

Come to the Table:

A Family Study Guide on 1 Corinthians 11:23-32

Message Preached 9-6-26 By Pastor Matt Alexander

1. Introduction: The Power of Memory and the Senses

Parental Note: Before you begin reading, ask your children: *"What is your favorite smell in the whole world? What does it make you think of?" Give everyone a moment to answer, then read the following.*

There are certain smells that have a unique power to transport us. A single familiar aroma can suddenly take you out of the present moment and place you back at a table you haven't sat around in years.

"You're back at your grandmother's house. You're standing in your mama's kitchen. Maybe you remember biscuits coming out of the oven. Maybe it's bacon frying. Maybe it's a cake your grandmother always made... One smell... one familiar aroma... and suddenly you remember."

When Jesus wanted to give His followers a way to remember Him, He didn't commission a monument, order a statue, or design a massive building. Instead, He gave us a meal. He provided bread and a cup. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon once noted that the remembrance of Jesus is the "pith and essence of your business at his table."

Our goal today isn't just to talk about a ritual, but to experience the person the ritual points to. As we move from the physical smells of our own homes to the spiritual symbols of the bread and the cup, let's ask God to help us see Jesus more clearly.

2. The Scriptural Foundation

To understand the purpose of this meal, we look to the instructions provided in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 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.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

The Depth of the New Covenant For centuries before Jesus, God's people offered animal sacrifices to cover their sins—a repetitive, bloody process that

pointed to their need for a Savior. When Jesus speaks of the "New Covenant," He is announcing a profound shift. We no longer need the blood of bulls or goats because His blood is shed "once and for all." This covenant is a promise sealed in His blood, offering us direct, permanent access to God and the total forgiveness of sins.

3. Part I: Commemoration—Remembering the Cost

To commemorate means to honor and remember. When we come to the Table, we aren't just acknowledging that a man named Jesus existed; we are remembering the specific, agonizing cost He paid for our rescue.

The Symbols of the Sacrifice

Symbol - Spiritual Reality (What it points to)

The Bread (Broken) - Points to the physical suffering of Jesus. His appearance was "marred more than any man" (Isaiah 52:14). He was mocked, beaten, scourged, and crowned with thorns.

The Cup (Poured Out). - Points to the blood shed on the cross. He was "pierced through for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5).

The Personal Connection: "For You" Commemoration becomes life-changing when we realize Jesus did not die for a vague crowd; He died for you. He bore your specific sins in His body:

Your pride and rebellion.

Your selfishness and anger.

Your lust and greed.

Your secret sins and your public failures.

Jesus called this meal His "sweet forget-me-not" because He knows how quickly we forget the price of our freedom.

Discussion Questions:

When you think about the physical reality of Jesus being "pierced through" and "crushed," how does that change the way you see His love for you?

Jesus knew we would be prone to forget His sacrifice. Why do you think a recurring meal is a better "forget-me-not" than a stone monument?

Which of the words "for you" is harder for you to believe—that He died for everyone, or that He died for your specific sins?

While we must never forget the somber cost of the cross, we can also rejoice because the story did not end in the grave.

4. Part II: Celebration—The Victory Meal

The Lord's Supper is not a funeral; it is a victory meal. We do not worship a dead martyr; we worship a living King.

Compassion: We celebrate the "Great Exchange." As 2 Corinthians 5:21 explains, God took our sin and gave us Christ's righteousness. He did this "while we were yet sinners" —before we ever tried to get our lives together or act religious.

Conquest: The tomb is empty! The cross was not Satan's victory; it was his total defeat. Jesus holds "the keys of death and of Hades" (Revelation 1:18). When we take the bread and cup, we celebrate that because He won, we win too.

Coming: The Table looks backward to the cross, but forward to a King. Jesus promised to return and take us to be where He is (John 14:3). One day, we will drink the fruit of the vine "new with Him" in the Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29).

Discussion Questions:

How does knowing the tomb is empty change how we feel when we take the bread and the cup?

What does it mean to be loved by Jesus "while we were still sinners" rather than after we "got it together"?

Jesus promised to eat with us again in His Father's kingdom. How does the promise of that "Other Table" give our family hope today?

The joy of what Jesus has done leads us naturally to look inward and ensure our hearts are right with Him and each other.

5. Part III: Contemplation—The "Search Me" Moment

Before we partake in the meal, we must slow down and get honest with God. This is not about being perfect, but about being real.

The Contemplation Prayer *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way." — Psalm 139:23–24*

Two Areas of Heart-Check:

Salvation: Ask yourself, "Do I really know Jesus?" Salvation is not about church membership, baptism, or being a "good person." It is about repenting of sin and trusting in Jesus alone.

Sanctification: For the believer, this is a time to look for bitterness, pride, dishonesty, or any sin we have been "defending" rather than confessing.

Family Restoration: Action Prompts Since the Table is for the family, use this moment to clear away any walls. Parents, lead the way in humility. Consider saying:

"I'm sorry for how I spoke to you this week. Will you forgive me?"

"I haven't been the dad/mom God has called me to be; will you pray for me?"

"I haven't been the child God has called me to be. I've been prideful and I'm sorry."

Discussion Questions:

Is the person everyone sees at church the same person our family sees at home?

Is there any "bitterness or pride" we need to clear away before we "come to the table" together?

6. Closing: Family Prayer and Commitment

Step-by-Step Family Prayer Time:

Step 1: The Silence. Spend one minute in total silence. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind anything that needs to be confessed.

Step 2: The Confession. If you need to apologize to a family member, do it now.

Step 3: The Thanksgiving. Have each person thank Jesus for one specific thing He did "for them."

Step 4: The Commitment. Join hands and pray that Jesus would be the center of your home.

Parental Vision As parents, your children are watching you. Years from now, they may not remember the details of your rules or your busy schedule. Our hope is that they will remember the physical reality of family worship: Dad taking their hand, Mom praying with them, and the clear message that Jesus was the center of the home—not sports, school, or accomplishments.

"We commemorate. We celebrate. We contemplate. And above everything else... **WE REMEMBER JESUS.**"