

Transformational Communion

Lesson 4: Power and Transformation

Vocabulary:

workshop	former	to be routine	to discern
to piece together	what's more	in need	the key (metaphor)
segment (n.)	to reveal	to being accepted by	to distinguish
to awaken	to come to your mind	practice (n.)	to investigate
removal	shame	confidence	to be resolved
well-known	addiction	cheerful	to address
in the first place	genuine	courage	unworthy manner
division (among people)	at work in	to proclaim	dull
no doubt	to work on	publicly	with regard to
to go ahead with	to be surrendered	to interact	to commit a crime
to ignore	to resist	to realize	to linger
to be betrayed	to discipline	discipleship	to reign
to recall	wholehearted	to face	bitterness

Introduction

Now that you have learned the meaning of the bread and wine during Communion, it's time to learn more about Jesus's deep desire for us to experience his love and transformational power during this time. This final class is a **workshop** that will explore more verses about Communion in the New Testament and allow us to experience transformation as we **piece together** all that we've learned.

The Importance of Silence

Before we begin each **segment** of our Communion experience, we will have a time of silence. At first, we may feel uncomfortable, but silence is an important part of spiritually focusing our minds. Sometimes we can hide our feelings, struggles, or pain, and the Holy Spirit needs time to **awaken** our minds. Silence gives us time to think deeply about our lives and gives the Holy Spirit an opportunity to encourage us, speak to our hearts, and show us the areas of our lives that Jesus wants to heal.

Take a minute just to quiet your mind and invite the Holy Spirit into this special time with you.

Remembering Jesus and our Afflictions

In the last few classes, we learned that God commanded the Jews to eat unleavened bread, bread made without yeast. God used this bread to help the Jews to remember how he had rescued them from the Egyptians, who had caused them much physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering. For this reason, the bread was called the "bread of affliction," where yeast represented sickness, poverty, misery, and sin that can spread suffering to others. The **removal** of this yeast came to represent holiness. We learned that this is God's heart for his people: to heal them of their suffering and make them into a holy people.

We learned that in the New Testament, yeast can also represent unbelief and false teachings that can also spread throughout the church and ruin people's faith. Paul introduces the new concept of "new

yeast,” and he instructed Jesus’s followers to rid themselves of the old yeast of sin and to spread instead the new yeast of honesty, purity, sincerity, and truth. In a **well-known** passage about Communion, Paul provides the church in Corinth with specific instructions on how to rid themselves of the old yeast when coming to the Lord’s table. Before we examine these instructions, let’s learn more about the situation that is happening in the Corinthian [kor-IN-the-yin] church:

¹⁷ In the following [instructions] I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ¹⁸ **In the first place**, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are **divisions** among you. ¹⁹ **No doubt** there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God’s approval. ²⁰ So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, ²¹ for when you are eating, some of you **go ahead with** your own private suppers... One person remains hungry, and another gets drunk. (1 Corinthians 11:17-21, NIV)

What’s happening in this church, and how have these followers lost the meaning of what Jesus had asked them to do?

Here we see that the Christians are divided in their hearts with each other. This division is causing them to **ignore** each other’s needs. They’ve completely forgotten the purpose of the gathering. Some are eating by themselves, while others are drinking all the wine! Paul plainly says to them that this is not Communion, and he begins to explain the true, transformational Communion that Jesus planned for us:

²³ ...The Lord Jesus, on the night he was **betrayed**, took bread, ²⁴ 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.” ²⁵ ...This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (11)

When we read this passage *in English*, we hear that the *only* reason we take Communion is to remember Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross. Simply remembering Jesus and his sacrifice might have solved some of their problems! But when Jesus and Paul speak about remembrance, the Greek word used is *anamnesin* [an-am-NEE-zin], which means to remember with **affection** *and* to remember one’s sins. This type of remembrance is also *caused* by something.¹ In other words, during Communion, Jesus wants us not only to remember his death with love and gratitude but also remember our sins *because* of his death, love, and sacrifice.

As we **recall**, this bread represents Jesus’s body and *all* that he died for on the cross: our suffering, sins, unbelief, false beliefs, sickness, pain, poverty, and misery. Jesus wants us to bring all these needs to him when we experience Communion. If we’ve spread our sins to others or sinned against someone, he wants us to turn away from that sin, receive his forgiveness, offer that same forgiveness to others, and heal situations where we have caused others to feel pain. He wants us to recommit ourselves to faith and trust in him, to holiness, sincerity, love, and truth. In the same way that the Jewish people ate the Passover bread as a remembrance of their **former** affliction, Jesus wants us to eat this bread to remember that he lives inside us and wants to heal us completely of all kinds of suffering! He wants to be so close to us that we would allow him to rule our hearts, minds, and bodies that we might be like him and enjoy all the riches of his goodness and love for us. **What’s more** is that he wants us to spread his love to others that they too might know him! In this way, he is the bread of a true and meaningful life.

¹ “364.anamnesis,” *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*. Electronic Database, 2011, Biblesoft, Inc., <https://biblehub.com/greek/364.htm>.

Close your eyes and take a few minutes to remember Jesus's death on the cross and why he died. (Meditate not only on his suffering, but also on his deep love for you. To help you, you can meditate on verses like Isaiah 53, Isaiah 43:1-7, Hebrews 10:11-24, or verses about your Identity in Christ, which is only possible through the cross.)

Pray together and thank Jesus for what he did for you at the cross.

Now take some time to remember some of your afflictions. We will focus on sin later. For now, ask the Holy Spirit to **reveal** areas where you need healing, and write what **comes to your mind**. Take some time to pray silently to Jesus over these areas:

Do you have any sickness or physical pain to bring to Jesus?

Are you suffering from a challenging financial situation that you need Jesus to heal?

Do you have relational pain or conflicts where you need Jesus's guidance and help?

Are you experiencing emotional suffering? Do you have any feelings of hopelessness, fear, depression, guilt, **shame**, or lack of faith?

Do you have some other problem or need you wish to share with Jesus during this time?

Share one thing that you realized during this time.

Examining Ourselves

We can see from the passage in Corinthians that some members of the church were not only forgetting about Jesus and their hearts, but they weren't addressing the problems they had with each other or the selfishness and **addictions** in their lives. For this reason, Paul gives us these instructions: "28 Everyone ought to examine themselves *before* they eat of the bread and drink from the cup" (11). The Greek word for *examine* "dokimazo" [dok-im-AD'-zo] means to examine and prove that we are **genuine** and real.² In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul says this: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves" (II Corinthians 13:5).

How do we test ourselves to see if we are genuine and real in our faith and spirit? What questions can we ask ourselves?

While we may realize that we are not genuine in some areas of our lives, this does *not* mean we're not true Christians. But it may mean that we need to be more honest and open about what is happening in our lives, minds, and hearts. Jesus and John say that a true follower will want to be open about these areas and seek help, but someone who is not genuine will hide their sin and have no true desire to change (John 3:19-21, I John 1:5-10). In some areas of your life, you will be able to praise God for how he is changing you! Yet, we can all find areas where we need to grow. As we identify these areas at the Communion table, we can take our weaknesses to the Lord for his healing power that can transform our hearts and our lives!

² "1381.dokimazo," Ibid, <https://biblehub.com/greek/1381.htm>.

Close your eyes and take a few minutes of silence to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas that he wants you to examine in your life. Here are a few questions to consider. As you examine the questions, write what comes to your mind. If you feel good about yourself in an area, write what is good and praise the Lord for his power and goodness **at work in** you! If you see an area you need **to work on**, write what you see, and pray to the Lord for his forgiveness and help. Pick **two** questions that you feel are the most important for you to answer. You can choose different questions next time!

Do I have hidden or unconfessed sins, feelings of hurt, anger, or mistrust toward God, his church, or another Christian? Did my life this week reflect Jesus and his holiness or the world?

Am I truly grateful and **surrendered** about where God has me in my life? Or am I **resisting** God's plan for me, his **discipline**, or the things he's trying to teach me?

Am I **wholehearted** in my walk with Jesus? Am I reading the Word and praying regularly? Am I putting my heart into these times, or have I let them become boring and **routine**?

Am I committed to worshipping with other believers each week? Am I serving the church, a ministry, and others **in need**, or am I focused mostly on my own life?

Am I struggling with doubts about the Lord, the Bible, or other areas of my faith?

How are my relationships with others? Have I hurt anyone with my sin? Do I need to apologize to someone? Do I have a conflict to resolve?

Am I open about my life to other believers or hiding who I really am and what I'm truly thinking or feeling?

Am I sharing my faith with others, or do I care too much about **being accepted by** people?

Do I have any other sin to confess? (For a list of sins, see the [Victory over Sin](#) study, or meditate on Galatians 5:19-26, Ephesians 4:17-21, and Colossians 3:5-21.)

Are there any other spiritual **practices** that I've been neglecting (i.e., sacrificing financially for the kingdom of God, loving others, sharing my faith, serving the poor or the weak, etc.)

Share one thing that you realized during this time.

Since we have examined ourselves, we are ready to eat of the bread with **confidence** in Jesus's forgiveness that he offers us through the sacrifice of his body:

Take a minute to pray together over the bread and thank Jesus for his love for us and care over our afflictions, his grace over our sin, and his sacrifice of forgiveness.

The Wine of Rejoicing!

In the Old Testament, we see that God used blood to make his priests and the objects in his temple holy. As we drink the wine or grape juice during Communion, we are reminded that Jesus's blood has made us holy priests for the glory of God! Through the bread of his body and the wine of his blood, he fulfilled all

the Laws of the Old Testament required for man to be made acceptable to God. For this reason, Paul says in Hebrews 4:16 that we should approach his throne of grace with **cheerful courage** and confidence.³

In I Corinthians 11, Paul says in the next verse that when we take the bread and wine and experience this kind of remembrance, “²⁶...[we] **proclaim** the Lord’s death until he comes” (11). The Greek word for proclaim is “kataggelló” [kat-ang-GEL-lo], which means to celebrate **publicly** and with praise!⁴ So, during communion, we are publicly celebrating and praising the Lord’s sacrifice and power over sin and suffering in our lives! Therefore, we’re not alone or not **interacting** with other people during this time. In God’s plan of transformational Communion, we are sharing what we’re **realizing** and praising God for his goodness over us! With all this in mind, we are ready to drink the wine of Jesus’s blood with a celebration of grace in our hearts and praise from our lips!

Take a minute to pray over the wine (or juice) and rejoice that Jesus’s blood makes us holy and pure, and his resurrection gives us power over our suffering, sickness, poverty, misery, and sin!

Communion: God’s Plan for **Discipleship**

As we move further into I Corinthians 11, we see that this time of deep self-examination is not just a good practice. It is God’s plan to keep us in Christ and never **face** the judgment of our souls!

²⁹ For those who eat and drink without **discerning** [or recognizing] the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

The Greek translation does not include “of Christ” in the phrase: “discerning the body of Christ.” The original Greek says, “For those who eat and drink without discerning [or recognizing] the body, eat and drink judgment on themselves.” The Greek translation for “the body” [Gk: *sóma*] can mean our physical body, like sins of the flesh, Jesus’s body who died on the cross, and even the church body.⁵ But **the key** is in the word “discerning” or “recognizing,” [Gk: *diakrinó*], which means **distinguishing** or judging as though thoroughly **investigating**.⁶ So, which *body* are we judging or investigating during Communion – Jesus, the church body, or ourselves? Clearly, we are judging and investigating ourselves and our relationships within the church, not Jesus! Is there sin or division in our hearts? Is there someone we’ve hurt or failed to love? Are there problems in the church that need to be **resolved**? Here, Paul is telling us to do this every time we take Communion! Imagine how free and loving our churches would be if we were **addressing** our sin, our needs, and our relationships in this way.

For this reason, Paul says:

²⁷ So then, 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...³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep (or become spiritually **dull**).³¹ But if we were more discerning **with regard to** ourselves, we would not come under such

³ Used for translation of “confidence” in NIV Hebrews 4:16: “3954. parrésia,” Ibid., <https://biblehub.com/greek/3954.htm>.

⁴ “2605. kataggelló,” Ibid., <https://biblehub.com/greek/2605.htm>.

⁵ “4983. sóma,” Ibid., <https://biblehub.com/greek/4983.htm>.

⁶ “1252. diakrinó,” Ibid., <https://biblehub.com/greek/1252.htm>; Other modern translations use the word “recognize.”

judgment.³² Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

Again Paul is calling us not to simply remember Jesus's sacrifice for us during Communion, but to discern and judge ourselves. If we do not, then he says we are guilty of sinning against Jesus. The Greek word for guilty is "enochos" [EN-okh-os], which in this passage means to **commit a crime**. Therefore, if we take Communion without examining and testing ourselves, we are committing a crime against Jesus.⁷

Yet, in such a beautiful way, this verse helps us to understand that Communion was God's original plan to help us remain faithful to him all the days of our lives. Today, many churches struggle to help their members become true disciples of Jesus who continue to grow and remain in him, as Jesus requires (John 15:1-10). However, Paul is revealing to us that transformational Communion was God's original plan for keeping the church faithful! This begins with us examining ourselves as we take the bread and drink the cup of Jesus loving sacrifice.

Whenever You Drink

We may be wondering, "How often should we celebrate Communion?" In the Bible, the earliest Christians came together weekly for this purpose. In Acts 2:42-47, Luke writes that the Christians came together regularly to "break bread," a phrase used to express Communion. In Acts 20:7, Luke shows us more specifically that this regular practice was something that the followers did at the beginning of every week. Imagine if every week, we examined our hearts, our relationship with Jesus, and our relationships within the church. Our relationships with Jesus would be renewed regularly. Conflicts and sin would be confessed and resolved weekly, instead of **lingering** for weeks, months, and even years. Forgiveness and mercy would **reign** in our hearts, instead of hurt, doubts, and even **bitterness**. Imagine how clean, free, and joyful we would feel if everyone was faithful and true to this practice and how much healthier our churches would be!

As you can see, transformational, Biblical communion was never meant to be a ritual. Biblical Communion is a powerful transformation process both for ourselves and for our churches and is something that brings true joy in our relationships with each other and with Jesus.

This Week:

Write in your journal:

1. Take time this week to confess to a loving believer what you learned about yourself. Make a transformation plan, share your plan, and have your friend strengthen you and pray over you.
2. Continue to have your own transformational Communion times at home.
3. Help others to experience the true meaning of Communion by sharing this study with your small groups. Begin practicing this in your communities, among friends, or with your family.
4. As you, your family, and friends begin to experience the transformational power of Communion, share your testimonies and this study with your pastor. Pray that you can begin to have regular times of transformational Communion throughout your church or small groups.

⁷ "1777.enochos," *Ibid.*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/1777.htm>.