

Well... Summer 2023 is all but in the books – it's hard to believe that school starts back this week. I'm sure everyone is ready... RIGHT? Personally, I'm ready for some normalcy – and for H.S./college FB.

As w/ close out our summer and look ahead to the start of a new school year, this AM, we're going to gather around the L.S. table to engage in a hard, spiritual reset to refocus on Jesus. WTM – let's all take a moment to close our eyes, take a deep breath, and enter into the presence of God for a day of worship and renewal.

Now in giving the following instruction, I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin w/, I hear that when you come together as a church there are divisions among you, and in part, I believe it. There must, indeed, be differences among you, so that the approved among you may be recognized. Therefore, when you come together in one place, it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others, and one person is hungry while another is drunk! Don't you have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you look down on the church of God and embarrass those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I praise you? I do not praise you for this! For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: on the night when He was betrayed,

the Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, He also took the cup, after supper, and said, "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. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. So, a man should examine himself; in this way, he should eat the bread and drink the cup. For whoever eats and drinks w/out recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep. If we were properly evaluating ourselves, we wouldn't be judged, but when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord, so that we may not be condemned w/ the world. 1 Corinthians 11:17-32

Before we partake in the bread/cup, there are a few reminders from this passage that I'd like to bring to your attention as a word of encouragement.

Who here likes a good church potluck? My daughter Abi loves them. Especially the ones we have here. And I'm thankful b/c ours are more than edible – yet I've been to a few churches where it was more **good luck** than **potluck** – if you know what I mean?

The early church had a wonderful tradition that was actually tied to the Passover Meal Jesus enjoyed w/ the (12) and to the crucifixion. Taking a cue from Jesus having a sit-down meal w/ the (12) leading to the first communion, the early church gathered for a potluck that included the L.S. It was called a **Love Feast**.

Unfortunately, when Paul writes to the Corinthians, their *Love Feast* had degenerated into a self-absorbed event in the church that resulted in division/discord.

Can you imagine church people being at odds w/ one another over trivial issues to satisfy themselves? Never! the irony is palpable as they were at odds over the very reason they were gathering to love each other.

WTM – I'd like to remind you of why we gather?
We gather each week to make sure God is on the throne of our lives, to edify each other in the faith, and to be reminded that we all are a part of God's G.C.

IOW – We gather to remind each other that it's not about us but about Him – and that we all are a part of something bigger than ourselves.

I It is a time for **CONSIDERATION**

We consider what the Lord has done for us and we consider how we can spur each other along in the faith. We come to unite w/ each other in Christ.

Yes, communion is a time to remember what Christ did for us, but it's also a time to encourage us to make sure that we're not just in right w/ Him but also w/ each other. It's a meal of remembrance of what Christ has done for all of us – which is what brings us into this community to give us a commonality. Thus, we who've received His grace by faith are family – we're a community of faith asked to remember what Jesus has done for us – who are united thru His blood – we have a common spiritual DNA.

Each Sunday, as we gather, is to be a time for family – encouraging and sharing w/ one another as one body – remembering our common call to be salt and light.

II It is a time of **CONSECRATION**

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: on the night when He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, He also took the cup, after supper, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

It's a holy moment where we set aside time to remember what it cost God to love and redeem us. It's a time to set ourselves apart from sin to God by prioritizing His grace/mercy in our lives. It is a time to be thankful for the hope that is w/in us.

III It is a Time of **COMMISSIONING**

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

We're to proclaim as we partake in the declaration of our faith. When we partake, we're testifying/giving witness of our belief in God – and reminding ourselves that we've been called to represent Jesus to others.

His **Person** – Convinced of His Deity (Certain)

His **Sacrifice** – Convinced of His Work (Grateful)

His **Return** - Convinced of His Return (Ready)

We must never forget the emptiness of our lostness or the joy of salvation. It should motivate and send us into all the world to tell of His great love.

IV It is a time of **CONTEMPLATION**

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. So, a man should examine himself; in this way, he should eat the bread and drink the cup. For whoever eats and drinks w/out recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep. If we were properly evaluating ourselves, we wouldn't be judged, but when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord, so that we may not be condemned w/ the world.

This means that every time we gather, especially around the communion table, this is a time to get serious about life. First, it's a time to get things straight b/w you and God, but secondly, it's also a time for you to get right w/ others.

(3) Questions to Ask

Am I living in a RIGHT relationship w/ God?

Are things good b/w my spouse and kids?

Is there anyone in my life I've hurt or offended or who's hurt or offended me that we need to get straight?

Come to this sacred table, not b/c you must, but b/c you may; Come not to testify to your righteousness, but that you sincerely love our Lord Jesus and desire to be His true disciple; Come not b/c your goodness gives you a right to come, but b/c in your frailty and sin you stand in need of heaven's mercy/help; Come b/c you love the Lord a little and want to love Him more; Come b/c He loved you first and gave Himself to you; Lift up your hearts, above your cares/fears; Let this bread and juice be a sign of God's grace to you and a pledge of your love to the Lord; Receive the love God has for you and consecrate your life new and afresh to Christian obedience and service, to discover and do the will of God in humble faith.