesus broke bread, their eyes were opened. And this is why Jesus is teaching us. Many of us have been walking with Jesus for years with our eyes restrained. Jesus wants to open the eyes of our hearts, again and again, in the breaking of bread.

Now before we close and receive the Lord's Supper ourselves, let's discuss some questions about what we studied in this lesson.

Discussion Questions

(Be sure to ask the third question!)

1. What did we learn about the meaning of the breaking of bread?
2. When, where, and how often should we observe the breaking of bread?
3. Can we plan to eat a meal together next week and observe the Lord's Supper during (or after) the meal?

Close in Prayer

As we close, let's each examine and prepare our hearts to break bread together. Though someone will lead, let's each participate in sharing things we love and appreciate about Jesus, things we can receive today by faith, and how we should commit to the fellowship.

7-Day Plan | Week Four

Day 1 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:23–26

Write: Considering the lesson on the breaking of bread do you see this passage differently? If so, what are the most significant insights?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 2 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Acts 2:42

Write: What does it mean to you, to be devoted to “the breaking of bread”?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 3 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:17-22

Write: What were the Corinthians doing wrong? What were the root causes?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 4 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:27-35

Write: How can you examine and judge yourself (verses 28 and 31)? How often should you do that?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 5 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Isaiah 53:3-7

Write: What purposes of Jesus' sacrifice does this prophecy reveal? How can we receive them by faith when receiving Communion?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus' Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Day 6 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: Exodus 12:7-13

Write: What similarities do you see between the original “pass-over” and the Lord’s Supper?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus’ Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

Reminder!

Does the Lord have something for you to share with someone at your coming Jesus’ Church gathering? Continue to invite Him to speak through you.

Day 7 | My daily scripture and prayer

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Write: How does this passage teach us to view and regard ourselves and others who are “in Christ” because of Jesus’ sacrifice?

Pray: Submit yourself to God today as a member of Jesus’ Church, and ask Him to use you to minister to people.

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PO Box #4970

Anaheim, CA 92803

BFAMmovements.com