

HOW CHURCH WORKS

"HOW TO REMEMBER" 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

This Week's Core Competency

Church – I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish his purposes on earth today. Eph 4:15, 16 *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

Paul uses a number of metaphors to describe the church. He calls the church God's *field* and God's *building* (1Co 3:9; cf., Eph 2:21), Christ's *body* (Eph 5:23; cf., 1Co 12:27, 28), and a holy *temple* (Eph 2:21) to mention just a few. Perhaps *family* qualifies as another of his metaphors since he refers to "the family of believers" in his letter to the Galatians (6:10). Philip Yancey explores the significance of this metaphor in his book, *Church: Why Bother?* He writes: "The business world has learned that human beings respond well to rewards of status; they can be powerful motivators. In families, however, status works differently. How does one earn status in a family? A child 'earns' the family's rights solely by virtue of birth. An underachieving child is not kicked out of the family. Indeed, a sickly child, who 'produces' very little, may actually receive more attention than her

*"To dwell in love with saints above,
Why, that will be glory.
To dwell below with saints I know—
Why, that's a different story."*

— Anonymous

healthy siblings. As novelist John Updike once wrote, 'Families teach us how love exists in a realm beyond liking or disliking, coexisting with indifference, rivalry, and even antipathy.'

After stressing that families make room for every member, he goes on to describe how families overlook individual differences. "Every family contains some successful individuals and some miserable failures. At Thanksgiving, corporate vice president Aunt Mary sits next to Uncle Charles, who drinks too much and has never held a job. Although some of the folks gathered around the table are clever and some stupid, some are ugly and some attractive, some healthy and some disabled, in a family these differences become insignificant. Cousin Johnny seems to try his best to alienate himself from the family, but there is no practical way to drum him out. He belongs, like all of us, because we were born of the same ancestors and the same genes coil inside our sells. Failure does not cancel out membership. A family, said Robert Frost, 'is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.'

"I sometimes think that God invented the human institution of the family as a training ground to prepare us for how we should relate within other institutions. Families work best not by papering over their differences but rather by celebrating them. A healthy family builds up the weakest members while not tearing down the strong. As John Wesley's mother put it, 'Which child of mine do I love best? I love the sick one until he's well, the one away from home until she's back'" (62-64).

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Had the church in Corinth better understood the significance of church as family, perhaps their observance of the Lord's table would not have drawn the ire of the apostle Paul (1Co 11:17-22).

For Discussion

Every passage is about something; every passage has a *subject*. Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 and identify the subject of the passage. What is Paul writing to them about?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

17In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. 22Don't you have homes 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 praise you for this? Certainly not!

23For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my

blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 29For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. 31But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. 32When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

33So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. 34If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.

And when I come I will give further directions. (NIV(c)1984)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "for" indicating *reason* in vv. 17 (after the comma), 21, 23, 26, 29.
- * Box "therefore" and "so then" indicating *result* in vv. 27 and 33 respectively.
- * Highlight vv. 20, 21.
- * Draw a line from "waiting" in v. 21 to the word "wait" in v. 33.
- * Number the *rhetorical* questions in v. 22.

- * Circle "received" and "passed on" in v. 23.
- * Bracket "guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord" at the end of v. 27 and "without recognizing the body of the Lord" in v. 29.
- * Circle "fallen asleep" in v. 30.
- * Circle "wait" in v. 33.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 34.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. In verse 17 Paul said, "I have no praise for you" (cf. v. 2). Why not?
2. According to verse 18, the assembly was divided. Infer *how so* from the context.
3. Corinthian believers assembled and ate what they thought was the Lord's Supper. Why did Paul say it wasn't?
4. Transform the rhetorical questions in verse 32 into declarative sentences-simple statements that convey the point of each question.
5. Read verses 23-26 and put the significance of the Lord's Supper in your own words.
6. Paul warned against eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord "in an unworthy manner." What did he mean by that?
7. He also warned against eating and drinking "without recognizing the body of the Lord." What did he mean by that?
8. Abusing the Lord's Supper, like the Corinthians did, resulted in the sickness and death of some of them. Do you think the same consequences result today?
9. So then, what must we do when it comes to eating the Lord's Supper?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about whether you think "eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner" warrants such harsh punishment.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

When Jesus instituted what we commonly call "The Lord's Supper" (Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:15-20), the bread and cup were part of the meal; in all likelihood, the bread was broken near the beginning (cf. 1Co 11:24) and the cup taken at the end (v. 25). By the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, the Lord's Supper was observed in two stages that involved eating the bread and drinking the cup either in conjunction with or at the end of a communal meal. The remembrance of the Lord that specifically involved eating the bread and drinking the cup came to be called the "Eucharist" from the Greek word for "thanksgiving." The communal meal was called the "Agape" (cf. "love feast" Jude 12) from the Greek word for "love." This week's passage contains Paul's scathing rebuke of abuses that went on when the Corinthians came together to eat the Lord's Supper.

"In the first place," he says (without going on to mention "a second place"), they were divided when they came together to eat it. One group of "haves" separated itself from the other group of "have-nots." This socio-economic discrimination resulted in the "have-nots" going home hungry. Exactly what transpired isn't easily discerned, but Gordon D. Fee can't be far wrong when he says, "As they assemble together to eat the Lord's Supper, instead of being 'together' they are being sundered apart by the activities of some who are going ahead with their own private meals, thus despising the church by shaming those who have nothing" (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 535, 536, italics added). Another author puts the same idea a bit differently, "The Lord's Supper should have been the remembrance of a preeminently selfless act, Christ's death on behalf of others. Instead the Corinthians had turned the memorial of selflessness into an experience of selfishness and

had made a rite of unity a riotous disunity. While one brother went hungry because he lacked the means to eat well, another brother drank to excess" (David K. Lowery, "1 Corinthians" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 532). In either case, it wasn't the overindulgence of "the haves" that irked Paul as much as their abuse of "the have-nots." Because they didn't have a proper regard for the body, many among them were physically ill and a number had died. The Corinthians probably assumed that they were eating the Lord's Supper when they assembled, but Paul thought otherwise.

To correct the problem, he reminded them of the true significance of what we often call "communion." The night Jesus was betrayed, at the Passover meal he ate with his disciples, Jesus took the bread and the cup and assigned them a new significance. About the broken bread he said, "This is my body, which is for you." And about the cup he said, "This is the new covenant in my blood." From that night forward they were to eat the bread and drink the cup in remembrance of him and in so doing proclaim his death until he comes. No supper is the Lord's Supper that violates the significance that Jesus originally assigned to his Table. "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, a manner that violates its significance, will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord," which is what the Corinthians were doing by their abuse of one another when they assembled to eat the bread and drink the cup. They did not demonstrate a proper regard for the body when they divided into groups and "the haves" discriminated against "the have-nots" in the congregation. They had to stop despising the church of God if they wanted to eat the Lord's Supper.

The Message of the Passage

Eat the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner with regard for his body, to remember him, and to proclaim his death until he comes.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

- Write about what God wants you to know . . .

- Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

- Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“How to Remember”

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 17 **divisions** The divisions did not result from differences of opinion as in 1:10-12. Here the divisions resulted from socio-economic differences. When they assembled as a church for the Lord's Supper, the "haves" segregated themselves from the "have-nots," which led to gluttony on one hand and deprivation on the other. While the kind of abuse Paul condemns is clear enough, the precise details are not. In an attempt to reconstruct those details, Gordon D. Fee writes, "First, since the church gathered for such meals in the homes of the rich, most likely the host was also the patron of the meal. Second, archeology has shown rather conclusively that the dining room (the triclinium) in such home would scarcely accommodate many guests; the majority therefore would eat in the atrium (the somewhat larger entry 'courtyard'), which would still seat only about 30 to 50 guests on the average. "These material realities are complicated by a variety of sociological factors. In a class-conscious society such as Roman Corinth would have been, it would be sociologically natural for the host to invite those of his/her own class to eat in the triclinium, while the others would eat in the atrium. Furthermore, it is probable that the language 'one's own supper' (v. 21) refers to the eating of 'private meals' by the wealthy, in which at the common meal of the Lord's Supper they ate either their own portions or perhaps privileged portions that were not made available to the 'have-nots'. This is further complicated by the question of the relationship of this 'private supper' to the Lord's Supper, especially in light of the language 'after supper' for the blessing of the cup (v. 25). Did the wealthy eat their 'private meal' before or in conjunction with the eating of the bread that constituted the Lord's Supper? And how did it affect 'those who have nothing'. "In any case, the apostle does not eliminate the social distinctions as such: the wealthy still have their own houses in which to eat their private meals (vv. 22, 34). What he will not let them do is to bring such distinctions to the common meal of believers, where Christ had made them all one signified by their all eating of the one loaf (10:17)" (533, 534).

v. 21 **goes ahead** Paul explained why he did not consider their meal the "Lord's Supper." His words can be interpreted in any of three ways. 1) The "haves" who brought more to the meal ate all they brought without sharing with the "have-nots" (emphasis on "each of you"). 2) The "haves" gathered early to eat a sumptuous meal before the "have-nots" arrived (emphasis on "goes ahead with" understood to mean "to take beforehand"). 3) The "haves" were eating private meals that involved both an earlier starting time and privileged portions not available to the "have-nots" when they arrived (emphasis on "his own" [cf. "for in eating each one takes his own supper first" NASB]). In any case, their meal wasn't the "Lord's Supper" because it involved discrimination that resulted in the abuse of the poor.

v. 21 **as you eat** It sounds like the Lord's Supper was eaten in *conjunction* with a communal meal—called by some the "love feast" (see F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 267). Others believe that it was eaten after.

v. 23 **is** The bread is not his body literally but figuratively; it signifies or represents his body. The disciples would have distinguished his actual body from the bread that he held in his physical hands; likewise with the wine contained in "this cup."

v. 25 **after supper** "The words 'after supper' indicate that at the Last Supper the bread and cup sayings were separated by the meal itself (or at least part of it); given their continuing but otherwise unnecessary role in the tradition, it seems probable that this pattern persisted in the early church. As noted earlier, this does not necessarily mean that this was also the Corinthian practice, but neither is there anything in Paul's argument to indicate that the Lord's Supper took place at the end of their 'love feast,' as is so commonly asserted" (Fee, 554).

v. 25 **remembrance** "It is not simply 'in memory of him,' but it is eaten as a 'memorial' of the salvation that he has effected through his death and resurrection" (553).

v. 27 **unworthy manner** Eating and drinking in an unworthy manner involved abusing the poor as described in verses 20-22. So "those guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord were those who despised a poorer member by utter disregard for his need" (Lowery, 532). "Unworthily" KJV; cf. "unworthy manner" NKJV. The translation in the KJV has wrongly led to the conclusion that an "unworthy" Christian who eats the bread and drinks the cup "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (v. 29). "People are 'unworthy' if they have any sin in their lives, or have committed sins during the past week. This in turn resulted in reading v. 28 personally and introspectively, so that the purpose of one's self-examination was to become worthy of the Table, lest one come under judgment. The tragedy of such an interpretation for countless thousands, both in terms of a foreboding of the Table and guilt for perhaps having partaken unworthily, is incalculable" (Fee, 560, footnote 10).

v. 29 **body** Probably the church as the body of Christ rather than the Lord's physical body symbolized by the bread (see note on v. 27).

v. 33 **wait** The "haves" were not to eat beforehand leaving nothing for the "have-nots." Or since the Greek word can also mean "receive," "welcome," or "entertain," the "haves" were not to segregate and eat their fare separately but to demonstrate Christian hospitality to the "have-nots" in the assembly.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

It was easy for me to know my son wasn't ready to take communion. When he asked me if he could participate it opened a door for me to ask him questions about Jesus. The conversation went like this:

Him: I have Jesus in my heart!! Me: How did He get there? Him: I ate Him!

Needless to say, he was not ready to participate in communion for a while. This week, as we celebrate and worship, we will have the opportunity to take communion. Many parents wonder when it is appropriate for a child to participate. This important, spiritual discussion begins with prayer. Pray God will give you and your child discernment to know if he is ready. Also, pray that God will give your child understanding and a pure heart of worship. Next, have an intentional discussion with your child. Has your child trusted Jesus as his Savior? Can she explain her journey with God in her own words? Does he understand the symbolism of the bread and drink? Does she understand that communion is an act of worship and should be approached reverently? It is always better to wait if you think your child's not ready. It will still be a meaningful experience for them to watch you worship through communion. Leading our children through spiritual milestones is one of the great privileges in parenting. I'm glad we are doing it together!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: 1Co 11:17-34; Mt 26:17-30

1. According to 1Co 11:28, what should a person do before he takes communion?
2. Read Mt 26:26. What did Jesus say the bread represented?
3. Read Mt 26:28. What did Jesus say the drink represented?

What Do You Think

1. What does it mean to examine ourselves before we take communion?
2. What does Jesus want us to remember when we take communion?
3. Why do you think God was not pleased with the way the Corinthians were taking communion?

What R U Going To Do

It's the great MAKING MEAL TIME HAPPEN challenge! Our busy lives often mean families are eating meals at different times or on the run most nights of the week. Decide with your family to set a goal this week of eating together around the table a certain number of times. Set it high and make it a priority to meet it!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Church - I believe God uses the people in the church to do His work.

Memory Verse

Acts 2:44, 45 "All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.