



The What and The Why Part 1 Discussion Guide

Face the Issue:

This week, Jeremy began a new series where we are going to examine the things that we do as a church, as the body of Christ, and rediscover or learn why we do them. This week we focused on the Communion.

The words, “Do this in remembrance of Me,” are well known to Christians. These words are carved into the front of Communion tables across the face of this planet, including ours. The words are quoted and sung. They’re mentioned twice in 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul reminds the Corinthians about the practice of the Lord’s Table—a practice established by Jesus on the night before He was crucified..

Here’s the problem. Religion, when given enough time, is able to squeeze the life out of reality. God reveals His grace and power but then human institutions and traditions can cage it, box it up, or drive it back into the recesses of ritual, where the power and the wonder of what the Lord intended are lost in human ideas and traditions.

We face an important question in asking ourselves what Jesus exactly wanted us to remember.

Why do you take Communion?

What did Jesus want us to remember—the way he died or why he died? Explain.

Why do you think He wanted us to remember by doing something so demonstrative and everyday as eating and drinking?

Is there any other purpose in Communion besides remembering? If so, what is it?

Into the Word:

Read **1 Corinthians 11:17–34**.

Background: Paul had founded the Corinthian church and pastored it for 18 months. He wrote this letter after he’d been gone about five and a half years, and his purpose in writing was to deal with problems. In this particular case, they were having a fiasco of a feast when it came to the Lord’s Table. Everybody was bringing picnic lunches. If you didn’t bring one, you didn’t get anything. They were not sharing with one another. People brought wine for partaking at the Lord’s Table and were getting drunk. Their celebration reflected separatism, a sense of entitlement, and a lack of perception and discernment.

If the apostle Paul had established the Lord’s Table as anything less than a joyous celebration, it seems unlikely it would have become such a time of partying that it had. Evidently, Paul had not established the Lord’s Table as a morbid event, where people were virtually clawing at their hearts in self-examination. Most likely, Paul had instructed them that this was a table of triumph, and they’d learned to come rejoicing. With the passage of time and the absence of his careful teaching, the rejoicing had become ridiculous and way out of bounds. Paul writes to them to set some things in order.

After reading this passage, what do you think was most wrong with how the Corinthians were celebrating Communion?

Describe the person who takes Communion too seriously. What kind of attitude would he or she have toward themselves? Toward others?

Describe the person who takes Communion too lightly. What kind of attitude would he or she have toward themselves? Toward others?

What do you think should be a proper attitude at Communion? What kind of balance should there be between self-examination and rejoicing?

Application:

Read and discuss these two differing points of view.

Do you think that when Jesus instituted the Table—saying He wanted us to come together regularly to break bread and drink of the cup—He wanted us to remember how much it hurt Him? Did He say, “The nails went into my hands, and the spear went into my side, and the thorns went on my head. Remember how much it hurt me. Never forget that it was your fault”? Obviously, that intent would imply that an ongoing sense of guilt is required for discipleship.

Or did He mean this: I want you to remember, every time you take the bread and the cup, that when my blood was shed for you, it was shed once and for all to cover all your sin so that you never need to live under condemnation. Never forget when you partake of this bread, like Israel getting miracle manna in the wilderness, that there is nourishment in my life. I have forgiven you, and I will enable you with strength for every day. Don’t forget when you’re sick and afflicted, you needn’t go on with interminable suffering. I am your healer. If you feel plagued by Satan, remember that through my Cross I abolished the power of all principalities and powers.