

Communion with Christ

Combined Presentation

**slides added sequentially, not necessarily
grouped by sub-themes**

Book Recommendation

Jesus: The Greatest Life of All

Charles Swindoll

Quote

**Without a shepherd,
sheep are not a flock.**

Lillian Braun

God reveals Himself to Man

Link to previous class on Joseph

Consider the story of those on the road to Emmaus

What did these men have in common
with the brothers of Joseph?

There was the unexpected appearance of someone
that they considered dead.

Jesus did not reveal himself on the road (at first).
How much does God reveal Himself to man?
How much can man understand of it?
We have to be made to think!

The men on the road to Emmaus were communing with Christ --
but it didn't "dawn" on them until he was at the table with them!

How do we feel about the one who saves us?

[Link to previous class on Joseph](#)

Sacrifice is what the Gospel, God's Truth, is all about!

Jesus gave Himself up in a very similar way to that of Judah.

What was the relationship between Joseph and the brothers
(and between Judah and the brothers)?

They both saved their brothers --

But how close did they come in their relationship ?

The brothers had a greater sense of:

- hunger or need
- guilt for what they had done
- physical nearness and touch

but they were still (as we are) reluctant to believe
that they had been forgiven!

Christ gave Himself up for each of us because He loved us!

How can we not have a close relationship to Him?

How must we appear as we come before God?

Link to previous class on Joseph

Joseph cleaned up before he went before Pharoah (Gen 41:25ff).

Think how nasty he must have become in prison!

Do we need to wear our “best Sunday go-to-meeting clothes”?

It is so good that we can come before God in whatever state we are!

**Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace
to help us in our time of need.**

Hebrews 4:15-16

God actually cleans us up Himself!

Linking everything together

**Link to the class on Patterns:
Symbols and Logical Basis for Communication**

**Link to the class on Joseph:
Communion with one that we thought was dead
Communion with the one who saves us?
We can appear before him no matter what: He will clean us!
God calls us in a variety of ways.**

There are many colors or layers in our Communion with Christ.

**Link to the class on Comfort, and the sending of the Comforter:
to communicate the inner depths of spiritual meaning and
the intimacy of His presence**

**Link to the next class on Parables:
We look at God's Truth as many ways as we can**

Comparisons between Moses' and Jesus' Times

Transition from the class on Joseph

**Look at parallels in the events in Exodus
and those recorded in the Gospels
which may or may not have special meaning.**

**Most of these ideas come from the book
The Presence by Bruce Larson.**

Comparisons between Moses' and Jesus' Times

- The two great deliverers had to be protected (delivered) at birth
Moses in the ark
- The Jews spent forty years in the wilderness [in preparation]
- The law was given on Mount Sinai
- Pharaoh set out to kill all the male Jewish infants
- There were twelve tribes of Israel
- The serpent, the bronze symbol of modern medicine, was lifted up by Moses to heal those bitten by snakes

- Christ in the manger
- Jesus began His ministry by praying for forty days in the wilderness
- A mountain was the scene of Jesus' famous sermon
- King Herod did the same at the time of Jesus' birth
- Twelve disciples were chosen by Jesus
- Jesus said, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32)

Comparisons between Moses' and Jesus' Times

- The Passover lamb was slain and its blood sprinkled over the doorpost to ensure that the Angel of Death would pass over the Jewish households, killing only the Egyptians
- God provided manna day by day in a barren desert, and for forty years the Israelites survived on this hoarfrost kind of food

- When Jesus came to be baptized in the Jordan, John greeted Him with these words, “Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).
The Passover was being celebrated by Jesus and His disciples when He instigated the first communion service, a holy sacrament of the Christian church
- Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry” (John 6:35).
He fed the crowd of five thousand which had traveled out to the hills of Galilee to hear His teachings with just seven loaves of bread and a few small fish

Comparisons between Moses' and Jesus' Times

- Moses brought forth water from a rock when the wanderers were thirsty
- God appeared to Moses in a burning bush (He also led the Israelites using a pillar of fire)
- Moses met with God in a tent of meeting, outside the camp, and there they communed
- Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14)
- The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was accompanied by fire
Biblically, fire has always been a sign of God's presence – a fire that does not consume... continues to be linked with God's presence.
- Jesus prayed often in the mountain alone

Closeness and Communion with God

Moses stood in the opening of the rock
while the Glory of God passed by.

[Elijah had a similar experience]

Is it possible that in those places where God is most present,
His face is hidden from us?

The Presence, Bruce Larson

Where is God most present in the world?

“At the cross where His Son died,” was Luther’s answer.

The Presence, Bruce Larson

The purpose of this class

To get closer to Christ (and God)

To find more ways to see the meaning of the Cross
and not just see it as a “rote” exercise.

How do we study the communion?

This won’t be a complete study:
we have to keep looking (we will only scratch the surface).
There is great richness in the layers, the depth and thickness;
It is not just a veneer

There is an infinite extent to the space that we are looking in
that is defined from our personal experiences.
We can get a fresh look every day!

We can make our own connections and images.
We may make our own “parables”.

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God's point of view

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IV The Value and Meaning of The Communion

Joy

Love

Fellowship

Communication / Prayer

Images and Symbols

Kingdom

Service

Teaching

V End Game

Imaging the Depths of the Issue (1)

God gives us the opportunity to think the highest thoughts

**How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!**

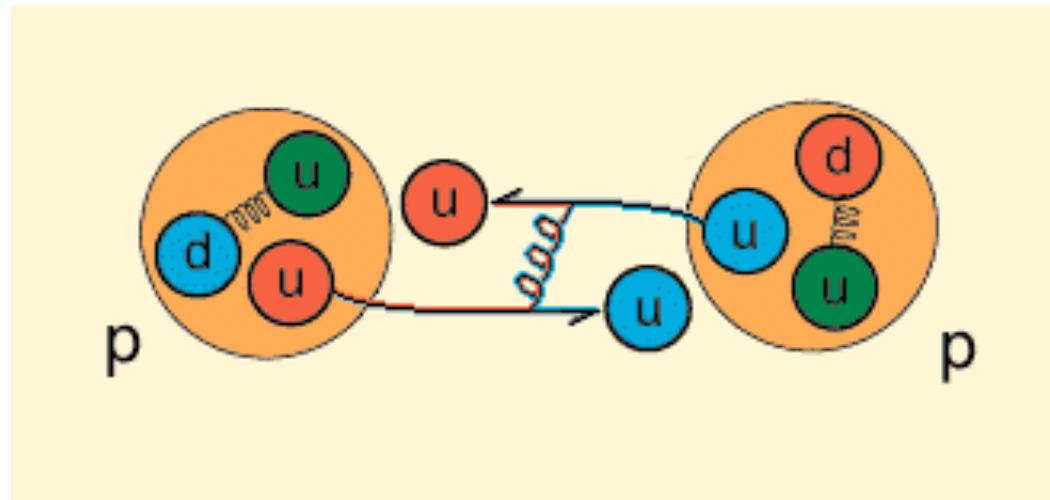
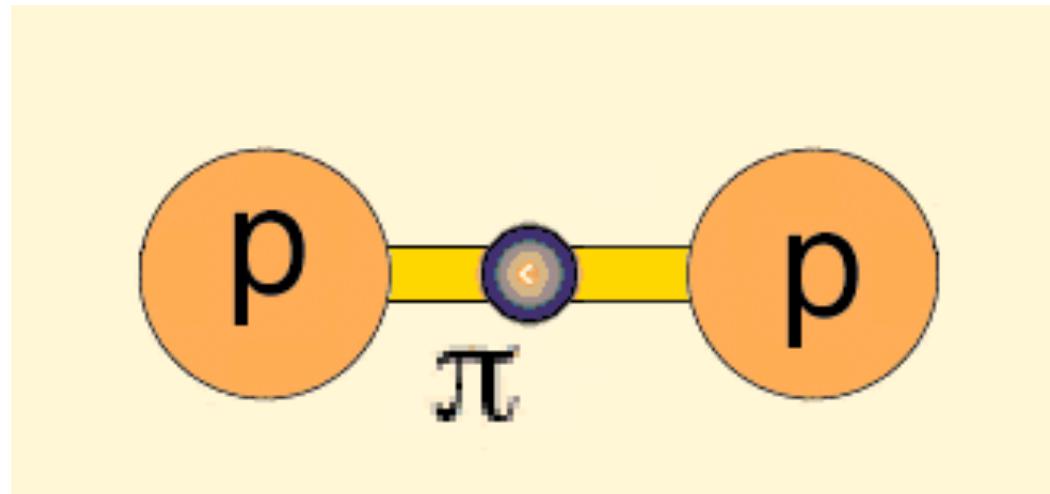
**Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand.**

**When I awake,
I am still with you.**

Psalm 139:17,18

Imaging the Depths of the Issue (2)

Communication is an exchange of ideas



Forces: particles exchange energy to binds things together

Imaging the Depths of the Issue (3)

We use analogies to “image” truths.

Analogy creation methodology (how to create analogies)

- 1) Pick an event or topic or thing or person
- 2) How is it like the truth you are trying to understand?
what similarities or contrasts are there?
it does not have to be perfect or complete to be useful
- 3) Find moral lessons from personal experiences and stories
- 4) Meditate on it -- Wait for the piece that fits (with a “click” or “snap”)

The ideas are from the heart,
but trimmed and made more efficient by the mind.

Imaging the Depths of the Issue (4)

We can inspire thought in each other.

Job's friends provoked thought in the conversation
and kept him from the “death spiral” of bad thinking
that we many times get into by ourselves.

The Bible is the Word -- but it is a starter.
It is completely the truth, but it is not the complete truth.
(We can't handle the complete truth - but we can search for it

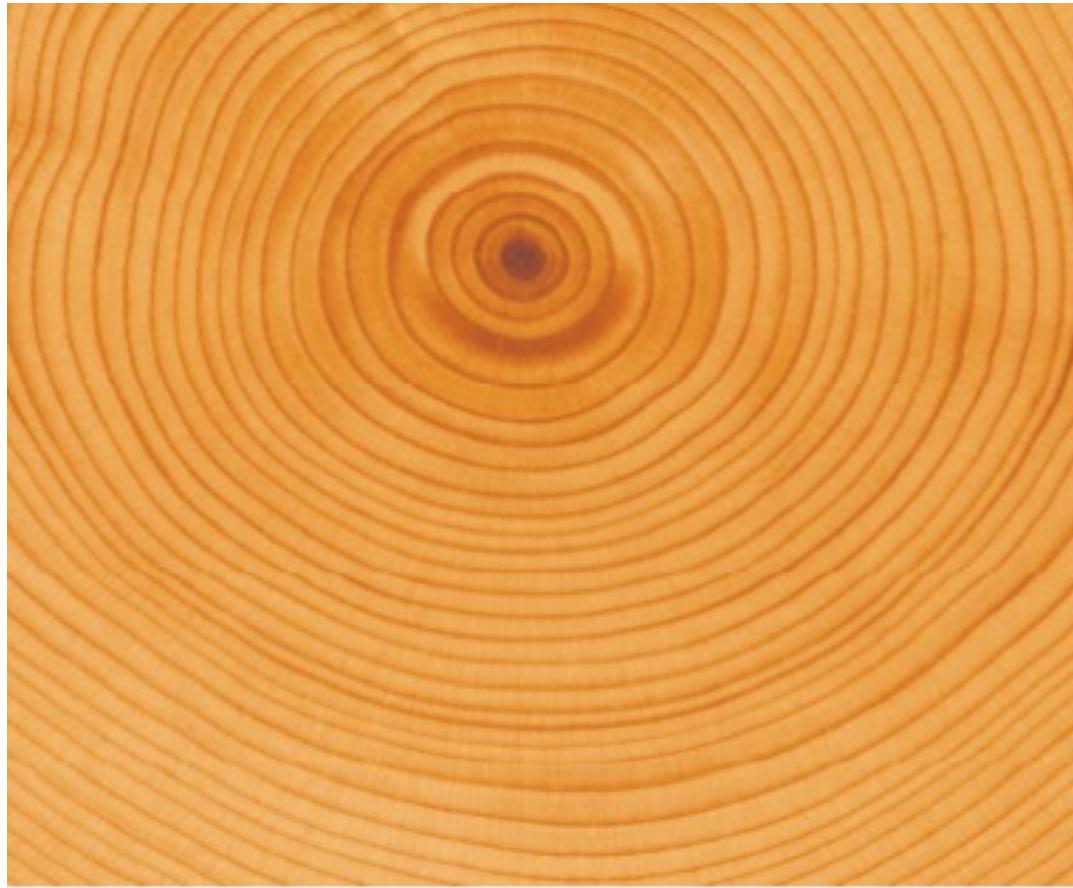
It is the yeast that causes the bread to rise.

There is no need for a new revelation,
but our understanding should get deeper and deeper as we dig.

Did you ever try to dig to China? In your back yard?

The real message is simple and clear --
like the beauty of the universe,
but we capture and admire many aspects of it.

The Cross Cut Saw



We look as deeply as we can into the levels of the story,
like tree rings show layers of growth.
Think of sawing through the cross to study its depths.

Link to Joseph's multi-colored coat and rainbow spectra

A Continual Search for Fresh Views

**Similar to when you are hiking in the mountains;
you know that you are there
even if you are not always at an overlook**



**I love to find different ways of seeing the cross.
The beauty, though, is not that I have a good or important idea,
but that we as a church family are all having them.**

**We are blessed with different ideas each Sunday
by different (talented and worshipful) men.**

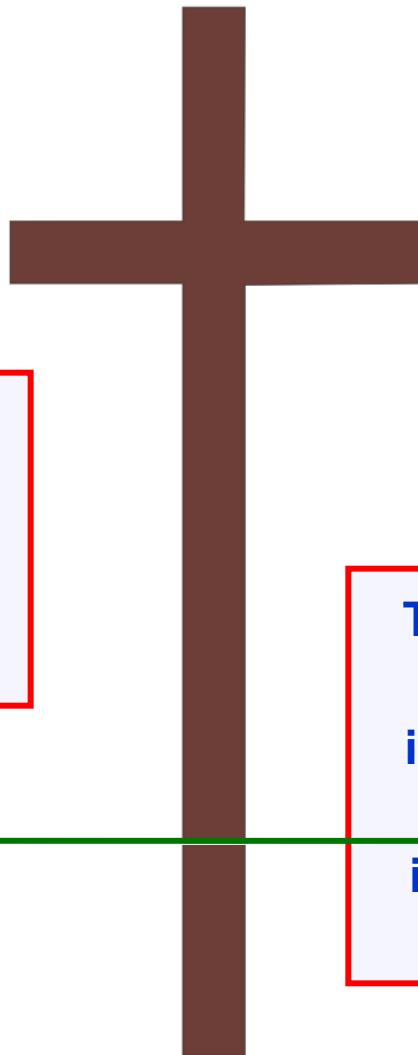
Are we on the Right Path?

Hiking is representative of an overview of Life.



We see what we think is the top of the mountain
(the sky through the trees);
but when we get there it is just another turn of the switchback!
And sometimes there are fantastic overlooks.

How do we view the Cross?



**You are from below;
I am from above.
You are of this world;
I am not of this world.
John 8:23**

**The cross must be anchored
down into the ground;
it's like the hidden part of an
iceberg;**

**it must have “roots” for it to
be able to stand**

**There is an interface between ground (the physical)
and sky (the spiritual)**

Physical vs Spiritual Dimensions

The Communion ties into both the physical and spiritual worlds.

Christ was here with us on this earth. (body and spirit)

Church continues this communion with him in body and spirit.

**For the husband is the head of the wife
as Christ is the head of the church, his body,
of which he is the Savior.**

Ephesians 5:23

**We are in a sense mapping the physical into the spiritual
when we partake of the bread and fruit of the vine.**

**These do not have to be transfigured into
the real body and blood of Christ
to have spiritual power for us.**

Communion with Christ

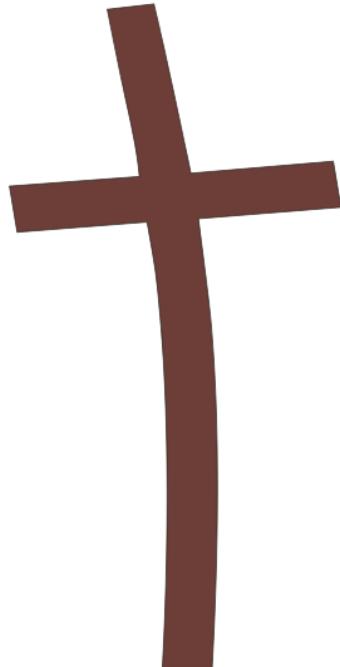


The Search for A Deeper, More Complete Relationship

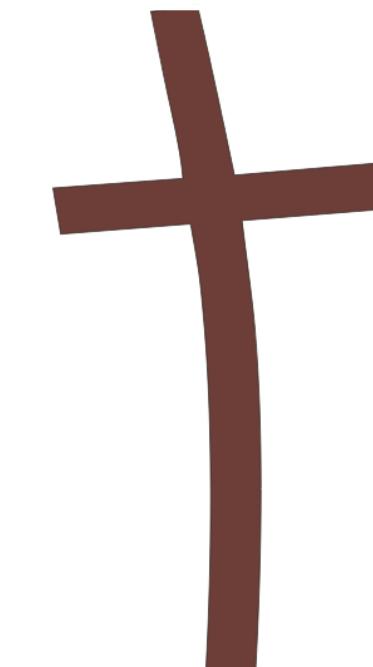
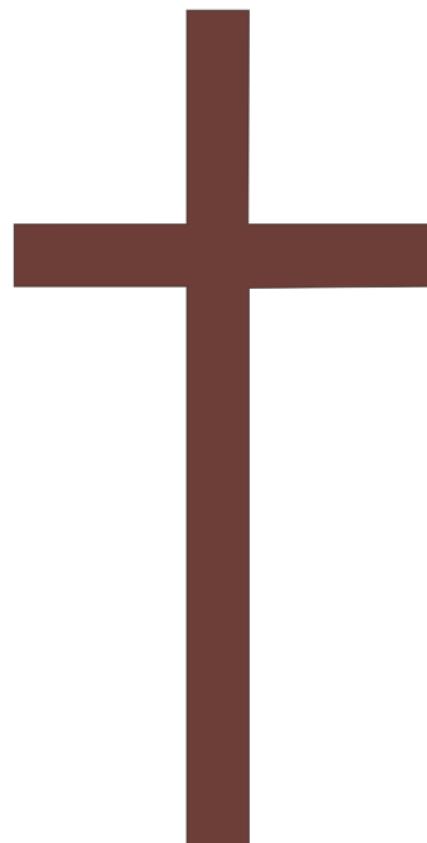
Communion with Christ

Why are the outside crosses curved?

One sinner lashed
out at Jesus



One sinner reached
out to Jesus...



and was promised
paradise

The magnetic power of the Cross - it repels some and attracts some...

Think about the Power of Good and Evil

Definition of Communion

- a joining together of minds or spirits
- intimate fellowship or rapport
- communication: the act of sharing one's thoughts and feelings with another or others
- an intimate relationship with deep understanding
- being of one mind (Tom Marcrom)
- mental compatibility (Jerry Crites)

How would you define it?

HSL: Drawing closer together

Story of Heathkit, my Dad's dog
His mission was to get as close as he could...

Analogy: diffusion of materials that are in close contact

Being of the Same Mind

... make my joy complete by being **like-minded**,
having the same love,
being one in spirit and purpose.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ...

Philippians 2:2, 5

Book Recommendation

Jesus, the One and Only

Beth Moore

Quote

God wants full custody, not just weekend visitation.

Seen on church sign

Imaging the Depths of the Issue (1)

God gives us the opportunity to think the highest thoughts

**How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!**

**Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand.**

**When I awake,
I am still with you.**

Psalm 139:17,18

Does Closeness Guarantee a Relationship?

**There is a typical book or movie story line:
that people put in close contact fall in love:
but the opposite can also be true
“familiarity breeds contempt”**

Can we worship (awe) without communion (closeness)?

Can we commune without worshiping?

“Even the demons believe — and shudder.”
James 2:19

**None of us never really know Christ well enough;
asking for God to intercede for all of us,
even those who do not know Him “at all”**

Can we worship from afar?

**Worship someone from afar (a movie or soap star) –
but this is no relationship!**

**Charlie Brown not being able to talk
to the red-haired girl**



**God is infinite,
but we can approach him
through communion with Christ**

What Draws us to Christ?

Why are we not Drawn to Him?

- His Nature of Goodness
- His Creative Power
- His Sacrificial Love
- Fear of Him
- His Mercy and Grace
- The Power he gives us

- The Promise of Everlasting Life
- The Promise of Being Part of a Family, a Kingdom

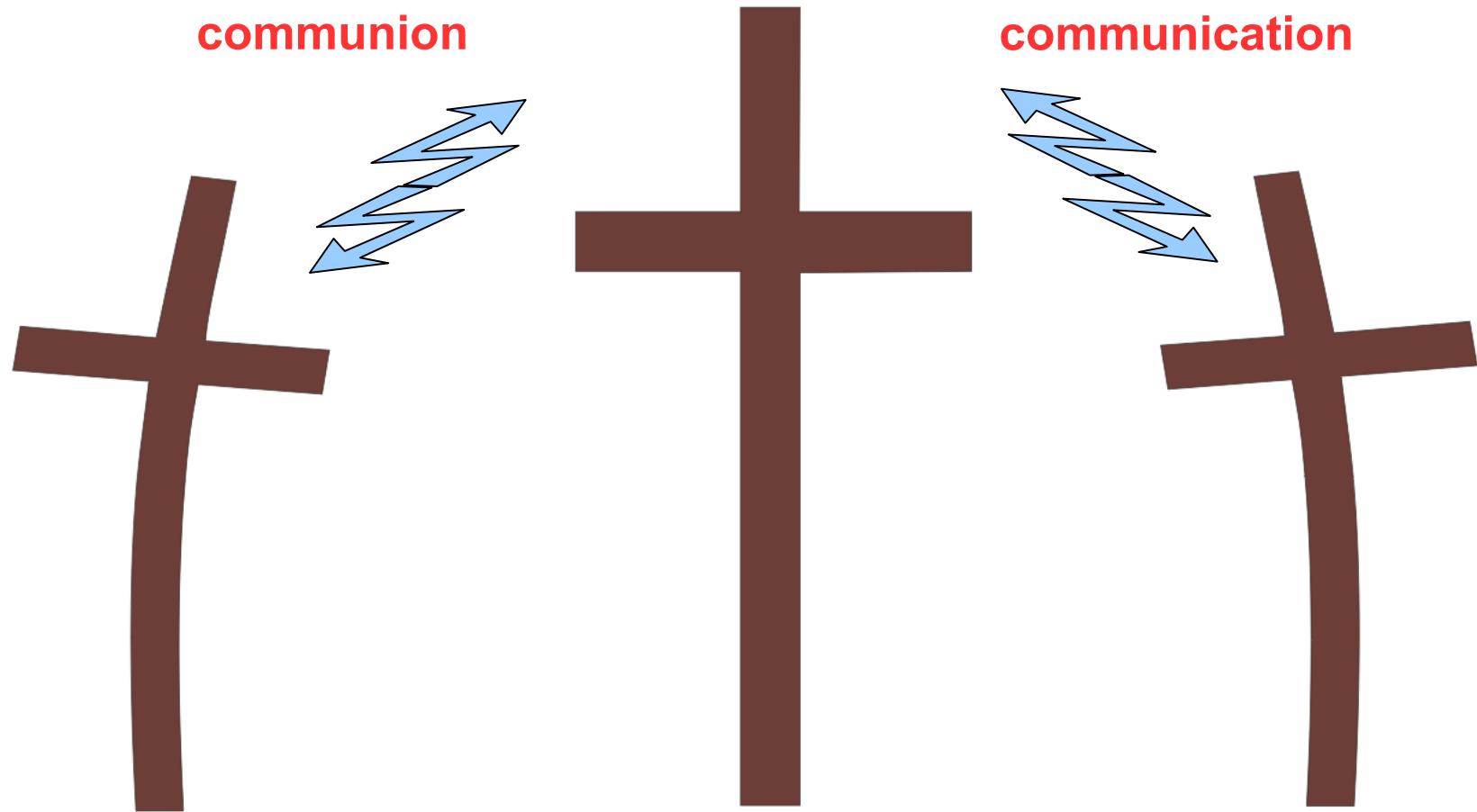
- We are too busy (and selfish)
- The existence of evil in the world
- Pride
- Love of the world
- We don't understand that we really need Him

- He doesn't give us everything we want
- The whole story has grown too familiar and we have grown tired of it (we don't really believe)
- We don't want to give up our ways

**Love should grow deeper all of the time
(but it doesn't always)**

Communion with Christ

They should be curved like this!



Everyone should feel the compelling attraction of the Love of Christ!

The Search for A Deeper, More Complete Relationship

God Wants to Attract Us All (1)

**"No one can come to me
unless the Father who sent me **draws** him,
and I will raise him up at the last day.**

**It is written in the Prophets:
'They will all be taught by God.'**

**Everyone who listens to the Father
and learns from him
comes to me.**

John 6:44-45

God Wants to Attract Us All (2)

It ought to be like this:

**But I,
when I am lifted up from the earth,
will **draw** all men to myself."**

John 12: 32

God Wants to Attract Us All (3)

**This is good, and pleases God our Savior,
who wants all men to be saved
and to come to a knowledge of the truth.**

1 Timothy 2:3-4

Satan Wants to Attract Us, Too!

**Even from your own number men will arise
and distort the truth
in order to **draw** away disciples after them.**

Acts 20:30

We are “Called” to Come to Him

There are many examples of being called by God
in the Old and New Testament

Many were called in the OT: Abraham, Gideon, Jonah, etc

The apostles were called by Jesus

Christ Himself was called to be High Priest (Hebrews 5:4)

At the Lord's Table we are called
to continually renew our relationship with Christ.

Who did Christ come to Earth to See (and Call) (1)?

Us? Because we are such great followers?

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law ...
complained to his disciples,

"Why do you eat and drink
with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

Jesus answered them,
"It is not the healthy who need a doctor,
but the sick.

I have not come to call the righteous,
but sinners to repentance."

Luke 5:30-32

Who did Christ come to Earth to See (and Call) (2)?

Us! But not for the reason we might hope!

**“For the Son of Man came
to seek and to save what was lost.”**

Luke 19:10

Surprise! That includes all of us!

Quote

I've never heard of anyone
who thought a rainbow was ugly.

Lynn Anderson

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Joy

Love

Fellowship

Communication / Prayer

Images and Symbols

Kingdom

Service

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V End Game

Communication Fundamentals

- **Common Basis for Understanding**
a common logic system
- **Symbols/Pattern**
using symbols and characters
- **Meaning (definitions)**
assignment to symbols, letters, and then words
(which can have various meanings)
- **Feeling**
voice and attitude

Can you Talk to Animals?

Do you ever talk to a pet?

**I used to “talk to the cat” – meowing back and forth;
was this communication?
it was communion of a sort**

The intelligence gap between us and God is similarly very, very wide.

**It is like trying to express the act of Creation
in terms that the layman can understand.**

**As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

Isaiah 55:9

Animals Sometimes Understand Better than We Do

**The ox knows his master,
the donkey his owner's manger,
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand."**

Isaiah 1:3

... but God wants us to “reason” together (Isaiah 1:18)

Communication doesn't always need words

Job and his friends' words:

It is hard to tell what was going on –

none were wise...

but Job's relationship was what counted.

Communication does not consist of just words...

Communication with Cara –

laughing and smiling (sticking her tongue out)

Communication can be:

- a touch: holding hands, snuggling together**
- a look: like when Jesus looked at Peter**
- an action: which sometimes speak louder than words**

Symbols and Patterns (1)

Computers: security

0's and 1's

simple in concept but not in content

**Typing letters that don't "go" anywhere
due to change of program focus**

**Typing with your fingers shifted
and typing things like "liar" instead of "list";**

**Sometimes we think that we are communicating
when we actually aren't!**

**Mere words are not sufficient;
there must be an exchange of meaning.**

**I remember being naive about learning a language -
as a child I thought was just letter and/or word substitution.**

At DLC, Dr. Rodney Cloud taught about "idioms".

Symbols and Patterns (2)

Snoopy is a symbol of a “cute” or comforting pattern.
how do you draw or develop such?

There are many symbols that make you think of particular things.
This is what advertisers make use of.



What kind of symbol is the cross to you?

The Importance of Language

**But the LORD came down to see the city
and the tower that the men were building.**

The LORD said,

**"If as one people speaking the same language
they have begun to do this,
then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.**

**Come, let us go down and confuse their language
so they will not understand each other."**

**So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth,
and they stopped building the city.**

**That is why it was called Babel -
because there the LORD confused the language
of the whole world.**

From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Genesis 11:5-9

Words and their Meaning - Pointing the Way

There is no ultimate truth about life or the universe
which can be experienced in words.

Whatever it is, **it has to be experienced directly.**

Words are symbols,
never to be confused with the thing itself.

The most that symbols can do is point the way.

Your task is to walk down the road,
not to worship the signpost.

Birnbaum

This doesn't mean a visitation from God,
but a level of understanding from deep within your soul.

Words and their Meaning - Beyond Expression

**In the same way,
the Spirit helps us in our weakness.**

**We do not know what we ought to pray for,
but the Spirit himself intercedes for us
with groans that words cannot express.**

**And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit,
because the Spirit intercedes for the saints
in accordance with God's will.**

Romans 8:26-28

Words and their Meaning - Aha!

When we read the poem,
or see the play or picture,
or hear the music,
it is as though a light were turned on inside us.

We say, 'Ah! I recognize that!'

That is something that I obscurely felt to be going on
in and about me,
but I didn't know what it was and couldn't express it.

But now that the artist has made its image -
imaged it forth - for me,

I can possess and take hold of it and make it my own
and turn it into
a source of knowledge and strength.

Dorothy Sayers

Sometimes we have to be able to read between the lines.

Words and their Meaning - Communication

Communication:

**Getting my thought into your mind
exactly as I thought it.**

**Words are the bridges
over which ideas are transported
into the minds of the hearers.**

Batsell Barrett Baxter

Have you ever played the “telephone” game?

**Transferring a thought from one mind to another
with minimum distortion.**

Quote

**Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee -
and just as hard to sleep after.**

Seen on church sign

Do We Listen?

We must really listen to God.

Jesus said to them,

**"If God were your Father,
you would love me,
for I came from God
and now am here.**

**I have not come on my own;
but he sent me.**

Why is my language not clear to you?

Because you are unable to hear what I say...

He who belongs to God hears what God says.

**The reason you do not hear
is that you do not belong to God."**

John 8:42-43, 47

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

John 10:27

Communion in Song: Jesus, Let Us Come to Know You

**Jesus, let us come to know you;
Let us see You face to face.
Touch us, hold us, use us, mold us;
Only let us live in You.**

**Jesus, draw us ever nearer;
Hold us in your loving arms.
Wrap us in your gentle presence;
And when the end comes bring us home**

Michael Card

Communion in Song: Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

Jesus, **keep** me **near** the cross;
there a precious fountain,
free to all, a healing stream,
flows from Calvary's mountain.

Fanny Crosby

Do We Really Understand?

**Story of the Duck church -- was there any real communication?
Amen; hypocrites**

Commercial -- bird flying off the cliff to the dismay of other birds

**Contrast to the full life of flying -
the freedom we are given by the cross**

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.

Galatians 5:1

The Lord says:

**"These people come near to me with their mouth
and honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me."**

Isaiah 29:13

We Commune through Song

The music is beautiful to us -
that doesn't matter physically to God,
but any means by which the worshiper experiences
the magnitude of God and His beauty
is approved by God
and He feels the “beauty” of that activity.

God doesn't recognize the beauty of the song
save in our use of it to better experience the beauty of God.

He would surely approve anything that causes or helps us
to magnify His Name and Glory.

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.
Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,
always giving thanks to God the Father for everything,
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:19-20

Jesus is Tenderly Calling

**Jesus is calling the weary to rest,
Calling today, calling today,
Bring Him your burden and you shall be blest;
He will not turn you away.**

**Calling today, calling today,
Jesus is calling, is tenderly calling today.**

Fanny Crosby

Communication must be Effective

Hike on AT to Hot Springs, NC.

**Jerry Crites was the driver and was to pick us up at
“the end of the trail”.**

**We waited at trail’s end on one side of the city,
while Jerry waited at the other end of the city.**

Communication must be Effective

**Remember the time I announced at church
that Grady Prater was dead.**

**Benny and an elder went to see the widow,
consoling her on the death of “Mr. Prater.”**

Later there were calls that Grady was seen at Walmart.

It had been his brother that had died.

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- Joy
- Love
- Fellowship
- Communication / Prayer
- Images and Symbols
- Kingdom
- Service
- Teaching

V End Game

The “Last Supper”: A Fellowship Meal

**What we think of as the “Communion” service
is part of an actual supper.**

**A special part emerged from the supper
that became something much larger
and overshadowed the meal.**

Was it the “Last” Supper? Or the “First”?

Bartholomew
James <
Andrew

Judas
Peter
John

Thomas
James >
Philip

Matthew
Thaddeus
Simon

Judas

Leonardo picked the moment of astonishment when Jesus proclaimed that someone would betray Him

What moment would you have picked for your painting?

When He discussed the eating of his body and the drinking of his blood?

The History of the Supper (intro)

**In the following slides,
the gospels are blended and the text colored
to show which source was actually used.**

**There is some question about the exact timing
and proper blending of the accounts,
but this is my estimate.**

Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22

The History of the Supper (1)

**On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread,
when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb,
the disciples came to Jesus and asked,
"Where do you want us to go and make preparations
for you to eat the Passover?"**

The History of the Supper (2)

**So Jesus sent two of his disciples,
Peter and John, saying,**

**"Go into the city,
and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.**

**As you enter the city,
a certain man carrying a jar of water will meet you.**

**Follow him to the house that he enters,
and say to the owner of the house,**

The History of the Supper (3)

'The Teacher says:

My appointed time is near.

**I am going to celebrate the Passover
with my disciples at your house.**

**Where is my guest room,
where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'**

**He will show you a large upper room,
all furnished and ready.**

Make preparations for us there."

The History of the Supper (4)

So the disciples left,
went into the city
and found things just as Jesus had told them.

[Then] the disciples did as Jesus had directed them
and prepared the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve.

When the hour came [to eat],
Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table.

The History of the Supper (5)

And he said to them,

"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

For I tell you,

I will not eat it again
until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

This shows how much Christ wanted to have this time together.

After taking the cup,

he gave thanks and said,

"Take this and divide it among you.

For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine
until the kingdom of God comes."

Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22

The History of the Supper (6)

While they were eating,
Jesus took bread,
gave thanks and broke it,
and gave it to his disciples,
saying,
"Take and eat;
this is my body given for you;
do this in remembrance of me."

The History of the Supper (7)

In the same way,

after the supper he took the cup,
gave thanks and offered it to them,
saying,

"Drink from it, all of you.

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
which is poured out for many
for the forgiveness of sins.

I tell you the truth,

I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on
until that day when I drink it anew with you
in my Father's kingdom,
the kingdom of God."

And they all drank from it.

Our communion is ongoing and incomplete - will be completed in the kingdom of heaven

The History of the Supper (8)

And while they were eating, he said,
"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me
— one who is eating with me.

The hand of him who is going to betray me
is with mine on the table.

The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed,
but woe to that man who betrays him."

They began to question among themselves
which of them it might be who would do this.
They were very sad and began to say to him
one after the other,
"Surely not I, Lord?"

The History of the Supper (9)

Jesus replied,

"It is one of the Twelve.

The one who has dipped bread

[with] his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.

The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him.

But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man!

It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Then Judas,

the one who would betray him,

said,

"Surely not I, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered,

"Yes, it is you."

Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22

The History of the Supper (10)

There is much more about the betrayal and the actions of Judas in John chapter 13:18-30.

- **Fulfillment of scripture**
- **Jesus was troubled in spirit**
- **Peter had John ask Jesus who it was**
- **When Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him**
- **Jesus tells him to quickly do what he has to do**
- **Other disciples did not understand what was going on**
- **Judas leaves the group and goes into the night**

The History of the Supper (11)

**When they had sung a hymn,
they went out to the Mount of Olives.**

Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22

Outline of the Class

Communion with Christ

I Introduction

Objectives of Class

Description of the Event (Last Supper)

History (Connection to Passover)

Interpretation (Table or Altar)

II Need

Our point of view

God's point of view

III What God/Christ did

IV Our Response

IV The Value and Meaning of The Communion

Joy

Love

Fellowship

Communication / Prayer

Images and Symbols

Kingdom

Service

Teaching

V End Game

The Legacy of the Supper - Initial Passover

Passover

What is the purpose of the Passover Meal?

**To signify the exodus from Egypt
and the deliverance by the Passover Angel**

Passover Instructions (Exodus 12)

Preparation Start Date: On the tenth day of the first month

choose the main course:

**a year-old male sheep or goat without defect for each household
(can share with nearest neighbor).**

**Actual Event Date: On the fourteenth day of the month,
with the entire nation present, slaughter the sacrifice at twilight.**

**Protection: Put some blood on the sides and tops of the doorframes
of their houses (a sign for the Passover angel).**

**Posture: Tuck cloak into belt, wear sandals on feet and have staff in
hand (ready to go). [first instance of fast food, or food to go?]**

**Meal: Eat the meat roasted over the fire (not raw or cooked in water),
along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast
(there is no direct reference to wine - but they had to drink
something)**

Burn the left-overs. Eat in haste.

The History of the Supper - Anticipation

And he said to them,

**"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover
with you before I suffer.**

For I tell you,

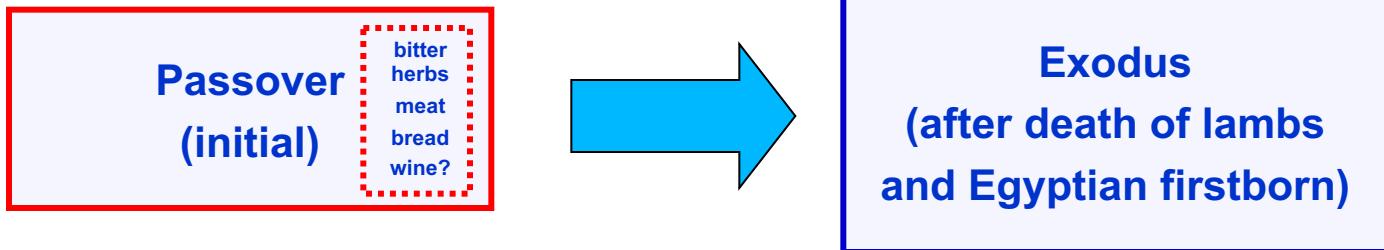
**I will not eat it again
until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."**

Luke 22:15-16

This shows how much Christ wanted
to have this time together.

Our communion is ongoing and incomplete -
It will be completed in the kingdom of heaven

The Legacy of the Supper - After Passover



communion with God
(pillar of smoke and fire)
during the Exodus

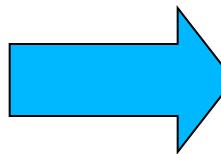
The Legacy of the Supper - Memorial Passover

scripture on purpose:
Exodus 12:17, 25-27

To remember and
teach

Passover
(initial)

bitter
herbs
meat
bread
wine?
.....



Exodus
(after death of lambs
and Egyptian firstborn)

communion with God
(pillar of smoke and fire)
during the Exodus

Passover
(memorial)

reproduce conditions

a few major attempts to restore

What is the purpose of the Passover Meal?

To remember and teach others

Purpose of the Passover Observances

**"Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread...
as a lasting ordinance
for the generations to come.**

**When you enter the land that the LORD
will give you as he promised,
observe this ceremony.**

**And when your children ask you,
'What does this ceremony mean to you?'
then tell them,**

**'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD,
who passed over the houses
of the Israelites in Egypt
and spared our homes
when he struck down the Egyptians.' "**

Exodus 12:17, 25-27

Passover Memorial Instructions (Exodus 12)

Celebrate it as a regular festival to the LORD

For seven days eat bread made without yeast

On the first day [fourteenth day of the month]
remove the yeast from your houses,
for whoever eats anything with yeast in it
from the first day through the seventh
must be cut off from Israel.

On the first day hold a sacred assembly,
and another one on the seventh day [the twenty-first day of the month].

Do no work at all on these days,
except to prepare food for everyone to eat —
that is all you may do.

For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses.

There were critical rules concerning the preparation of the meal
Is the meal the important thing?
Or a vehicle to help us to remember?

Passover Memorial Restrictions (Exodus 12)

No foreigner is to eat of it.

**Any slave you have bought
may eat of it
after you have circumcised him
a temporary resident and a hired worker may not eat of it.**

**It must be eaten inside one house;
take none of the meat outside the house.**

Do not break any of the bones. [fulfillment of prophecy]

The whole community of Israel must celebrate it.

**If some could not celebrate the Passover on the right day
because they were ceremonially unclean on account of a dead body,
they could postpone it exactly one month. (Numbers 9)**

Passover Tradition that Developed

The four cups of wine served at the Passover meal represented the four expressions of deliverance, or “I wills” of God in Exodus 6:6-7:

- “I will bring out,”
- “I will deliver,”
- “I will redeem,” and
- “I will take.”

The third cup was traditionally taken after the supper was eaten. This is the cup of redemption.

“Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.’

Exodus 6:6-7

Theme: We will be God’s people and he will be our God...

What importance can we give to these traditions?
They are not referenced to in the Biblical text.

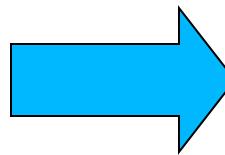
The Legacy of the Supper - Memorial Passover

scripture on purpose:
Exodus 12:17, 25-27

To remember and
teach

Passover
(initial)

bitter
herbs
meat
bread
wine?
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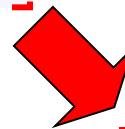
Exodus
(after death of lambs
and Egyptian firstborn)

communion with God
(pillar of smoke and fire)
during the Exodus

Passover
(memorial)

reproduce conditions

a few major attempts
to restore



Lord's Supper
or
“Last Supper”
(initial)

Quote

**Do you know God paints every color
on a butterfly with His finger?**

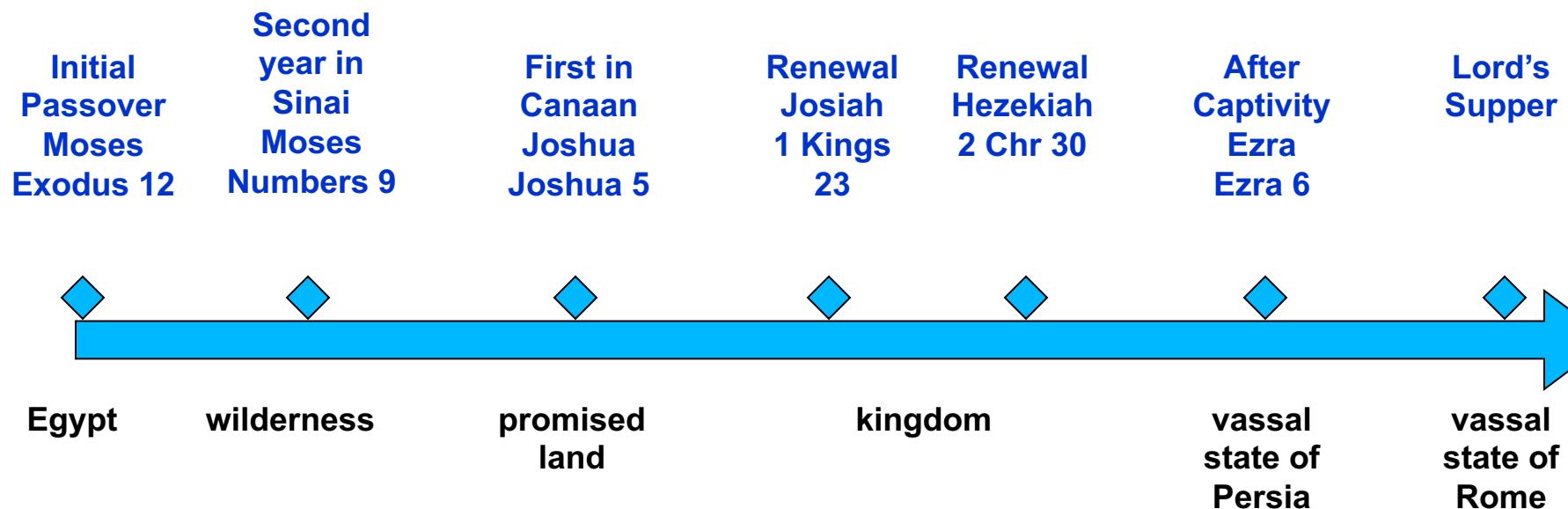
Jim Stovall

A dying child's viewpoint.

From the movie, The Ultimate Gift

Timeline of the Passover

Recorded Occurrences



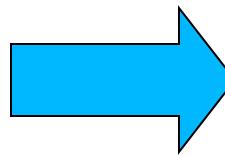
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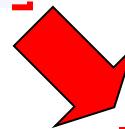
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or
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The Legacy of the Supper - Immediate Context

The Immaculate Conception

The birth of Jesus

Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

Left at the Temple discussing the Law

Began his ministry - gathered disciples

Chose apostles

Baptized by John

Toured the land and taught people

Cleansed the temple

Transfigured on the mountain

Triumphal entry into Jerusalem

Judas agrees to betray Christ

Preparation for Passover

Jesus washes the disciples' feet

Jesus teaches the disciples in depth

- mansions -

- vine and branches -

- the Comforter promised -

Peter's betrayal predicted

Lord's Supper

or

“Last Supper”

(initial)

The Great Intercessory Prayer

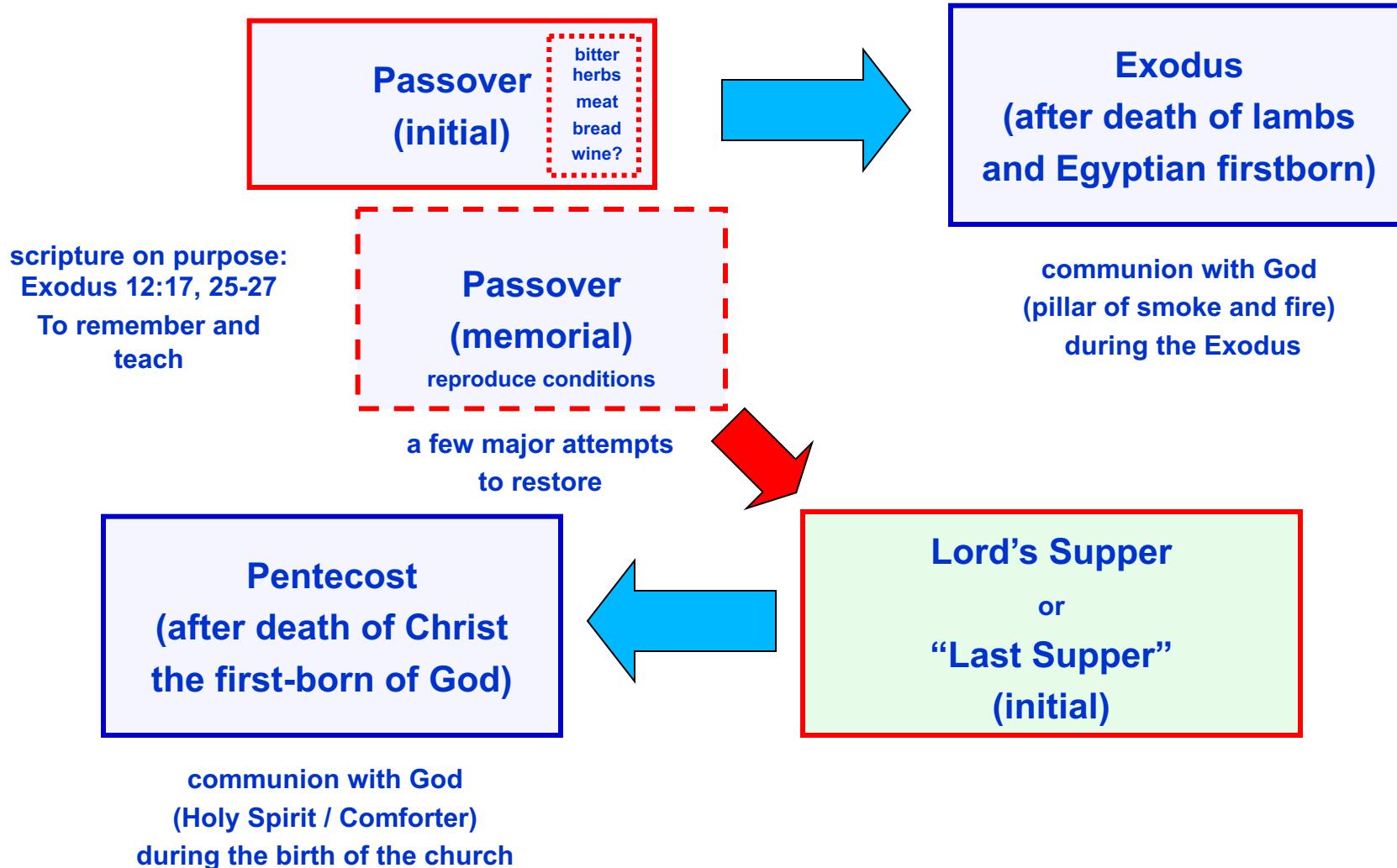
The group sung a hymn and went to the Garden

Jesus underwent intense periods of prayer

Jesus was arrested, put on trial and crucified

Jesus rose on the third day

The Legacy of the Supper - Memorial Passover



Purpose of the Lord's Supper

To teach about the meaning of the upcoming death and sacrifice of Christ.

To usher in a new kingdom.

To commune with each other before separation.

Common Aspects of the Passover and the Supper

Each event was a meal with a purpose: To remember and teach
Exodus 12:17, 25-27; 1 Corinthians 11:26
the event became a “wrapper” for its real meaning

Each was an initial event that was followed by a memorial
How close were the conditions to be reproduced?
There have been attempts at rejuvenation through the years

Each was associated with a death that initiated a new age
Egypt's firstborn and the lambs of the Israelites:
and Christ, the firstborn of God

Common Aspects of the Passover and the Supper

Sharing is involved in each:

was it communion or fellowship?

was it a period of soberness or a joyful feast?

the real communion occurred afterwards:

 during the Exodus, and in the garden

 the communion was to ready them for the road ahead

Each had a particular eating attitude or position:

Passover: standing, ready to escape Egypt for the promised land

Supper: reclining, ready for the garden and the cross

Did each group understand what was coming?

Quote

**We serve a God of second chances,
and remember,
with Him sin knows no size.**

contributed by Martha Swanger

**How many sub-chances do we get?
Is it similar to the 70×7 times of forgiveness principle?**

Communication must be Effective - Language (1)

**Sometimes we have a foreign speaker at a conference:
no one can understand a word that he says.**

**He doesn't know, of course;
he thinks he is communicating well.**

How does that feel?

**Sometimes we have had an interpreter,
a fellow countryman,
but one who has such an accent
that you cannot understand,
or you cannot concentrate long enough to stay with him.**

**We look at each other and give a shrug --
the universal symbol for non-comprehension.**

Communication must be Effective - Language (2)

Poor communication is like knowing a little bit of a foreign language - we may speak a few words of it to impress, but when a native hears it, and thinks we know the he then begins rattling off conversation, we realize how incapable we are to speak the language.

Our phrases of praise and prayer are like that; we have just picked them up around.

From Juan Carlos Ortiz

I remember one time that we were traveling as a family and Dad contacted a Mexican ham radio operator.

My sister Dona began speaking Spanish, and then the excited Mexican poured out such a flood of Spanish in return that she could not understand.

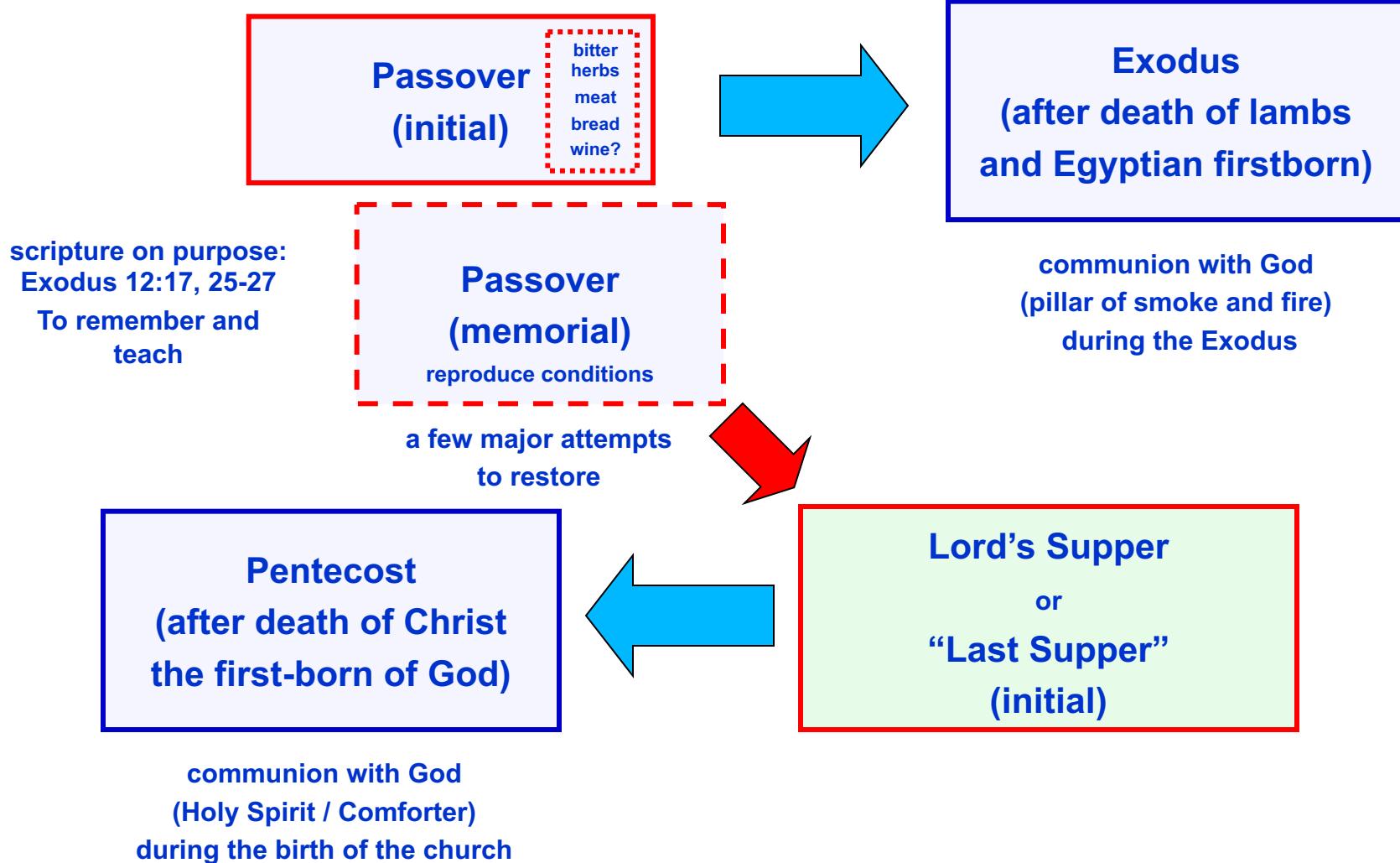
Communication must be Effective - Language (3)

**What language will there be in heaven? (from Hi Jones)
(we assume our own?)**

**In heaven there will be a much higher level of language
and ability to communicate!**

**The ultimate in communication in heaven:
There will be no more limitations caused by distance
due to the speed of light
or the reduction of energy with distance squared**

The Legacy of the Supper - Memorial Passover



Purpose of the Lord's Supper

To teach about the meaning of the upcoming death and sacrifice of Christ.

To usher in a new kingdom.

To commune with each other before separation.

Core Components of the Passover and the Supper

There were four core components of the Passover:
unleavened bread, lamb, bitter herbs, wine (assumed)
preparation was to be performed under critical rules
Is the meal the important thing or the symbolism and meaning of it?

Parallels:

unleavened bread -->	body of Christ
lamb -->	Christ in an overall sense
bitter herbs -->	wine mixed with gall given to Christ on the cross?
wine -->	blood of Christ

Christ the Lamb

The lamb was chosen early and “prepared” - Exodus 12:3-6

Like Christ (John 1)

Sacrificing the firstborn lamb to redeem firstborn sons (Exodus 13:14ff):

Christ put himself into this form to fulfill this (Philippians 2:5-8)

We are all now considered “firstborn” and redeemed (PDE)

Christ only had to do this once (see Hebrews 9:12) -

because as the Lamb he was healed and rose again

John’s gospel makes it sound as though Jesus was being crucified just when the Passover lambs were being slaughtered for Passover celebrations.

Conrad Gempf, Mealtime Habits of the Messiah

Does the exact timing matter?

Or is it the principle of the thing?

Book Suggestion

Mealtime Habits of the Messiah

Conrad Gempf

Time Issues

Getting rid of the yeast for 7 days before...

No yeast because there was no time to prepare in the wilderness - Ex 12:39

The bad influence Pharisees was considered a “yeast” - Matthew 16:6

Could this relate to Passion week? Perhaps the attacks of the Pharisees?

The Passover was eaten at twilight, probably the same as the Supper.

PDE: symbolic of the closing of the day - the end of light

The Passover was eaten on the fourteenth,

but from the fifteenth to the twenty-first there was a festival (Lev 23:4-8)
no work performed on the last day

At midnight the angel struck -- is there a timing issue?

Jesus was on trial in the middle of the night

The Vigil (don't hear about this much): Webster: “watch on the eve of a feast”

Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt,
on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil

to honor the LORD for the generations to come. Ex 12:42

Does this compare to the evening in the garden and the vigil by the cross?

Do we tend to slack off if the memorials are only a year apart?

Other Comparisons

Physical restrictions (circumcision)

Fire/Cloud: like the Comforter? John 14, Acts 2

Presence: commune

Water from the Rock --> Christ; Exodus 17 and 1 Corinthians 10:4

Placing a hand on the lamb before slaughter

- innocent eyes
- putting our hand on Christ? (touching Him)

They left 430 years “to the very day” after they came - Ex 12:41

Communion in Tough Circumstances

- Job in his misery with his three friends
- The Israelites in the wilderness, and then as conquerors
- David and his men in the caves
- The apostles with Jesus
 - Built on three years of communion during the ministry, all events added to a “communion” and relationship.
 - 1) called to an underdog ministry
 - 2) watching Jesus’ distress in the garden
 - 3) trying to hide during the trial and crucifixion
 - 4) together without Jesus after the ascension
 - 5) spreading the gospel after Pentecost

There is a similar communion or fellowship on a rough hiking or camping trip.

On the Threshold of Adventure

**The actual Passover does not seem to be
a fellowship or communal meal;
it was to be eaten standing up,
ready to take off on a great adventure with God.**

**In a similar way,
the Last Supper was a meal eaten
in an atmosphere of nervous anticipation
of the great historical event
that was about to occur.**

These were “launching points”

PDE

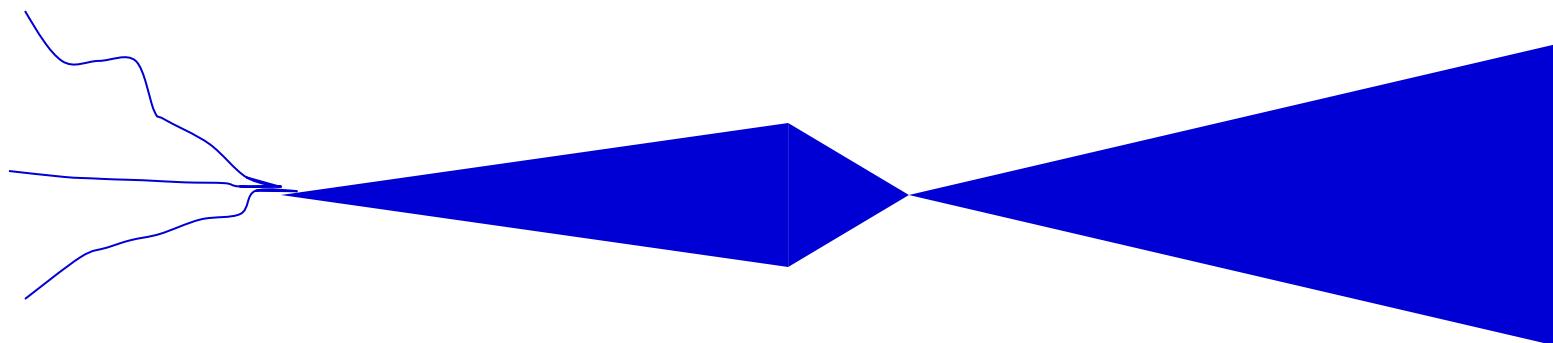
Development of Disciples' Communion with Christ

Choosing
and
gathering
the
disciples

Growing
relationship

Bottleneck:
crisis at the
cross

Re-expansion



Communion with Christ in the Crisis

The Passover was an intimate event

Jesus washes the disciples' feet

Judas, betrayed Christ to the Jews, is given the “sop” by Jesus; later in an intimate event he kisses Jesus to mark him

John asks Jesus who the betrayer is, and later is brave enough to enter into the trial area

Peter claims to never forsake him, but his perspective is changed when he realizes that he has misunderstood Jesus' purpose; He denies Christ and later weeps because of it

John and Peter stayed close during the trial and at the cross

Joseph and Nicodemus prepare the body for burial

John and Peter ran to the tomb to see if Christ was there; women also go there -- Mary Magdalene is visited by Him

Thomas later seeks to feel the hands of Christ

Quote

Indeed,
experience shows that
it is only the mature Christian man
who can begin to see a little
of the “size” of his Father.

J.B. Phillips

Communication must be Effective

The ‘email’ communication technique.

A father who only “communicates” through e-mail to his sons.

**Because of the poor relationship,
the boys won’t even look at it.**

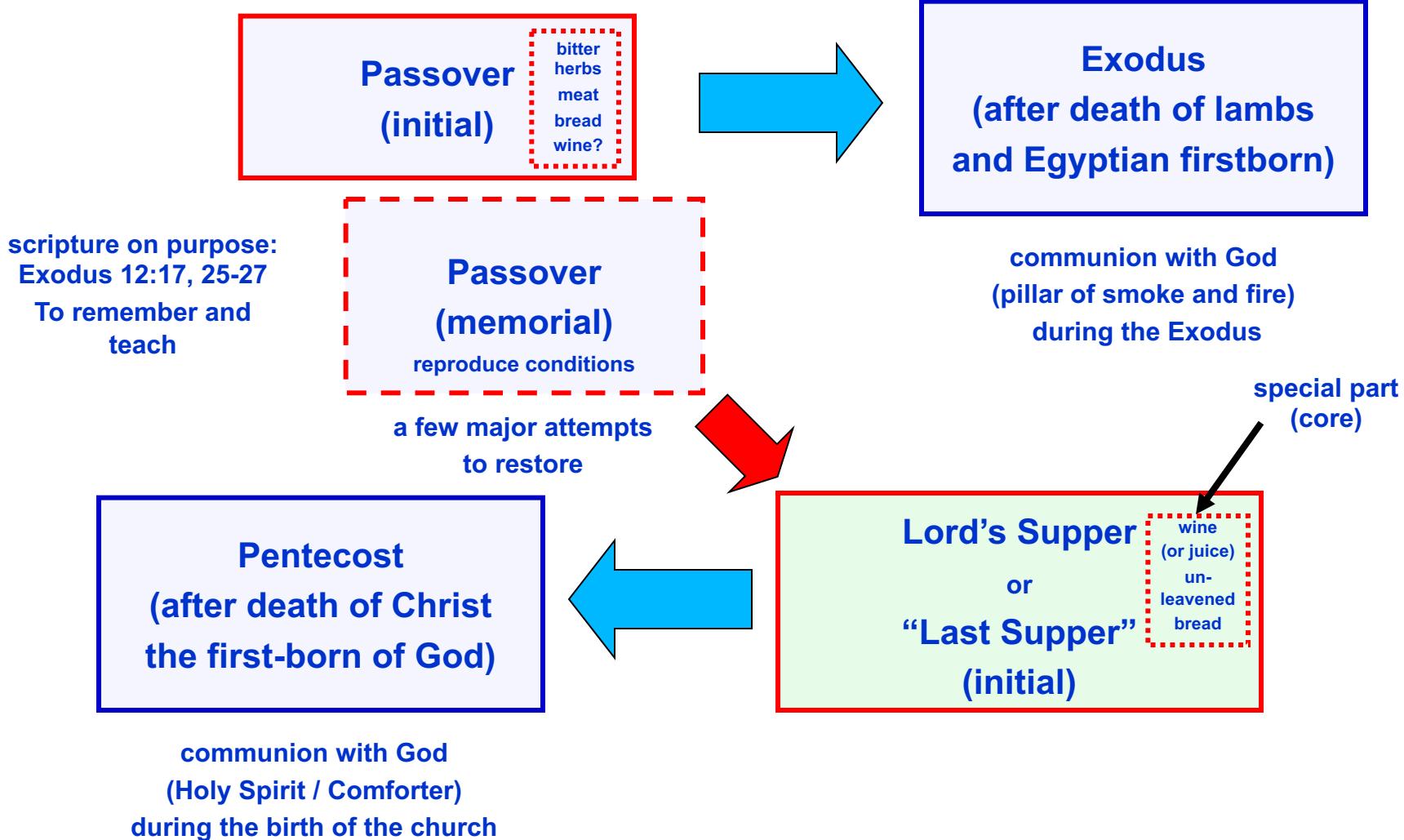
Is this an effective way to communicate?

**The information is there,
but you don’t have to read it.
You have to love the author to read it.**

**We have the same problem with the Bible.
Direct contact is better;
but we seldom have that luxury w/ God
except through our own prayer.**

**God didn’t just “email”.
He came and gave of Himself!**

The Legacy of the Supper - Core



Communion in Song: O Draw Me, Lord

O Draw Me, Lord
O Draw Me, Lord
O Draw Me, Lord
And I'll Run
After You

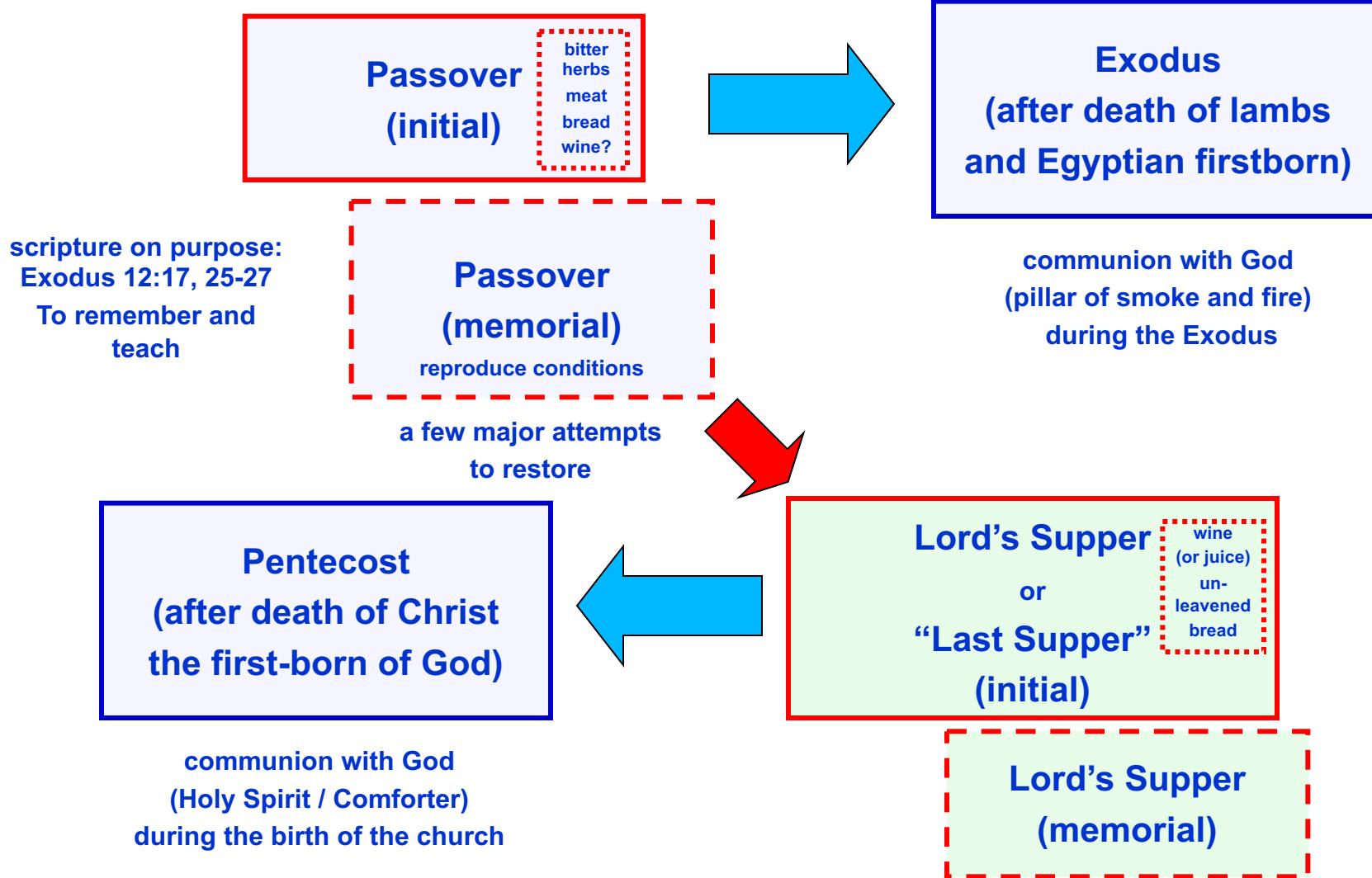
David Baroni

The Core of the Communion

**Do we recount the entire Passover meal,
or just focus on a special part?**

We must keep thinking about this...

The Legacy of the Supper - Memorial Passover



Purpose of the Lord's Supper Observances

For whenever you eat this bread
and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death
until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:26

The Legacy of the Supper (info 1)

**The Last Supper, in a sense,
is also in actuality the Last Passover,
as the Passover lamb was now present among them.**

**The Passover has been transformed into the Holy Communion.
Now once for all time.**

The Legacy of the Supper (info 2)

**The Passover was the first event in a new era,
but they were not in the new land -
they were at its threshold.**

**The Supper (Communion) was also the first event in a new era,
but they were not yet in the new kingdom -
they were at its threshold.**

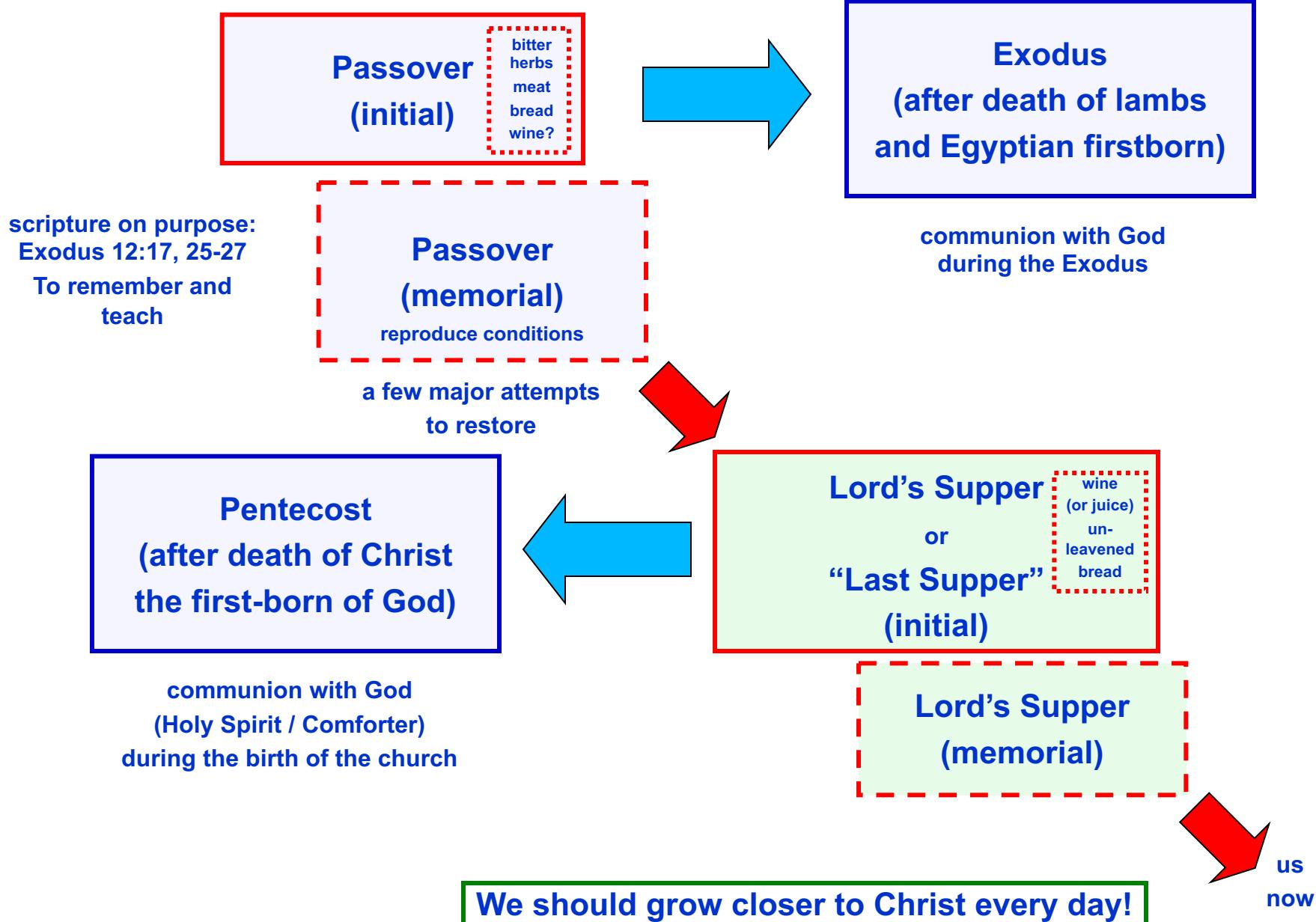
The Legacy of the Supper (info 3)

Arguably, Passover is the most important Jewish holiday just as the Exodus is the most important event in Jewish history.

How much chutzpah, how much nerve would it take to hijack this holiday? ... not only has he changed the meal to commemorate an event other than the exodus, namely his death, but this first “remembrance” meal happens before the event it commemorates.

Conrad Gempf, Mealtime Habits of the Messiah

The Legacy of the Supper - the Future



Looking Forward

**When one of those at the table with Him heard this,
he said to Jesus,
“Blessed are those who will eat at the feast
in the kingdom of God.”**

Luke 14:15

**We participate in the supper
looking toward the hope
of the new heaven and the new earth.**

Come to the Table, by John Mark Hicks

Book Suggestion

Come to the Table

John Mark Hicks 

Outline of the Class

Communion with Christ

I Introduction

- Objectives of Class
- Discussion of Communication
- Description of the Event (Last Supper)
- History (Connection to Passover)
- Interpretation (Table or Altar)

II Need

- Our point of view
- God's point of view

III What God/Christ did

IV Our Response

IV The Value and Meaning of The Communion

- Joy
- Love
- Fellowship
- Communication / Prayer
- Images and Symbols
- Kingdom
- Service
- Teaching

V End Game

Thinking about Food

Compared to other biographies

(except maybe those of famous gourmets and chefs)

the gospels are bursting with meals and foods and daily bread.

Conrad Gempf, Mealtime Habits of the Messiah

Meals with Jesus in Luke



from Come to the Table, by John Mark Hicks, p. 55.

The Bible and Food

God miraculously furnished food for the Israelites:

manna

quail

water

He was leading them to the Promised Land...

a land **flowing** with milk and honey! (Exodus 33:3)

Jesus said that He was the Bread (John 6:31, 48, 51)

and the Water of Life (John 4:14)

Reasons for a Banquet or Feast

Memorial

Celebration

- marriage
- finding what was lost

Worship

- three commanded feasts

Social/Political (fellowship)

Celebration for Finding Lost Items

Luke 15 - there was rejoicing when all of the lost items were found

Sheep: Shepherd calls his friends and neighbors to celebrate

Coins: Woman call her friends and neighbors to celebrate

Prodigal Son: servants and family (but not accepted by brother)

I tell you that in the same way
there will be more **rejoicing in heaven**
over one sinner who repents
than over ninety-nine righteous persons
who do not need to repent.

Luke 15:7

Interesting Banquets of the Bible

Think about the fellowship aspects (good or bad) of each

Saul eating with Samuel around the time he was anointed

Saul (with and without David)

David (taking care of Mephibosheth)

Naboth (bad)

Adonijah (bad)

Laban

Abimelech

Amnon (bad)

With angels (Abraham, Samson's parents)

Samson (lost his future wife)

Wedding at Cana

Meals in the Parables

Banquets with Jesus (a learning experience)

Feasts with Joseph and his brothers – link back to previous class; Joy?

Fellowship?

Think of the anxiety at the first one, also at the second
but which was relieved by Joseph's revelation

Quote

**The trouble with many people today
is that they have not found
a God big enough for human needs.**

J.B. Phillips

Communication - Signs

**Petroglyphs:
what were they trying to say?**

**Is the message or meaning clear
or unclear?**

Where they just showing off?

**Were these just symbols (art)
or more complex messages?**

**Why did they draw on one particular
rock and not another one?**

**Did they use them like a “white board”
for their plans, history, etc?**



Communication - Symbols

The rainbow was a great symbol -- so is the cross!

There is association at a glance with a depth of meaning.

Communion in Song: Draw me Nearer

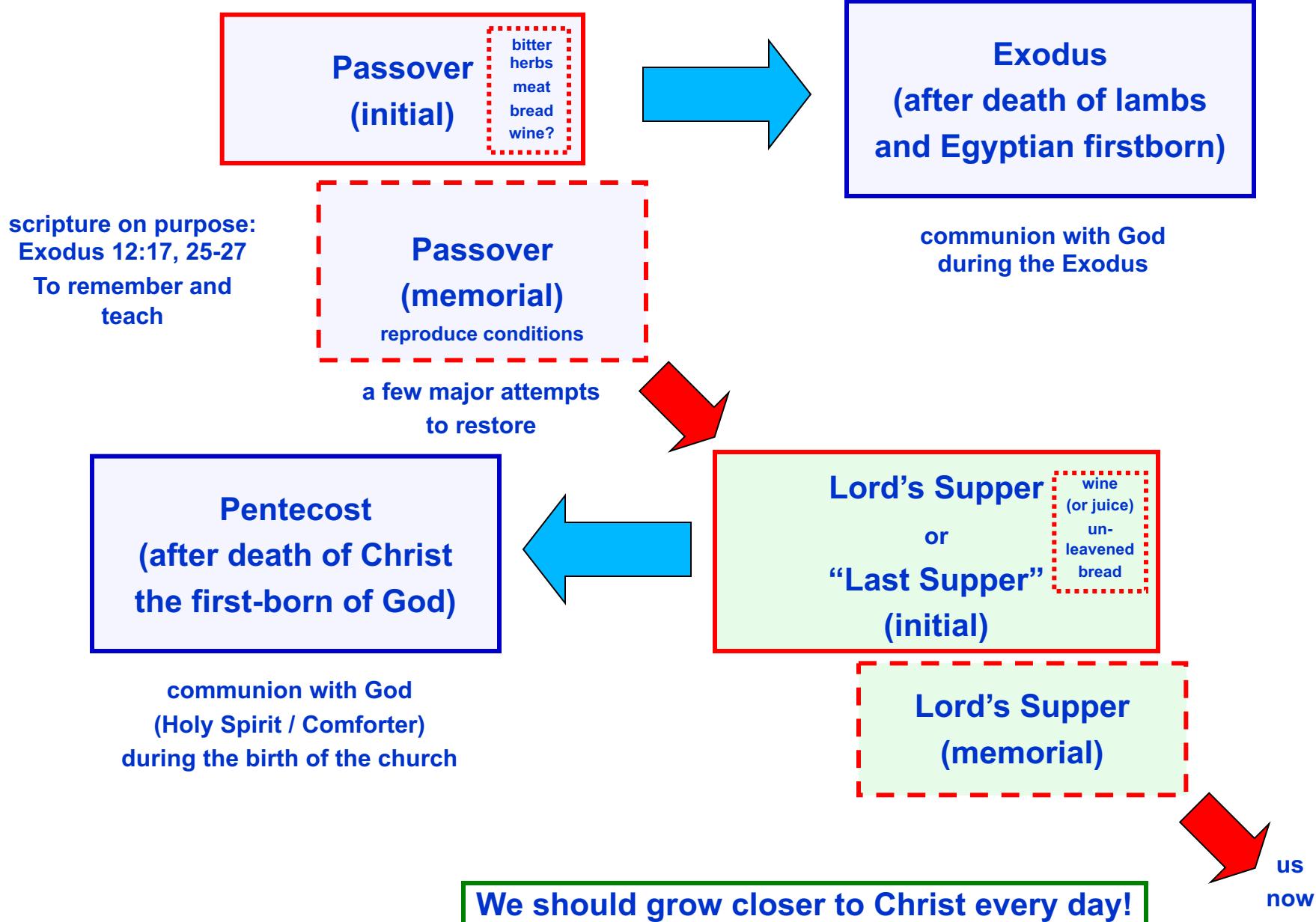
I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice,
And it told Thy love to me;
But I long to rise in the arms of faith
And be closer drawn to Thee.

Refrain:

Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord,
To the cross where Thou hast died;
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer blessed Lord,
To Thy precious, bleeding side.

Fanny Crosby

The Legacy of the Supper - the Future



Far and Near

Near:

**A study of the communion is a study into the depths of Love.
We must magnify God (love) and
not be distracted by the outer form of things.**

Far:

**Beauty, Goodness, and Truth, wherever they occur,
are certainly clues;
but they seem to be like cameras focused “to infinity” –
we cannot tell how far and how great
is the Reality
to which they are pointing.**

J. B. Philips

Jesus and Table Fellowship

In the Gospel of Luke

the meal stories dominate the landscape of the narrative.

At every turn,

Jesus is eating with different kinds of people in varied settings.

According to Markus Barth,

**“in approximately one-fifth of the sentences
in Luke’s Gospel and in Acts,
meals play a conspicuous role.”**

**Koenig even describes eating and drinking
as the “organizing principle” of Luke’s story.**

**Table fellowship is a focal point of Jesus’ ministry
and it became a focal point of the early church.**

John Mark Hicks

The Best Seats at the Banquet

When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable:

"When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.'

Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 14:7-24

They are told off for seeking the best seats –
for their self-importance and self-promotion...

There will always be more important seats at a banquet or synagogue;
What Jesus hates is the attitude of seeking those places,
of trying to project and enhance your own importance.

Conrad Gempf

Cleanliness

Food:

**Jesus declaring all foods clean;
a new era as opposed to the “clean” animal laws;
does this have any connection to our own evaluation in the
communion?**

How does it link into the bread and wine?

Jesus is perfectly clean.

Hands:

**Was there a command to wash their hands before the Passover?
or any meal?**

**But the Pharisee was surprised
when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal.**

Luke 11:37-54

There is a bit of hand-washing relative to sins, though.

Parallel in Psalm 23 to Supper (and afterwards)

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”
(how many meals did Jesus eat with His enemies)
(think of Judas at the Last Supper)

“You anoint my head with oil”
(Mary anointed Jesus’ feet in the framework of a meal,
John 12:3)

“My cup runs over”
(let this cup pass from me...)

Overflow of Blessings

**Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse,
that there may be food in my house.**

**Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty,
"and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven
and pour out so much blessing
that you will not have room enough for it.**

Malachi 3:10

**Compare to the excess of manna and quail
(and how the manna rotted when it wasn't authorized).
The Israelites still complained about it.**

**It is a rare person who,
when his cup frequently runs over,
can give thanks to God
instead of complaining
about the limited size of his mug!**

Debbie Macomber

The Cup of Suffering (1)

When Jesus was in the garden,
after Peter had drawn his sword
and cut the ear off of the servant Malchus, said,

“Shall I not drink of the cup which the Father has given me?”

John 18:11

Then Jesus went to Gethsemane, prayed three times:

“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.
Yet not as I will, but as you will...
if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away
unless I drink it,
may your will be done.”

Matthew 26:36-46

[Christ prayer was answered: No!]

Christ asks us, as he does James and John in Matthew 20:22,
“Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?”
Can we answer from our hearts as they did, 'We are able!'?

The Cup of Suffering (2)

In Luke 4:21, Jesus began with a stunning eight-word synopsis:

“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”

The Greek word for “fulfilled” is *pleroo*, meaning “particularly, to fill a vessel or hollow place.”

Beth Moore

“But we see Jesus,
who was made a little lower than the angels,
now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death,
so that by the grace of God
he might taste death for everyone.”

Hebrews 2:9

Barclay says that a better translation is that

Christ drained the cup of death for us.

In other words, he did not just taste it,
but he drank all of it.

He gave it all for us.

Think of Christ as filling the cup that was presented to Him.

The Cup of Suffering (3)

We usually think only of the blessings we receive relating to Christ's act of sacrificial love.

But the Greek word for fellowship, *Koinoneo*, also implies a sharing, as we read in 1 Peter 4:13,

“But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings...”

As we have fellowship with him in our communion, to what extent are we willing to have fellowship with his suffering?

We must take the responsibility with the blessing.

The Cup of Suffering (4)

**Jesus today has many who love his heavenly kingdom,
but few who carry his cross;
many who yearn for comfort,
few who long for distress.**

**Plenty of people he finds to share his banquet,
few to share his fast.**

**Everyone desires to take part in his rejoicing,
but few are willing to suffer anything for his sake.**

**There are many that follow Jesus
as far as the breaking of the bread,
few as far as drinking the cup of suffering;
many that revere his miracles,
few that follow him in the indignity of his cross.**

Thomas a Kempis

The Cup of Suffering (5)

Paul was ready to fill the cup of suffering:

**Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you,
and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking
in regard to Christ's afflictions,
for the sake of his body,
which is the church.**

Colossians 1:24

**Paul seems to be comparing his life to a cup,
which is to be placed under the faucet
of the continual stream of the suffering of Christ.**

**Christ, on earth,
had already filled His cup there.**

**Paul is saying that he is more than happy
to fill his cup to the brim there, too!**

The Challenge of the Cup

Can we drink the cup? (Remember the apostles' claim)

**Perhaps when Christ offered the cup is where
I would have snapped the picture for the Last Supper...**

**“Drinking the cup”
meant so much more to the people at that time**

Quote

I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please,
not enough to explode my soul
or disturb my sleep,
but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk
or a snooze in the sunshine.

I don't want enough of him to make me love a black man
or pick beets with a migrant.

I want ecstasy, not transformation;
I want the warmth of the womb,
not a new birth.

I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack.

I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.

Wilbur Rees

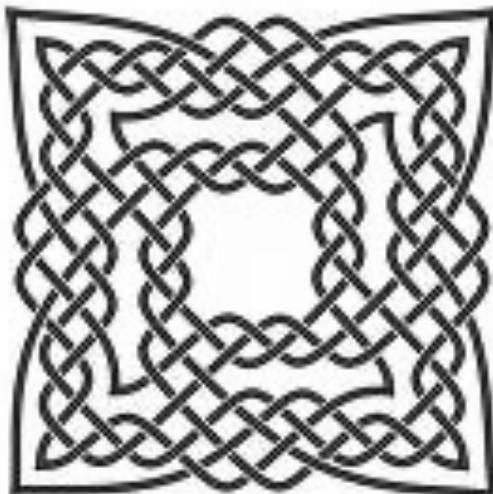
Communication - Signs and Images

Behind your doors and doorposts
you have put your pagan symbols.

Isaiah 57:8

The Jews and Muslims would not use images in their temple,
thinking that that was disobedience to the commandment
forbidding graven images.

They needed a way to decorate without using images.



Communion in Song: Nearer, Still Nearer

**Nearer, still nearer,
close to Thy heart,
Draw me, my Savior —
so precious Thou art!**

**Fold me, oh, fold me
close to Thy breast.**

**Shelter me safe
in that "Haven of Rest;"**
Lelia N. Morris

Far and Near

Near:

**A study of the communion is a study into the depths of Love.
We must magnify God (love) and
not be distracted by the outer form of things.**

Far:

**Beauty, Goodness, and Truth, wherever they occur,
are certainly clues;
but they seem to be like cameras focused “to infinity” –
we cannot tell how far and how great
is the Reality
to which they are pointing.**

J. B. Philips

Review of the Cup

God will fill our cup to overflowing

- it may be blessings or not!
- either way God will give us strength to handle it
- we must accept without complaining

Jesus drank a cup of suffering for us

- are we able to drink the cup as well?
- in our communion we participate in His sufferings

The legend of the “Holy Grail” places great value the cup supposedly used at the Last Supper.

But the cup was just a cup, with no real significance -- the blood is the thing.

Being a Cupbearer

So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream.

He said to him,

"In my dream I saw a vine in front of me,
and on the vine were three branches.

As soon as it budded,

it blossomed,

and its clusters ripened into grapes.

Pharaoh's cup was in my hand,

and I took the grapes,

squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup

and put the cup in his hand."

Genesis 40:9-11

I was cupbearer to the king.

Nehemiah 1:11

A cupbearer protected the life and mission of the king.
We must be a cupbearer for Christ.

How Large does the Cup need to Be?

'And no one puts new wine into old wineskins;
if he does, the wine will burst the skins,
and the wine is lost, and so are the skins;
but new wine is for fresh skins'.

Mark 2:22

There is nothing that can do more to expand our minds than to try to fit God in. The story is told of the student who held his cup for the teacher to fill. The teacher kept pouring after the cup had been filled. When the student asked why this had been done, the teacher replied that if the student would not expand his mind in contrast to the cup, there was not much that his mind would hold.

I think that it is possible to interpret Mark 2:22 with Barclay as Jesus pleading for a certain elasticity in our minds. The new wine is a dynamic growing (in pressure) substance. It is as though the word of God really begins working inside us, and we must be able to accept it. All this, of course, within the limits of what the Bible teaches us.

Augustine: We have a hole in our soul that can only be filled by God.

The Communion of the Cup

The LORD sent Nathan to David.

When he came to him, he said,

"There were two men in a certain town,

one rich and the other poor.

The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle,

but the poor man had nothing

except one little ewe lamb he had bought.

He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children.

It shared his food, **drank from his cup** and even slept in his arms.

It was like a daughter to him.

2 Samuel 12:1-3

It appears from the gospels

that Jesus passed his cup

and then everyone else drank from it.

There is a certain communion in that,

but now we worry about communicable diseases.

We still have communion by taking it together as one.

The Cup is Symbolic in Many Ways

It can hold wrath, too!

Jeremiah 25:15 and Revelation 14:10, 16:9

It can represent our heart.

“You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!

You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

Matthew 23:24

It can show the simplest kindness.

And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

Matthew 10:42

Think about how the servant would feel bringing a cup of “water” to the governor of the feast at Cana (John 2.1ff) - Transformation.

The Cup of Joseph

What was unique about the cup of Joseph?

**It is known more for what the cup was in
rather than what was in the cup.
(in a sack of grain and money)**

How do you Transport a Cup of Water without Spilling a Drop?

You drink it.

Do we meet around a Table or an Altar?

In a word,

the supper should be revised as a “table”
rather than as an “altar”.

The altar is the blood ritual.

It is the moment of atonement and forgiveness.

God cleanses his people with blood.

But the altar is followed by a table.

... there is a distinction between the altar and the table.

The altar is the blood ritual,

which may be characterized by sadness, guilt, and penance.

But the table is a different moment with a different mood.

The table is shaped by joy and communion.

There is always joy at the table.

Come to the Table, by John Mark Hicks

But we need to think about both!

We must Consider Table and Altar

**The cross is the Christian altar
and the Lord's supper is the Christian table.**

**Just as the cross brings forgiveness and reconciliation,
so the Lord's supper is the experience
of communion in God's presence.**

Come to the Table, by John Mark Hicks

The Table and the Altar are two sides of the same Coin!

There can be Joy at an Altar, too!

Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.

Psalm 43:4a

The altar does not necessarily need to be solemn!

**The “altar” approach helps us keep focus.
There must be a table, though, to reach out.**

Should We be Solemn at the Table?

The only detailed example of the Lord's Supper was with a group of 13, and it wasn't all that "joyous".

The premise of this book is that the practice of the supper as a silent, solemn, individualistic eating of bread and drinking of wine is radically dissimilar from the joyous communal meal that united Christians in first century house churches.

John Mark Hicks

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."'

Matthew 11:19

Richness at the Table?

**The table is no mere symbolic eating
of a pinch of bread and a sip of wine.**

Rather, it is a full banquet with rich food and drink.

The experience of covenant is a table experience.

John Mark Hicks

**The true Richness is with our Communion
and experience with Christ.**

Who is Invited to the Feast?

Passover: all those in the kingdom (slaves can also participate)

The “Last” Supper: only the apostles?

The “Lord’s” Supper: all those in the kingdom

Pentecost: apostles and disciples (about 120)

Other meals:

As was the custom, uninvited guests were permitted to sit against the walls and listen to the dinner conversation. However, they were never to intrude... and, in that culture, certainly not a woman!

Charles Swindoll

**Then the angel said to me,
"Write: 'Blessed are those
who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' "
And he added, "These are the true words of God."**

Revelation 19:9

Who did Jesus eat with?

**Jesus was a guy who would chow down
with just about anybody.**

**His radical spirituality involved Jesus...
having “table fellowship” with tax collectors and sinners.**

**In those days,
eating with people implied acceptance and a level of intimacy.**

Conrad Gempf

Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Matthew 9:9-13

**[The Pharisees] would have wanted to see him
preaching to “sinners” as a superior
rather than drinking with them as if a partner in crime.**

Conrad Gempf

Quote

... walking with God sharpens,
not dulls,
my mind.

Alicia Britt Chole

Effective Communication does not have to be Eternal

A sermon does not have to be last forever to be eternal.

**[joke about two scientists that are offered a last wish
before execution.]**

see A different universe, Robert Laughlin, p. 153

Communion in Song: Come Share the Lord

He joins us here;
He breaks the bread.
The Lord who pours the cup
Is risen from the dead.
The one we love the most
Is now our gracious **host**.

Come take the bread...
Come drink the cup...
Come share the Lord!

Bryan Jeffery Leech

Book Recommendation

Your God is Too Small

J.B. Phillips

We must Fill up with God

Remember the wineskins -

we must expand to hold as much of God as we can.

We should be like a sponge and soak Him up.

David Elrod's Pond:

You can fill a hole with anything for a while, but it may leak out.

You must keep refilling.

You must fill with the right thing.

You must seal it so that it doesn't leak.

This was not just an isolated hole, the whole surface leaked -

Not just individual sins, but a sinful nature.

We must reverse the process so that we let God in (but not out).

We must make room for Him

**Their hearts are so full of hurt they can't feel the love around them.
[or hate, or anger, or self]**

David

Allen

**We know that Christ knocks on the door of our heart
so that He can enter.**

**There is nothing more powerful than his sacrifice to open that door.
This communion points to the love that our Savior bore to the cross,
and how His body was broken and His blood shed
so that we might live.**

**There was no room at the inn for the infant Jesus,
but we must give Him a place.**

Are we too full for God?

Are we are filled up with something else?

I don't like it when there is no room for desert.

“you have no room for my word”

Jn 8.37

**Think of the soul that was cleaned out and seven spirits filled it.
(Matthew 12:45)**

We must Consider Table and Altar

The Table and the Altar are two sides of the same Coin!

The altar does not necessarily need to be solemn!

The “altar” approach helps us keep **focus**.
There must be a table, though, to reach out.

The true Richness of the Table
is with our Communion and experience with Christ.

We are all invited to the feast!

Jesus is the Passover

**Jesus ate with his disciples a Passover meal
when he was actually the Passover lamb.**

**We partake of the blood and body of Christ
even though we commune with him as Savior.**

Jesus Invites Us to Share a Meal

Here I am!
I stand at the door and knock!
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in and eat with them,
and they with me.

Revelation 3:20

If you open that door...
Jesus comes in and has supper with you and you with him.

Conrad Gempf

Does the Table Invite Fellowship?

A long table prevents fellowship.

**Have you ever tried a group dinner
and can't hear what people are saying at the other end?**

**The Lord's Table may have the same characteristics
as we practice it,
but it also has the power to bring us all close.**

The Fellowship of the Feast (1)

The doctrine [?] of the Trinity teaches that the divine reality is a community of loving fellowship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit [and angels and any other beings that we don't know about].

It is a community of holy love.
[... let us make man in our own image, Genesis 1:26]

Before the creation of the world,
God existed as a community,
not as a solitary being.

God has acted in Christ Jesus
in order that we might have fellowship with Him.

God is a community of love,
because God is agape (1 John 4:8)
["love of the unlovely" - in the deepest sense of the word].

John Mark Hicks

The Fellowship of the Feast (2)

Leviticus 3:1-17; 4:10, 26, 31, 35; and 7:11-38
describe the various types of “fellowship” (NIV) ... offerings.

The term is variously translated

“fellowship”,

“welfare”,

“communion”,

“shared-offering”,

“peace”, or

“well-being”

(from the Hebrew term *shelem*,

which many believe is related

to the normal Hebrew term for “peace” [shalom].

John Mark Hicks

... the peace that passes all understanding...

Philippians 4:7

Who is invited to the Fellowship of the Feast?

What should the table in the kingdom of God look like?

The Pharisaic expectation was that

the “righteous,” the honored, and the wealthy
would sit at God’s table in the kingdom.

Instead, Jesus sees the poor, the blind, and the lame at his table.

[& tax collectors & women of poor reputation] John Mark Hicks

Nehemiah (Nehemiah 8:10) made sure that
those that did not have food (the poor) could enjoy the feast.

The supper ought to overcome social polarizations
within a congregation.

Paul describes several in Corinth,
such as strong and weak, rich and poor,
Jew and Gentile, and male and female.
[also slave and free]

Only the inside counts!

John Mark Hicks

Who do we invite? Everyone!

But we must guard ourselves against the wolves (Matthew 7:15).

Parable of the Feast (1)

When one of those at the table with him heard this,

he said to Jesus,

"Blessed is the man

who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

This is a spiritual feast
(all-you-can-eat buffet)

Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

"But they all alike began to make excuses....

The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

"Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

"Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

Luke 14:15-20

The original invitees clearly did not want to go!

Parable of the Feast (2)

"The servant came back and reported this to his master.

Then the owner of the house became angry
and ordered his servant,

'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town
and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

" 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but
there is still room.'

The feast has been prepared;
the food will spoil!

"Then the master told his servant,
'Go out to the roads and country lanes
and make them come in,
so that my house will be full.'

The master wanted
fellowship

I tell you, not one of those men who were invited
will get a taste of my banquet.' "

Luke 14:21-24

We have free will: we can choose to go or not!

Compelled to Come to the Feast

The idea of being “compelled”
perhaps does not mean that they were taken against their will,
but shows the emphasis of the Master
who wanted so deeply
to have someone to share his bounty with.

Communion as Participation

Is not the cup of thanksgiving
for which we give thanks
a **participation** in the blood of Christ?

And is not the bread that we break
a **participation** in the body of Christ?

Because there is **one** loaf,
we, who are many, are **one** body,
for we all partake of the **one** loaf.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

The partaking of the bread and body is not emphasized here
-- it is the actual participation in what they represent.
We do not need to receive as much as we need to engage the world!

Context: eating food offered as sacrifices

Participation and Loyalty

Consider the people of Israel:

Do not those who eat the sacrifices
participate in the altar?

OT lamb sacrifices

Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol
is anything, or that an idol is anything?

No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons,
not to God,
and I do not want you to be **participants**
with demons.

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord
and the cup of demons too;

We cannot just commune with
Christ during the the worship
hour and commune with the
world the rest of the week.

you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table
and the table of demons.

1 Corinthians 10:18-21

Context: eating food offered as sacrifices

Loyalty and Commitment

Believers cannot sit at both tables.

**They can only serve one Lord
and they can only share the life of one community.**

John Mark Hicks

**Elijah went before the people and said,
"How long will you waver between two opinions?
If the LORD is God, follow him;
but if Baal is God, follow him."**

But the people said nothing.

1 Kings 18:21

We Must Choose!

Who Serves at the Feast?

Who serves at the Table?

Christ washed the disciples feet

Martha prepared the meal for another time

Stephen serving the Greeks

Christ assumed the role of host at Emmaus, at the feeding of the 5000, and at the Last Supper

Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve.

In the context of the table,

Jesus is a servant, that is,

He waited on the table at the Passover meal.

Jesus was not only the host,

He was the waiter...

Jesus fully embraced the role of servant

by washing the disciple's feet.

John Mark Hicks

Jesus is always our host as we gather around the Table. [PDE]

The Greatest Servant

Jesus said to His disciples:

**"You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them,
and their great ones exercise authority over them.**

**Yet it shall not be so among you;
but whoever desires to become great among you
shall be your servant.**

And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.

**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve,
and to give His life a ransom for many."**

Mark 10:42-45

Quote

**The survivor would have said of the giant, Goliath,
“He’s so big he will hurt me.”**

David said,

“He’s so big I can’t miss.”

John Maxwell

Communication must be Effective

I was talking to Winston Bolt (missionary in Indonesia) about how he had to shed the external “wrappings” and teach the fundamentals to a culture that is so different from ours.

Like a gift, the “wrapping” distracts us. We get tangled up in it.

Think about the blinders that we put on; the value of the gifts is obvious, but it is ourselves that are wrapped up.

We complicate the instructions on how to put the gift together.

...and how fast do we tear it apart?

Joel Gregory

We must find other ways, other idioms, to communicate in a way that the culture we are reaching for can understand.

Some cultures don't have sheep...

The veil over our hearts;
2 Corinthians 3:13-16 and
2 Corinthians 4:3

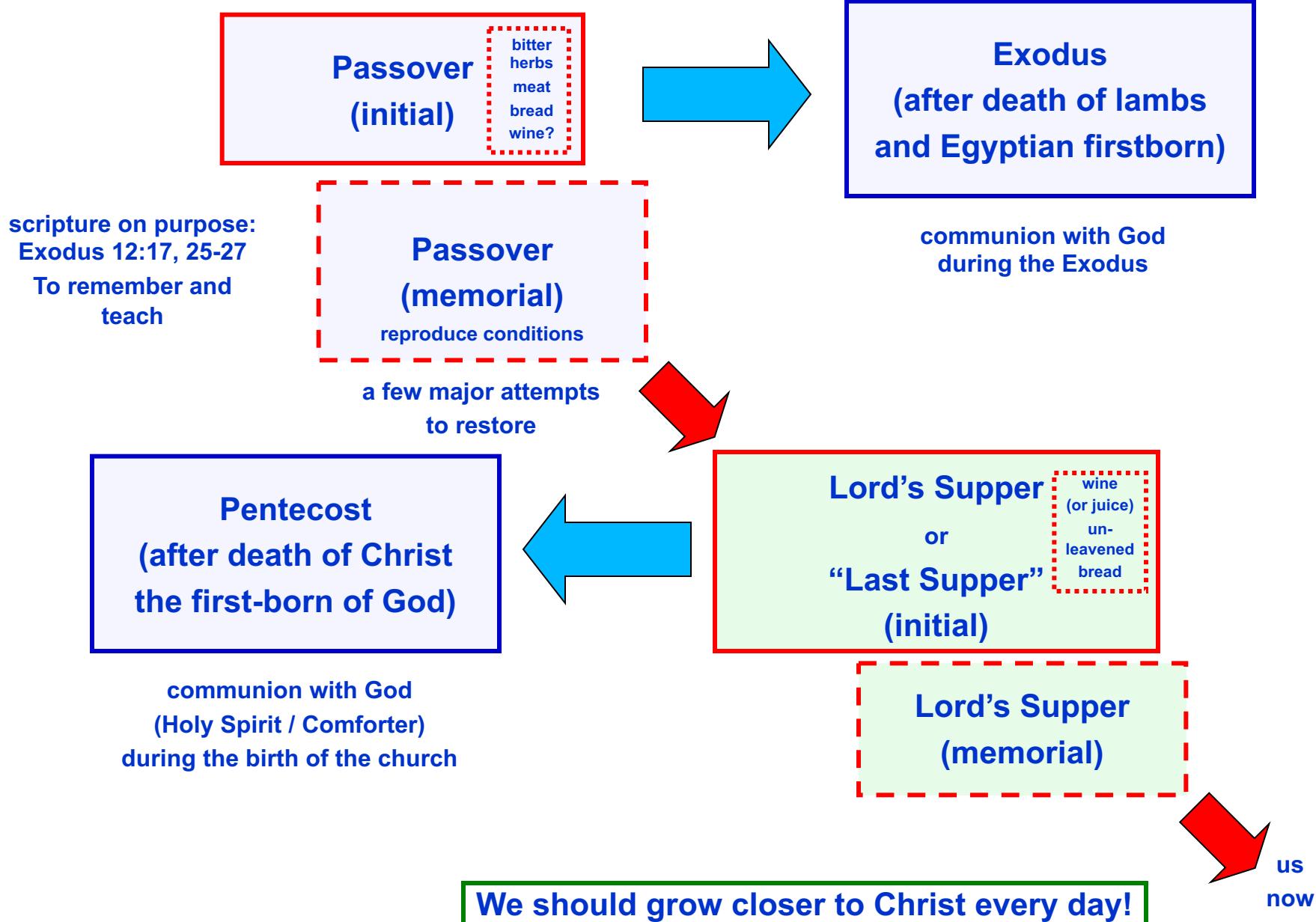
Communion in Song: Jesus Calls Us

**Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world's golden store.
From each idol that would keep us,
Saying, "Christian, love Me more."**

Cecil F. Alexander

**This relates to the idea of the wrapper (veneer or façade)
discussed in the Communications slide**

The Legacy of the Supper - the Future



Outline of the Class

Communion with Christ

I Introduction

- Objectives of Class
- Discussion of Communication
- Description of the Event (Last Supper)
- History (Connection to Passover)
- Interpretation (Table or Altar)

II Need

- Our point of view
- God's point of view

III What God/Christ did

IV Our Response

IV The Value and Meaning of The Communion

- Joy
- Love
- Fellowship
- Communication / Prayer
- Images and Symbols
- Kingdom
- Service
- Teaching

V End Game

We must Fill up with God

Remember the wineskins -

we must expand to hold as much of God as we can.

We should be like a sponge and soak Him up.

You can fill a hole with anything for a while, but it may leak out.

You must keep refilling.

You must fill with the right thing.

You must seal it so that it doesn't leak.

We do not have just a few leaks -

our whole "surface" leaks.

Not just individual sins, but a sinful nature.

We must reverse the process so that we let God in (but not out).

The cell wall is porous,

but selective in the ions that it allows to transfer through.

It is used as a gate to admit or reject in different directions as a function of the time in the cycle.

In particular nerve cell fire by passing ions at the right time.

What can Soften our Hard Hearts? (1)

We are a people who have stubborn wills, hard hearts, and stiff necks.

**God is confronted with the problem of softening that heart,
of changing it so that it is no longer stubborn and like stone,
as we read in Ezekiel 36:25ff.**

**When we have when we have a bolt that has rusted
and cannot be loosened,
we bring out the ‘liquid wrench’.**

But what can God use to soften our hearts?

What can Soften our Hard Hearts? (2)

**The strongest substance capable of doing the job
is the blood of Christ.**

**The overpowering love and sacrifice causes us
to respond, change, soften.**

Through it we submit our wills and rely on God for all things.

**This blood is powerful,
but we must allow it to penetrate our heart
so that it can be softened.**

**For those hearts that remain hardened,
God will ultimately crush.**

Have you let the blood of Christ truly sink into your heart?

We must not Relax our Vigilance

"When an evil spirit comes out of a man,
it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.

Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.'

When it arrives,
it finds the house unoccupied,
swept clean and put in order.

Then it goes and takes with it
seven other spirits more wicked than itself,
and they go in and live there.

And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.

That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

Matthew 12:43-45

Create in me a clean heart...

Psalm 51:10

Think of how secure the man felt once the evil spirit was gone. [PDE]

Did he think he was safe and no longer needed his "medicine",
like those who have certain disorders?

We typically rest on our laurels;
when we are "cleansed",
we think that the job is done.

Loyalty and Commitment

Believers cannot sit at both tables.

**They can only serve one Lord
and they can only share the life of one community.**

John Mark Hicks

Elijah went before the people and said,
"How long will you **waver between two opinions?**
If the LORD is God, follow him;
but if Baal is God, follow him."

We Must Choose!

But the people said nothing.

1 Kings 18:21

"No one can serve two masters.
Either he will hate the one and love the other,
or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.
You cannot serve both God and Money.

Matthew 6:24

Jesus was Someone to Die For

**They all were daily with Jesus.
Even Judas.**

Thomas:

Let us go that we may die with Him.

John 11:16

[reference by Sid Snyder]

Remember Thomas for his willingness to die with Christ.

Commitment: How Long do we Last?

**After the peak even of the Lord's Supper,
Peter and the others could not even stay awake one hour.**

**How long can we make it
after we participate in the Communion?**

[Comment by Tim Pauley]

Even if we daily walk with Christ, do we sometimes abandon Him?

Do Dogs eat at the Table? (1)

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre.

**He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it;
yet he could not keep his presence secret.**

**In fact, as soon as she heard about him,
a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit
came and fell at his feet.**

The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia.

She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

Mark 7:24-26

Do Dogs eat at the Table? (2)

"First let the children eat all they want," he told her,
"for it is not right to take the children's bread
and toss it to their dogs."

"Yes, Lord," she replied,
"but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

Then he told her,
"For such a reply, you may go;
the demon has left your daughter."

She went home
and found her child lying on the bed,
and the demon gone.

Mark 7:27-30

Do Dogs eat at the Table? (3)

**Was Jesus insensitive when he compared
the Syrophoenician woman to a dog?**

(implying that the Gentiles were not as important as humans)

**The Syrophoenician woman responded with the idea
that the dogs are welcome under the table as pets,
and that they are loved and taken care of as well.**

**Think about how Jesus taught by allowing this exchange,
making people think
instead of just speaking a truth.**

[question by Joie Pauley]

We are truly all welcome to come to His Table!

Experiencing Christ at the Table

Christ is the living host who serves his people at the table.
The presence of Christ is his presence at the table,
not his presence in the bread and wine.

Jesus is revealed in the context of the table.
The table is the living presence of Christ.

To eat and drink with Jesus, then,
is to experience the presence of the kingdom and hope.

The presence of the living Christ at the table of the kingdom
is the guarantee of our own future resurrection.

The table transforms death into life, despair into hope.

John Mark Hicks

The experience is spiritual,
and the physical memorials are only symbols!

The Spiritual Rock

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers,
that our forefathers were all under the cloud
and that they all passed through the sea.

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

They all ate the same spiritual food
and drank the same spiritual drink;
for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them,
and that rock was Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

Israel ate manna in the wilderness
and drank water from the rock in the wilderness.

The identity between Israel and Corinth
is not simply that they both eat and drink,
but that they eat and drink the same spiritual reality,
which is Christ.

John Mark Hicks

Communion is Agreement with God

To eat at the Lord's table
is to **share** his values
and to pursue compassion and justice in our communities.

By communicating with us through the body and blood of Christ,
God **renews** his covenant with us.

By eating and drinking,
we **renew** our covenant with God and with each other.

The Lords' table, then,
is a meal where we **bind** ourselves to the covenant once again.

Eating and drinking without commitment
is to eat and drink judgment,
but to eat and drink with **commitment**
is to visibly take up your cross at the table
and follow Jesus.

John Mark Hicks

We renew our vows on a continual basis!

Another Feast after Near-Disaster

**Where was there another Jewish feast that
was established to celebrate a near-death experience
(like the Passover)?**

The Feast of Purim -- Esther 9:18ff

Solemn and joy mix at feast: Esther 9:22

Communication through distractions

Internal

Body

- Temperature
- Heart rate
- Stomach (butterflies)
- Knees shaking
- Balance

Mind

- Processing Notes
- Thinking ahead
- Checking what you are saying
- Struggling to remember a critical item
- New ideas as you are speaking
- Making notes
- Word group choice (language)
- Feedback (hearing yourself)
- Feedback (hecklers? people leaving?)
- Equipment malfunctions (projector? speaker?)
- Face recognition
- Self-doubt
- Am I ahead or behind time?

INPUTS

External

Visual

- People (eyes, alert, restless, asleep, movement)
- Reading notes
- Lighting

Auditory

- Fan noise
- Microphone feedback
- Speaker volume
- Voice trembling
- Cell phone ringing
- Child's electronic game
- Child crying

Feeling

- Breeze
- Paper

Smell

- Something burning
- Food cooking
- Other odors

Voice (words and tone); Gestures (hands, face)
Stance (behind podium, sit on stool, wander around)

OUTPUTS

Communication through distractions - Examples

A preacher inhaled a fly at a local small congregation (Beech Grove). He said, “He was a stranger and I took him in.” [PDE]

Teaching class and saw a goat standing at the back door. [PDE]

Ants crawling over podium and Bible (came from potted plant on podium). Words in Bible appeared to be moving around. [PDE]

Gunfire during police chase through cemetery while Dr. Kerce was speaking at the graveside. [PDE]

Encounter with bear and cubs while having church service on the AT. [PDE]

Someone in the audience collapsing (should I stop?). [PDE]

The power going off at night (no lights); no way to read my sermon. [HSL]

Wasp flying around; everyone watching to make sure that it doesn't sting them. [HSL]

Young preacher in Lexington, Ky. I thought he was doing OK, but he suddenly said, “I can't do this anymore!” and left the pulpit. [HSL]

Making a technical presentation to visitors in hopes that they would further sponsor the work, I looked back to see my helper holding its pants legs up. [HSL]

Working through plastic viewgraphs for presentation to find that someone [PDE] had inserted a slide, “None of this is true. I just wanted to go to Hawaii.” [HSL]

Communion in Song: How Beautiful

How beautiful the hands that served
the wine and the bread
And the sons of the earth.

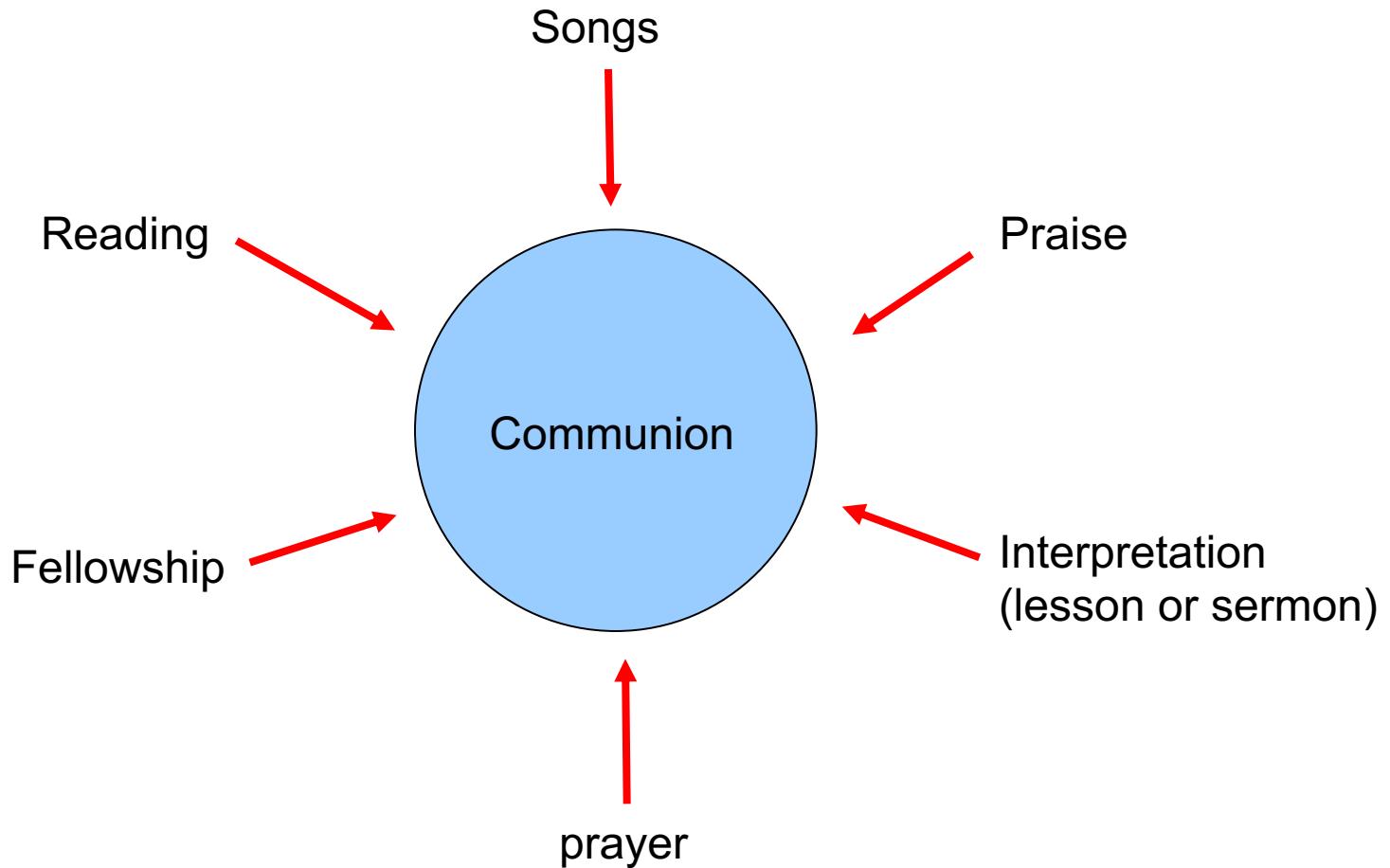
How beautiful the heart that bled
that took all my sin
and bore it instead.

How beautiful the tender eyes
that chose to forgive
and never despise.

Twila Paris

Communion with Christ

What is at the Core of our Worship?



Each item outside the circle helps us to focus on the center.
Their purpose is to facilitate the Communion
(but we must not think of them as the center).

Looking Back on the Supper - Fellowship (1)

**In the following directives I have no praise for you,
for your meetings do more harm than good.**

**In 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.**

**No doubt there have to be differences among you
to show which of you have God's approval.**

“Super-Christian” syndrome

1 Corinthians 11:17-19

Context: proper behavior

Looking Back on the Supper - Fellowship (2)

**When you come together,
it is not the Lord's Supper you eat,
for as you eat, each of you goes ahead
without waiting for anybody else.**

One remains hungry, another gets drunk.

Don'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!**

1 Corinthians 11:20-22

Context: proper behavior

Looking Back on the Supper - Fellowship (3)

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you:

The Lord Jesus,

on the night 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."**

Think of the
distractions for Christ:
Betrayal
Cross
Death
Teaching
Prayer

1 Corinthians 11:23-24

Context: proper behavior

Looking Back on the Supper - Fellowship (4)

In 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."**

**For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

1 Corinthians 11:20-22

Context: proper behavior

Looking Back on the Supper - Fellowship (5)

Therefore, 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.

A man ought to examine himself
before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

For anyone who eats and drinks
without **recognizing the body of the Lord**
eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Christ
<
Church

1 Corinthians 11:27-29

Context: proper behavior

Looking Back on the Supper - Fellowship (6)

**That is why many among you are weak and sick,
and a number of you have fallen asleep.**

**But if we judged ourselves,
we would not come under judgment.**

**When we are judged by the Lord,
we are being disciplined
so that we will not be condemned with the world.**

1 Corinthians 11:30-32

**The Lord's Supper was a part of their fellowship meal,
but they had become concerned only about feeding themselves!**

Context: proper behavior

Looking Back on the Supper - Fellowship (7)

**So then, my brothers,
when you come together to eat,
wait for each other.**

**If 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.

1 Corinthians 11:33-34

Can this apply to worship as well?

Context: proper behavior

Outline of the Class

Communion with Christ

I Introduction

- Objectives of Class
- Discussion of Communication
- Description of the Event (Last Supper)
- History (Connection to Passover)
- Interpretation (Table or Altar)

II Need

- Our point of view
- God's point of view

III What God/Christ did

III Our Response

IV The Value and Meaning of The Communion

- Joy
- Love
- Fellowship
- Communication / Prayer
- Images and Symbols
- Kingdom
- Service
- Teaching

V End Game

Our Need

My need keeps me close to God.

Jay Crouch

We must all recognize our Need for God!

Our Need

**Do we seek communion
so that God is with us
or so that He can solve all of our problems?**

Our Sinful Nature (1)

**One of the least pleasant jobs that I had to do in my younger days
was to weed my mother's flower garden.**

**Many of the weeds had an extensive root structure
that was very difficult to persuade out of the ground.**

**I found that it was much easier,
on the short term,
to just pull the tops of the weeds off.**

**As long as nothing showed above the ground,
I felt that I was all right.**

**I soon discovered, however,
that it wasn't long before I had to weed the garden again,
for the root systems that I had left
had simply grown new leaves.**

Our Sinful Nature (2)

We have a similar problem in our spiritual lives.

**Do we just consider the “sins” we have committed,
and ask God to help eliminate them from our lives?**

**But we all have a more fundamental problem,
a “sinful nature”.**

**It is ridiculous for me to think that any time period goes by
when I am actually sinless, or perfect.**

Our Sinful Nature (3)

We concentrate on mostly the ‘sins’ we commit,
not our ‘sinful nature.’

But it is our sinful nature that is the cause,
or the root of our whole problem.

We eliminate the super structure of sin,
and its just like pulling the tops off of the weeds.

The root system still exists underneath the soil.

We must work to destroy the roots as well.

God, through Christ,
forgives all of our sinfulness (Romans 7-8).

We must realize what the real problem is,
and respond to it!

Communication - Art

Colors changing hue
morning fields of amber grain
weathered faces lined in pain
are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand.

For they could not love you
but still your love was true...
and when no hope was left in sight on that starry starry night...
You took [gave] your life as lovers often do;

But I could have told you Vincent [Jesus]...
this world was never meant for one as beautiful as you.

And now I think I know what you tried to say to me
how you suffered for your sanity
how you tried to set them free.

They would not listen
they're not listening still.
perhaps they never will.

“Vincent”, song by Don Maclean

What is God trying to say to us? Do we get it?

Communion in Song: My Eyes are Dry

**My eyes are dry,
My faith is old,
My Heart is hard,
My prayers are cold.**

**And I know how I ought to be,
Alive to You and dead to me.
What can be done to an old heart like mine?
Soften it up with oil and wine.**

**The oil is You,
Your spirit of love.
Please wash me anew
in the wine of your blood.**

Keith Green

Relate to Earlier “Liquid Wrench” Idea

Our Need

We must all recognize our Need for God!

We must be made Clean

In our domestic cleaning,
there is always a stain that we cannot get out
no matter what chemicals we use
or how much physical agitation we use.

Think of the old days,
when women pounded their clothes against rocks.
Now we use a washing machine.

But we cannot rely on our own efforts to remove our sins.

If we couldn't get the stain out,
then we relegated the item to the pet's bed,
or simply discarded it.

We will not be discarded by God.

Think about the cleansing power of Christ's blood, continually.
Christ cleanses us absolutely without "effort"
(once the great sacrifice was made).

The Dirt is Taken by Christ

Imbesi's law of the conservation of filth:

**In order for something to become clean,
something else must become dirty.**

Freeman's extension:

...but you can get everything dirty without getting anything clean.

**He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree,
so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness;
by his wounds you have been healed.**

1 Peter 2:24

In fact,

**the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood,
and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.**

Hebrews 9:22

How can we become Clean if we cling to the World?

"This is what the LORD Almighty says:

'Ask the priests what the law says:

If a person carries consecrated meat in the fold of his garment,
and that fold touches

some bread or stew, some wine, oil or other food,
does it become consecrated? "

The priests answered, "**No.**"

Then Haggai said,

"If a person defiled by contact with a dead body
touches one of these things,
does it become defiled?"

"Yes," the priests replied, "it becomes defiled."

Then Haggai said,

"So it is with this people and this nation in my sight,'
declares the LORD.

'Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is defiled.

Haggai 2:10-13

How can we be made Holy?

[referring to the altar]

Whatever touches [it] will become holy.

Exodus 29:37

[referring to the grain and sin offerings]

Whatever touches [it] will become holy.

Leviticus 6:18, 27

Did this create a permanent condition?

Only God can make us Truly Holy?

We are made clean through Christ

(continually, while we are in communion with Him, 1 John 1:7).

We can be cleansed by contact with Christ,

and only him.

We must stay in contact (in relationship) with him.

Keep my decrees and follow them.

I am the Lord,

who makes you holy.

Leviticus 20:8

And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate

to make the people holy through his own blood.

Hebrews 13:12

Defilement is contagious...

Health is not.

Ryrie Study Bible Notes

We are all in Need - all Guilty! (1)

**We are not always firm believers in
truth, justice, and the American way.**

But we expect to be protected from those who are blatantly lawless.

**We see a somewhat standard view about lawyers,
especially from television shows and in murder mysteries,
who defend those who are murderers and thieves.**

**By working to set them free (to continue in their crime)
some people feel that they are on the same level (or worse)
as the criminals that they defend.**

**Just think about all of the lawyer jokes that abound
to show how people feel about them.**

We are all in Need - all Guilty! (2)

After seeing a lawyer I know (and respect),
I realized that spiritually I am the same as those criminals
that I was so quick to condemn.

I am not just an innocent man who has been unfairly accused.

I am guilty!

And I am desperate for someone to save me
(even though I continue to sin)!

Christ is our advocate that helps us through our trial.

He is that lawyer for those that we have looked down on for so long!

But now we are in trouble,
and we see things from a totally different perspective.

We must thank God that He furnishes us a Defender
that doesn't object to the fact that we are guilty.

Ripped Pants (1)

A couple of months ago during communion I accidentally ripped the seat of my pants on a podium as I stepped off the side of this platform.

I knew immediately that my pants were torn, but I wasn't sure how bad – and I didn't have a good way to check them.

I decided that I would try to continue, but David came to me and offered to substitute, off the bench, so to speak.

The pants were badly in need of repair, but neither Soozie or I could do fix them.

I couldn't determine the size of the rip;
(I couldn't take the pants off right there and fix them).
We cannot evaluate the size of our sin, either.

Ripped Pants (2)

We are all in need of repair in a spiritual sense.

It is one thing to be heartbroken, but more importantly it is our souls that are damaged and need to be stitched back together.

These rips may or may not be obvious, but God sees them all and only He can repair them.

Jesus is the Great Physician, and as such He is the divine surgeon that can stitch our wounded soul back together as it is torn.

Think of this communion table as an operating table where we are restored with the spiritual power of His flesh and blood, and remember that His love can never be torn away or separated from us.

Cats in Need

**Our cats come to the porch in their need for food,
and in giving them of our food we “domesticate” them.**

They are changed from eating in the wild (birds, etc).

**We are also changed not just by the need for spiritual food,
but by its delivery to us every day**

Cat's Instinct for Cleanliness

Instinct is such a powerful thing.

It's always amazed me how cats use a litter box.

We have one cat who is very dutiful at this job.

We can hear it scrape, scrape, scrape, for a minute or so.

But then the evidence drifts to us that the cat

had totally missed the “point”.

**The instinct it has drove it to “go through the motions”,
but that was all.**

Though this was a fairly minor unpleasantness to us,

it illustrates the way God sees us

if we treat this communion with as little thought,

and approach him in this ceremony

by just going through the motions.

Communion in Song: As the Deer

**As the deer pants for the water,
So my soul longs after thee.
You alone are my hearts desire,
And I long to worship thee.**

**I want You more than gold or silver,
Only You can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy Giver,
And the apple of my eye.**

Marth Nystrom

Our Need

We must all recognize our Need for God!

As it is written:

**"There is no one righteous,
not even one;**

Romans 3:10

Back to the Transfer of Dirt (1)

Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him **the LORD** had given victory to Aram.

He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

He **listened** to an Israeli slave girl
who suggested that Naaman see the prophet in Samaria.

His King let him go to Israel for the cure,
and even wrote a **letter of support**.

miscommunication

There was a misunderstanding about the intent of the situation,
and the King of Israel reacted badly.

Elisha hears about it and has Naaman come to him.
He tells him to wash seven times in the Jordan
and he would be cleansed.

**Naaman did
not listen here**

Back to the Transfer of Dirt (2)

Naaman was not impressed and left in anger.

Again, he **listened** to his servants who convinced him to try it anyway.

He became clean from the disease.

Naaman offers a gift to the man of God, who refuses.

Naaman asks that he be given a special license to bow with his king
as he worships the false god Rimmon,
while Naaman himself now is a true worshipper of God.

Elisha gives him peace on this issue.

But Gehazi, Elisha's servant, lies to Naaman and asks for the gift.

Elisha knew what Gehazi was doing
and Naaman's leprosy was transferred to Gehazi and his family.

2 Kings 5

What can we Touch to make us Clean?

**Just then a woman
who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years
came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak.**

**She said to herself,
"If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."**

**Jesus turned and saw her.
"Take heart, daughter," he said,
"your faith has healed you."**

And the woman was healed from that moment.

Matthew 9:20-22

The Complexity of Good and Evil

Some claim that a Good God could not allow evil to exist in the world.

Goodness is something that I embrace as the Greatest thing I know.

Evil exists and the spiritual rules are not something I can understand.

They cannot be defined by a simple formula.

Trying understand with our limited minds

is like performing higher math with Roman Numerals.

If God is all powerful did He not choose this path to save man?

The Need to Follow Spiritual Rules

What is the structure of the spiritual world?

We can't understand what the spiritual rules are that require blood.

In fact, the law **requires** that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:22

But does a spiritual God need physical satisfaction?

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To **act justly** and to **love mercy** and to **walk humbly** with your God.

Micah 6:7-9

Rules versus Principle

What if Jesus had an attitude like many of us today?

What if He emphasized the “rule” rather than the principle?

What if He had the attitude

that He only had to perform the letter of the law?

What if He had chosen to do the minimum necessary

to get His mission accomplished

(which was dying for our sins)?

With this type of attitude He would have made a quick trip;

He would have come and gone

without developing the personal relationships

or living under the same circumstances as us.

Did Christ just Follow the Rules?

With this attitude He could not have been the perfect high priest,
He would not have been tempted as we are.

This “Corban” attitude would have led Him to think
that His work in heaven was too important,
as He was one with God,
and that He really didn’t have much time left
to give to mankind.

But Jesus truly loved us with all of his nature,
and considered us as though we were of
more value or worth than Himself (Philippians 2:3-8)!

He didn’t “just” obey unto death;
He truly loved us and spent the time on earth
to establish relationships,
to teach us, and
to touch people individually.

The Attitude of Christ

**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,
but in humility consider others better than yourselves.**

**Each of you should look not only to your own interests,
but also to the interests of others.**

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

**Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.**

**And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!**

Philippians 2:3-8

Could True Love be Bound by the Rules?

**In some way there was a cosmic struggle
between the rules of the spiritual world
and the power of the love the God had for his people.**

Mercy triumphs over judgment!

James 2:13b

What did Jesus Die For?

**Jesus didn't die for a bunch of rules –
he died for **us**,
to have a **relationship** with us.**

**As we take the communion,
we must participate,
not just in His death, burial, and resurrection,
but in His consuming, unselfish, unfailing love for everyone.**

**He doesn't want us just guided
by just a bunch of rules, either.**

Communication: Having Something to Say

There is power in having something important to say.

My experience in public speaking started low:

“Wild horses will never drag me in front of people again”

I only overcame my fear

when I began working with the church youth program.

Once I had a message to give,

I was able to overcome my fear

(but only by continuing in my attempts to speak in public).

**We are inspired by Powerful Thoughts, Words, Feelings,
Deeds!**

Communion in Song: Abide with Me

**Abide with me:
fast falls the even tide;
The darkness deepens:
Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers
fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless,
O abide with me!**

Henry F. Lyte

One of a group of songs I use to commune with God

Our Need

We must all recognize our Need for God!

As it is written:

**"There is no one righteous,
not even one;**

Romans 3:10

The Need to Follow Spiritual Rules

What is the structure of the spiritual world?

**We can't understand what the spiritual rules are
that require blood.**

Rule: God is Perfect and cannot fellowship with Sin

**Response: God finds a “loophole”, and goes around the rule.
He gives Himself in sacrifice to meet the requirement of blood.
It is the Purest definition of Good -
It Draws us to Christ.**

Outline of the Class

Communion with Christ

I Introduction

- Objectives of Class
- Discussion of Communication
- Description of the Event (Last Supper)
- History (Connection to Passover)
- Interpretation (Table or Altar)

II Need

- Our point of view
- God's point of view

III What God/Christ did

III Our Response

IV The Value and Meaning of The Communion

- Joy
- Love
- Fellowship
- Communication / Prayer
- Images and Symbols
- Kingdom
- Service
- Teaching

V End Game

Preparation from the Beginning (1)

**In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.**

He was with God in the beginning.

**Through him all things were made;
without him nothing was made that has been made.**

**In him was life,
and that life was the light of men.**

**The light shines in the darkness,
but the darkness has not understood it.**

John 1:5

This was not a band-aid to patch a plan that could not be implemented

Preparation from the Beginning (2)

There came a man who was sent from God;
his name was John.

He came as a witness to testify concerning that light,
so that through him all men might believe.

He himself was not the light;
he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to every man
was coming into the world.

John 10:6-9

John testifies concerning him.

He cries out, saying,
"This was he of whom I said,

'He who comes after me has **surpassed** me
because he was **before** me.' "

John 10:15

Preparation from the Beginning (3)

**He was in the world,
and though the world was made through him,
the world did not recognize him.**

**He came to that which was his own,
but his own did not receive him.**

**Yet to all who received him,
to those who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God —
children born not of natural descent,
nor of human decision or a husband's will,
but born of God.**

John 10:10-13

Preparation from the Beginning (4)

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory,
the glory of the One and Only, -----
who came from the Father,
----- full of grace and truth.

From the fullness of his grace
we have all received one blessing after another.

For the law was given through Moses;
----- grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God,
but God [Christ?] the One and Only, -----
who is at the Father's side,
has made him known.

Contrast

John 10:14, 16-30

Preparation from the Beginning (5)

**Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,**

**But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.**

**We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.**

**He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.**

Isaiah 53:4a, 5-7

Jesus Verified this Preparation

[Jesus] said to them,

"This is what I told you while I was still with you:

**Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me
in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**

"Then He opened their minds
so they could understand the Scriptures.

We need to pray for this [PDE]

He told them,

"This is what is written:

**The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,
and repentance and forgiveness of sins
will be preached in his name to all nations,
beginning at Jerusalem..."**

Luke 24:44-47

**Jesus echoes the legacy of the prophetic scripture.
He does this after His resurrection.**

What Draws Us?

Not anything physical...

He had no beauty or majesty
to **attract** us to him,
nothing in his appearance
that we should **desire** him.
He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows,
and familiar with suffering.
Like one from whom
men hide their faces
he was despised,
and we esteemed him not.

He was regular, average.

It was only this bad at the cross!

PDE: They could not look into His eyes!

Isaiah 53:2-3

But the spiritual aspects of Goodness and Love!

We must grow from physical beings into spiritual ones!

The Beauty of God

We must grow from physical beings into spiritual ones!

**Jim McGuiggan in the book Jesus, Hero of Thy Soul,
considers his ability to imitate a famous Austrian violinist.
He plays so absolutely beautifully
that he knows he cannot possibly match him.**

“... if I tried for a thousand years I could never play like that...”

**I was a French horn player with a trumpet mentality.
I could never achieve the proper mellow sound to be any good.
I also play enough piano to know
that I could never achieve the perfection of one of the masters.**

**This is a hint of how far above us God is,
not just in power,
but in beauty.**

**We don't necessarily know what flowers will come from
a seed (or bulb) just by looking at it!**

Comprehending the Magnitude of God

Heaven's "streets of Gold" are only a hint of the Glory.

**Just as the physical universe does not show all of the
power of God in His Creation -**

**Perhaps even the cross does not show
the real magnitude of God's love for us.**

Think of God as Complete Goodness in a (Spiritual) Person.

How well do we Communicate our Feelings?

Think of the images we have of those trying to say “I love you”:

- 1) running along beside a car, bus, or train
- 2) on the phone after the other person has hung up
(the operator calling back)

How do you tell someone that you love them?

How do you tell someone how **much** you love them?

Greater love has no one than this,
that he lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13

Christ opened His arms wide, and died!

Communicating our Feelings

Think of the ease and difficulty of communication

Speaking to a friend about the football game.

Speaking to a stranger.

Speaking to someone about Christ.

Saying “I have sinned”.

Saying “I love you”.

The stereotypical man that cannot say the words “I love you”.

What makes it so difficult to pour out your heart?

The fact that it might get splashed back in your face (rejection).

**You can reject God,
But He will never reject you if you reach out for Him.**

Communion in Song: Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

**Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land.**

**I am weak,
but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand.**

**Bread of heaven,
bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more;
feed me till I want no more.**

William Williams

One of a group of songs I use to commune with God

What God Has Done

He Prepared His Plan from the Beginning

He Offers Us a Great Attraction on a Spiritual Level

He Offers the Opportunity to Connect to His Infinite Nature

He Provides a Conduit (Jesus) for His Power to Flow to Us Safely

He Uses a Fragile Container to Give us a physical Projection

that we can Touch and Relate to

He Contrasts Man's Finite Wisdom with His own Infinite Wisdom

to separate those of us who Truly want to Follow

He Offers an Intimate Relationship with Each One of Us

We must accept this offer and make the relationship Real.

Our relationships on earth give us a model for our relationship with

God; e.g., The church is the bride of Christ

Christ took our punishment

- broken body**
- shed blood**
- bore our sins**

Christ sacrificed much to accomplish a superior redemption

Our Purpose: To Magnify (Glorify) the Lord

Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.

Psalm 34:3

If we place a drop of ordinary water or a speck of dust
under a powerful microscope,
we will observe marvels we never dreamed could exist.

The same is true when we focus our attention on God;
the more we magnify the Lord,
the more we minimize our troubles.

Magnifying the name of the Lord
is to do Good so that we make God,
the Sum of all Goodness,
even bigger.

Zoom in or out,
it's amazing at
every level!

We must continually try to magnify the image of God.

John The Baptist said of Jesus (John 3:30):
"He must increase, but I must decrease."

The Limitless Expanse of God

“I pray that out of his glorious riches
he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit
in your inner being,
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

[prepare room]

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,
may have power, together with all the saints,
to grasp how wide and long and high and deep
is the love of Christ,
and to know this love that surpasses knowledge —
that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

[prepare a lot of room!]

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably
more than all we ask or imagine,
according to his power that is at work within us,
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

[it won't be enough!]

Ephesians 3:16-21

How can we See the Glory?

Remember that when God passed by in front of Moses,
he was hidden in a crevice in the rock
because he could not withstand the Glory.

Also think of Paul on the road to Damascus –
directed at Paul it blinded him until God healed him.

We have to squint when we are exposed to bright sunlight.

God lives in “unapproachable light,
whom no one has seen or can see.”

(1 Timothy 6:16)

But God has given us a full representation
that we can continually gaze on:
“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory
and the exact representation of his being...”

Representation
of His
Goodness!

Hebrews 1:3

Christ becomes a peephole
through which we can see what we need to of God.

God is Light

We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent,
and God is shining through it all of the time."

Thomas Merton

God is Light; in Him is no Darkness at all.

1 John 1:5

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers,
so that they cannot see
the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,
who is the image of God.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"
made his light shine in our hearts
to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God
in the face of
Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:4, 6

The Light of God's Face

It was not by their sword
that they won the land,
nor did their arm
bring them victory;
it was your right hand,
your arm,
and the **light of your face**,
for you loved them.

Psalm 44:3

The LORD bless you
and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace."

Numbers 6:24-26

Bathed in the Light of Grace (Soaked)

Go out on a clear night and view the heavens with awe.
But the starshine strikes us during the day as well,
when we cannot see because we are distracted or blinded.
“Uncountable stars” parallels un-measurable grace.

We are bathed in light
by an uncountable number of stars that we cannot see.
You can't reach the stars (and can't usually see them) in reality,
but they are always touching (or reaching for) you.

God's grace is **always there**, available if we could just see.
Some of the light comes in from eons before this time –
God's Grace has been **planned** since the beginning of time.

Faith is the lens or perhaps sunshade
that allows us to see the other stars.
It is there even if you don't look!

But not Overwhelmed (burned up)

The night sky paradox (Olber's):

**If the universe is infinite,
and there are an infinite number of stars,
why is the night sky not bright?**

In fact, why are we not burned up?

Answer: Because the universe is expanding!

**We are not scorched or burned up by Grace,
because of the immensity and expanse of God.**

Love and Grace Greater than the Universe

Though there is a cosmic struggle for our souls,
no power in the universe can separate us from the love of God.

... I am convinced that neither death nor life,
neither angels nor demons,
neither the present nor the future,
nor any powers, neither height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35-38

God will Win over evil!

How can we connect to the Infinite?

That is why God came to earth in the form of man.

**God is infinite, but reachable –
we need a bridge, and that is Christ.**

**Christ is the buffer;
He is a safe path to God.**

How can Christ Soften our Hearts?

Christ's blood is the universal solvent. (PDE)

But some things do not allow themselves to be dissolved.

**And the purpose is not to dissolve our entire heart away
- just the part that keeps us from being like God**

But what kind of container can you keep a universal solvent in?

Think of the most powerful acid.

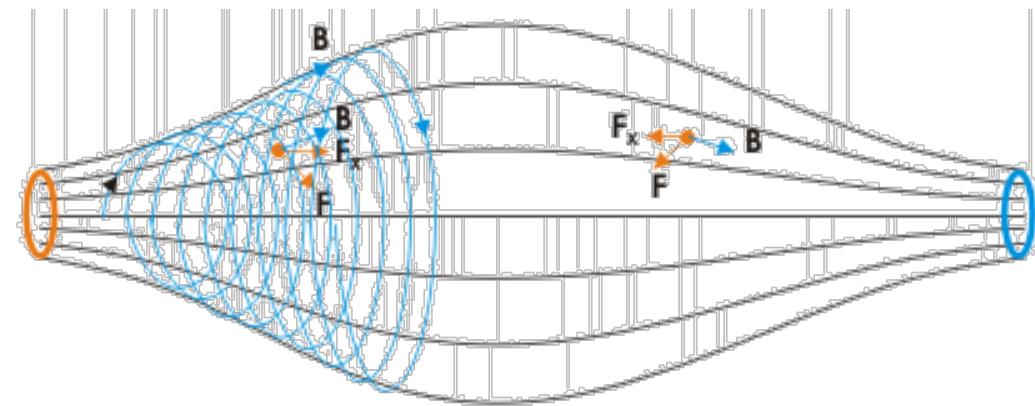
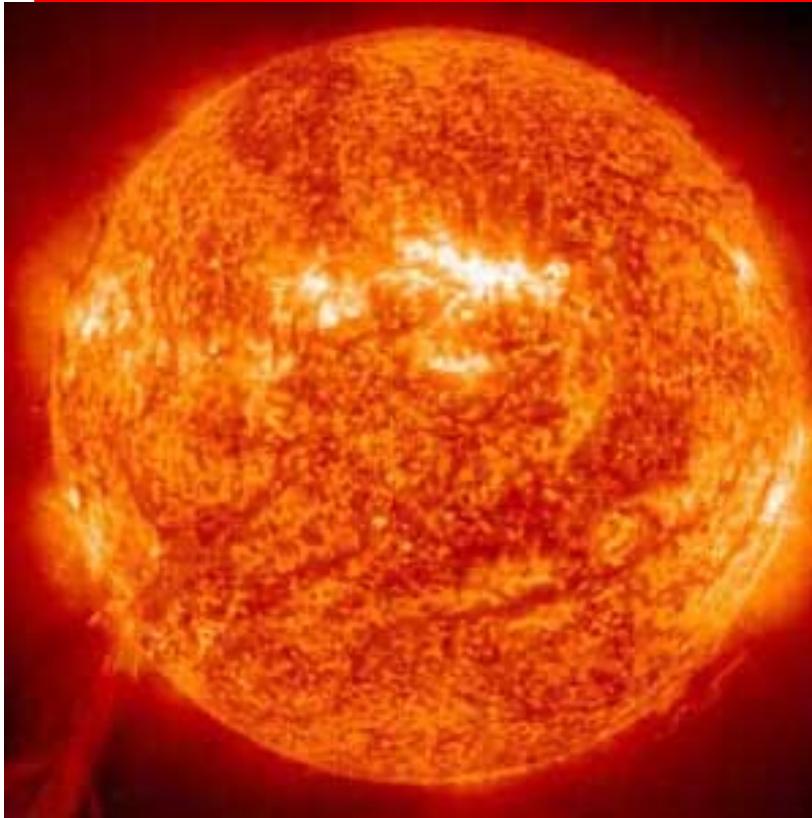
What kind of container do you use that it won't melt?

Something that is non completely physical in nature.

And that is how God presented Himself to us in Christ: God and man together

How can God be Contained so that we can see Him?

When I think of the core of God's Goodness,
I envision a highly powerful, reactive ball, sort of like molten lava.
What kind of physical vessel could contain it,
so that we could see it and understand it?



Fusion containment: the need for a magnetic bottle
that reflects the charged particles.

How can a Human Being Contain Him?

A human body is weak and frail,
but that is what God chose as the vehicle to deliver His Love.

Think of a human body struggling to contain
the emotional power of God;
but Christ did this for us.

But that Love couldn't be totally contained:
It splashed onto those who came near it,
it gushed out when the body was broken on the cross,
and it sweeps mankind into His arms.

We partake of the symbols of the remnants of his body
which represent the working of God's great sacrificial love.

The human body is frail and not "God-like";
but it didn't matter
because of the worth of His heart.

Communication - Follow the Rules?

Why was ee cummings given such poetic license?

Because the communication he creates is great (in spite of the rules)!

i carry your heart with me

i carry your heart with me (i carry it in my heart) i am never without it
(anywhere i go you go, my dear;
and whatever is done by only me is your doing, my darling)

i fear no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet)

i want no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows

(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud and the sky of the sky of a
tree called life; which grows higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

ee cummings

Communion in Song: I Need Thee Every Hour

I need Thee every hour,
Most gracious Lord;
No **tender voice** like Thine
Can peace afford.

I need Thee,
O I need Thee;
Every hour I need Thee!

O, bless me now,
My Saviour:
I come to Thee!

Annie S. Hawks

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but it didn't matter
because of the worth of His heart.

The Body of Christ Contained the Essence of God

What kind of container

could keep the **full representation** of the heart and Goodness of God?

Many things that are important to us

are only the vehicles

that carry something truly precious.

The body of Christ is like that,

as you can think of it as the vessel designated

to deliver the unfailing love of God.

The body of Christ was just the mechanism to deliver God's love

but do we revere the body,

or what He carried?

The Son is **the radiance of God's glory**

and **the exact representation of his being,**

sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Hebrews 1:3a

Solomon's Perspective on the Temple

But will God really dwell on earth?

The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you.

How much less this temple I have built!

Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy,
O LORD my God.

Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying
in your presence this day.

May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day,
this place of which you said,
'My Name shall be there,'
so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place.

Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel
when they pray toward this place.

Hear from heaven,
your dwelling place,
and when you hear,
forgive.

Solomon knows that God does not reside in the physical, and is very humble about presenting the temple; he asks for God to forgive its inadequacy

God is a Consuming Fire, But He holds back for us!

Moses is coming to the burning bush
found himself engaged in communion with God.
There was fear and awe in his heart.
He was overwhelmed by the grace of God -
it was power under control;
you cannot stop it!

God is in complete control,
with infinite resolution.



What Conduit or Vehicle Delivers Him to us?

The physical attributes of Christ were a one-time use that fulfilled its purpose, like first stage of a moon rocket delivering a payload into space.

How does the designer feel about a rocket booster that is left behind?

- good that it accomplished its mission
- not sadness that it was destroyed

The body of Christ was more like a cocoon, from which emerged the ultimate butterfly.

What is the value of the vine compared to the nourishment that it provides?

The vine and the branches are meant to nourish us (the branches)
- by infusing us with love.

We mustn't lose sight of the supreme importance of the delivered product over the carrier.

We pay tribute to the physical body through the symbols of the bread and fruit of the vine, but this is only to put us in touch with the critical Spirit.

What is more Important? Form or Content?

**When we enjoy this communion,
perhaps we should not consider his body and blood
something as sacred as the love that flowed through them.**

**We must make sure that we are paying our real tribute
to the power of the love
that flowed through them?**

Transfiguration

**The body of Christ converted God's love
into something that we could see and feel.**

**This was a transfiguration of spirit
into something physical.**

Royal Power from Humble Beginnings

Christ was born in a manger of poor town folk.
He is in reality the King of all.
Yet he was crucified as the basest criminal.
The contrast is as great as it can be.

God is infinite, but has the power to connect to each of us “specks”

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?
For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom
did not know him,
God was pleased
through the foolishness of what was preached
to save those who believe.
Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom,
but we preach Christ crucified:
a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,
but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom,
and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

1 Corinthians 1:20-25

Objective: Relationships! (1)

God wants us to be His People:

He will be our God and we will be His people (many references).

**God wants people who hunger and thirst after him,
who seek to establish the proper relationship
with him and with all of mankind.**

If we put our love for God first,

if we truly crave to know him

**as we would crave food if we were in great hunger,
then we will find him.**

**Blessed (or happy) are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness;
for they shall be filled.**

Matthew 5:6

God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you;

my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you,

in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Psalm 63:1

As the deer pants for streams of water,

so my soul pants for you, O God.

Psalm 42:1,2

Strong relationships are what make life meaningful and are what please God.

Our relationships (especially with God) must become stronger and stronger!

Objective: Relationships! (2)

When God created man he intended for man to have a relationship with Him.

God wanted a creature that

from his own free will chose God over everything else.

(no robot reciting “I love you God” or “praise the Lord”).

Free will, even though it presented the terrible possibility

that man would turn away from God and break the relationship.

PDE: God is the ultimate risk-taker.

We all seek a long-lasting, deeply-moving, freely-sharing relationship.

We want someone who,

from all of the sea of humanity that exists,

chooses us to live with.

God wants a real, ‘legal’ relationship.

He wants each one of us to commit ourselves fully,

even to the extent of the special ceremony of baptism,

and the taking on of His Son’s name.

And he does want obedience.

Objective: Relationships! (3)

**We should have a tremendous desire to obey
because of our relationship to God.**

**Like obedience to my Dad because I didn't want to disappointment him
(not just because I would be punished).**

God uses these relationships as illustrations:

**Others: to have the right relationship with God
we must have the right relationship with men as well. (1 John 4:21)**

**Father - Son: God chose this relationship to show man
what he means by real love.**

**To show how closely Christ represented God, God called Him his Son;
and Christ called him Father, and was obedient unto death (Phil 2:8)**

**Children: We have an inheritance in His eternal kingdom.
And we are privileged in that we can call God 'Father.'**

**Marriage: Probably the deepest and most profound relationship
that can exist between two people.**

Likened to Christ and the church (Eph 5:25)

Gives us a glimpse of what our relationship to God should be like.

Friends (close): Christ calls us friends if we obey him (John 15:14).

The Broken Relationship (1)

We should have a better idea of what God wants
if we put ourselves into his shoes.

God established man in the perfect relationship,
but man got jealous of his partner,
and wanted to be like God.

So the devil stepped in,
tempted man,
and man sinned,
thus severing the relationship beyond man's own ability to repair it.

This story is contained in the first few chapters of the Bible,
and the entire remainder of the book is devoted to God's plan
for re-establishing that relationship.

The original relationship was like a fabric which ripped into two pieces;
now man and God are separated by a great gulf,
which we find that only Christ can step into and bridge.

It is a wound which only Christ can heal.

The Broken Relationship (2)

**After man sinned,
God cast him out of the garden so that he could learn for himself,
the hard way,
the truth about relationships.**

**He would learn how wonderful it had been to be a very close friend of God.
He would learn that his relationship to his son Cain was greatly inadequate
because he could not teach him obedience,
and he would see the relationship between Cain and Abel
disappear completely.**

**It was not long before Adam truly hungered and thirsted for
the relationship that he had shared with God before he sinned.**

The Broken Relationship (3)

Man began to multiply and things got worse and worse.

Hebrews 11 gives a short summary of the few 'faithful',
or those who sought after God.

Because Abraham put God first, above everything,
God made a special agreement with him and his descendants.

'Abraham believed God,
and it was counted unto him for righteousness.' (Romans 4:3)

Because of the relationship between God and Abraham,
God accepted him,
and made an agreement with him.

Circumcision was the outward sign of the relationship of faith
between Abraham and God.

But this sign later became to the Jews the sign
that they were the chosen of God,
no matter what their faith or relationship was.

Some Jews believed that they were saved,
no matter what they acted like.

The Broken Relationship (4)

Spending time together is crucial to building strong relationships.

It works here on earth as well as it works in the spiritual world.

**God asks us to spend time willingly with him
so that we may grow closer and closer together.**

**Personal prayer and meditation,
reading the Bible and other religious literature,
and the gathering of ourselves together in worship to Him
all involve spending time with God,
and are so necessary for our relationship to grow.**

Do we really hunger and thirst after God?

Taking our Punishment

Jesus took tremendous physical punishment for us:

- His body was torn**
- He shed His blood**
- He broke His heart**

Jesus took tremendous spiritual punishment for us:

- His power was limited**
- He bore our sins (temporarily tainted by them in the process)**
- God “forsook” Him for a while**

Drinking Blood Prohibited for the Jews

But you must not eat the blood;
pour it out on the ground like water.

Deuteronomy 12:16

... because the life of every creature is its blood.
That is why I have said to the Israelites,
"You must not eat the blood of any creature,
because the life of every creature is its blood;
anyone who eats it must be cut off."

Leviticus 17:14

God worked this contrast with old and new ideas of drinking the blood
to emphasize the value and meaning of the later symbol
of drinking Christ's blood.

Without the Shedding of Blood... (OT)

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up... Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant...

[Moses] sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness**.

Hebrews 9:1-4, 21-22

The Old way was meaningful, but insufficient

When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that **only once a year**, and never without **blood**, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings — **external regulations applying until the time of the new order**.

Hebrews 9:6-10

Without the Shedding of Blood... (NT)

The New Way Requires a New Mediator

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by **his own blood**, having obtained eternal redemption.

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are **outwardly** clean.

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! **[inward]**

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Hebrews 9:11-15

Without the Shedding of Blood... (NT)

Christ Brought His Own Blood to the Innermost Sanctuary

It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a **copy** of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now **he has appeared once for all** at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Hebrews 9:23-28

The Blood that Continually Cleanses

There is a need for a true Realization of the magnitude of the glory of God;
Realization of His Goodness
Realization of the Depth of Evil
and thus the Blackness that Christ had to battle for us.

We must appreciate that we are continually cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Christ, being alive, can continually produce blood to cleanse us
because of his continual love and participation in that suffering.

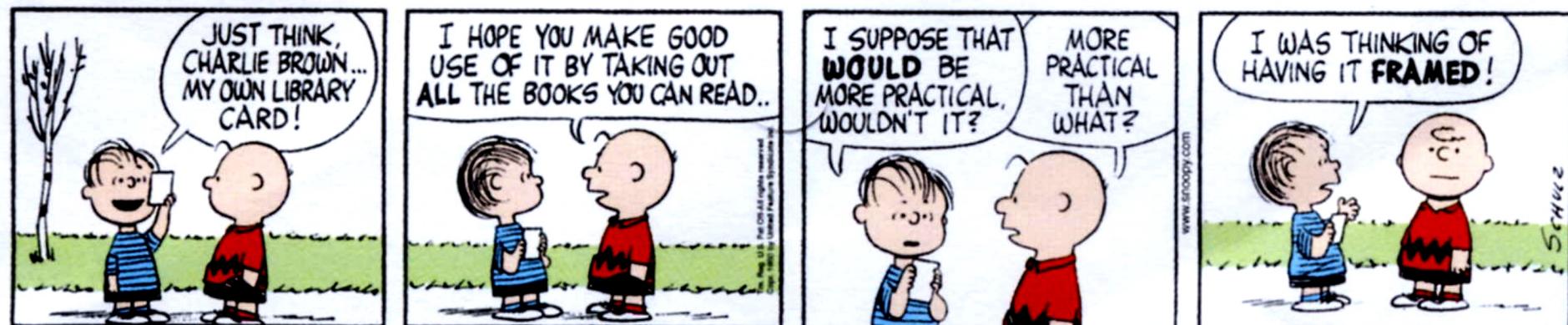
But each of us only needs a drop of that blood,
which miraculously can cover us.

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you:
God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness,
we lie and do not live by the truth.

But if we walk in the light,
as he is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another,
and the blood of Jesus, his Son,
purifies us from all sin.

Blocking the Gateway to Communication



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Communion in Song: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

O soul are you weary and troubled?
No light in the **darkness** you see?
There's **light** for a look at the Saviour,
And life more abundant and free.

Refrain

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And **the things of earth will grow strangely dim**,
In the light of His Glory and Grace.

Helen H. Lemmel

Keeping the Flame Burning

Trying to start a fire, especially in difficult circumstances.

The flammable material keeps going out (many camping examples)

How to get it “roaring”?

- in 6” snow at Dotson’s point
- in steady rain at Gray’s Cove

Sometimes love is like that – difficult to keep burning.

We have to fan the flame and keep feeding the fire.

We have the naive assumption in the beginning that love will grow.

The flame of the Israelites kept “going out”.

The burning bush shows that God’s love will never be extinguished.



Humble Sacrifice

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

Luke 2:22-24

Mary and Joseph offered the **least** sacrifice permitted by Jewish law for the rite of purification.

How fitting that they held in their arms the **greatest** sacrifice a holy God could ever make for their eternal purification.

Beth Moore

Objective: Relationships! (1)

God wants us to be His People:

He will be our God and we will be His people (many references).

**God wants people who hunger and thirst after him,
who seek to establish the proper relationship
with him and with all of mankind.**

If we put our love for God first,

if we truly crave to know him

**as we would crave food if we were in great hunger,
then we will find him.**

**Blessed (or happy) are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness;
for they shall be filled.**

Matthew 5:6

God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you;

my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you,

in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Psalm 63:1

As the deer pants for streams of water,

so my soul pants for you, O God.

Psalm 42:1,2

Strong relationships are what make life meaningful and are what please God.

Our relationships (especially with God) must become stronger and stronger!

Objective: Relationships! (2)

When God created man he intended for man to have a relationship with Him.

God wanted a creature that

from his own free will chose God over everything else.

(no robot reciting “I love you God” or “praise the Lord”).

Free will, even though it presented the terrible possibility

that man would turn away from God and break the relationship.

PDE: God is the ultimate risk-taker.

We all seek a long-lasting, deeply-moving, freely-sharing relationship.

We want someone who,

from all of the sea of humanity that exists,

chooses us to live with.

God wants a real, ‘legal’ relationship.

He wants each one of us to commit ourselves fully,

even to the extent of the special ceremony of baptism,

and the taking on of His Son’s name.

And he does want obedience.

Objective: Relationships! (3)

**We should have a tremendous desire to obey
because of our relationship to God.**

**Like obedience to my Dad because I didn't want to disappointment him
(not just because I would be punished).**

God uses these relationships as illustrations:

**Others: to have the right relationship with God
we must have the right relationship with men as well. (1 John 4:21)**

**Father - Son: God chose this relationship to show man
what he means by real love.**

**To show how closely Christ represented God, God called Him his Son;
and Christ called him Father, and was obedient unto death (Phil 2:8)**

**Children: We have an inheritance in His eternal kingdom.
And we are privileged in that we can call God 'Father.'**

**Marriage: Probably the deepest and most profound relationship
that can exist between two people.**

Likened to Christ and the church (Eph 5:25)

Gives us a glimpse of what our relationship to God should be like.

Friends (close): Christ calls us friends if we obey him (John 15:14).

Workers: 1 Corinthians 3:9

The Broken Relationship (1)

We should have a better idea of **what God wants**
if we put ourselves into his shoes.

God established man in the perfect relationship,
but man got jealous of his partner,
and wanted to be like God.

So the devil stepped in,
tempted man,
and man sinned,
thus severing the relationship beyond man's own ability to repair it.

This story is contained in the first few chapters of the Bible,
and the entire remainder of the book is devoted to God's plan
for re-establishing that relationship.

The original relationship was like a fabric which ripped into two pieces;
now man and God are separated by a great gulf,
which we find that only Christ can step into and bridge.

He grabs both sides and fuses them back together.
This is a wound which only Christ can heal.

The Broken Relationship (2)

After man sinned,

**God cast him out of the garden so that he could learn for himself,
the hard way,
the truth about relationships.**

He would learn how wonderful it had been to be a very close friend of God.

**He would learn that his relationship to his son Cain was greatly inadequate
because he could not teach him obedience,
and he would see the relationship between Cain and Abel
disappear completely.**

**It was not long before Adam truly hungered and thirsted for
the relationship that he had shared with God before he sinned.**

We learn from our relationships.

We also teach from them.

The Broken Relationship (3)

Man began to multiply and things got worse and worse.

Hebrews 11 gives a short summary of the few 'faithful',
or those who sought after God.

Because Abraham put God first, above everything,
God made a special agreement with him and his descendants.

'Abraham believed God,
and it was counted unto him for righteousness.' (Romans 4:3)

Because of the relationship between God and Abraham,
God accepted him,
and made an agreement with him.

Circumcision was the outward sign of the relationship of faith
between Abraham and God.

But this sign later became to the Jews the sign
that they were the chosen of God,
no matter what their faith or relationship was.

Some Jews believed that they were saved,
no matter what they acted like.

The Broken Relationship (4)

Spending time together is crucial to building strong relationships.

It works here on earth as well as it works in the spiritual world.

**God asks us to spend time willingly with him
so that we may grow closer and closer together.**

**Personal prayer and meditation,
reading the Bible and other religious literature,
and the gathering of ourselves together in worship to Him
all involve spending time with God,
and are so necessary for our relationship to grow.**

Do we really hunger and thirst after God?

Real Relationships

**Nathan went to Disney on Ice,
and really enjoyed the show.**

**But when it was over he started crying
because he wanted to say goodbye to the Disney characters.**

**He was trying to make real relationships
with characters that weren't really real.**

**Sometimes we have the realization about our “real” relationships
that they are not always what we expect.**

**Our Relationships with God and Christ and the Holy Spirit
are very real
- more real than any other we can have.**

**We must strive to make the Communion
as Real in our hearts as we can.**

The Image of the Bride

**... the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church,
his body,
of which he is the Savior.**

**Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their
husbands in everything.**

**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church
and gave himself up for her to make her holy...**

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.

**After all, no one ever hated his own body,
but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church
— for we are members of his body.**

**"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother
and be united to his wife,
and the two will become one flesh."**

**This is a profound mystery
— but I am talking about Christ and the church...**

Ephesians 5:22-32

The Image of the Bride

**Maybe that's why God chose the symbol of the Bride
to represent the church.**

**Christ meant for His Church to turn heads,
to turn the world upside down,
and to draw attention to itself
as the location of hope and belief in a world
shot through with cynicism.**

Charles Swindoll

Communicating our Dreams

You must share the dream of your children.

Talk to them about them.

Even the ones that you think are just passing phases.

Adjust when they want to do something different than you do.

God wants to hear our dreams;
what we are excited about;

He also wants to talk to us about what He is excited about
(His reality)

Our time with our children is precious:
we do not want to spend it fussing at and being
legalistic;
and you especially do not want to spend it
crushing their dreams

What would Jesus' dreams have been like?

Communion in Song: O Sacred Head

O sacred Head, now wounded,
with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
with thorns, Thine only crown;
How pale Thou art with anguish,
with sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish,
which once was bright as morn!

What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered,
was all for sinners' gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression,
but Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!
'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor,
vouchsafe to me Thy grace.

Bernard of Clairvaux

The Gentle but Infinite Power of God

**Think of using a massive bulldozer
to create or repair a break in a stained glass window.**

**God has his power under infinite control
and can successfully perform the microsurgery
needed to heal our hearts.**

[PDE]

This is not like a bull in a china shop.

Relationships are Two-way Streets

Faults on either side can weaken or destroy relationships.

**With God, His side of the relationship is always perfect.
(no other relationship is so easy to keep).**

**As we draw near to God and become like Him,
our relationships with others can only improve.**

[PDE]

**There is a third player, Satan, though,
who attacks the relationships.**

We have to watch out for Him.

Jesus Took our Punishment

Jesus took tremendous physical punishment for us:

His body was torn and bruised

He shed His blood

He broke His heart

Jesus took tremendous spiritual punishment for us:

His power was limited

He bore our sins (temporarily tainted by them in the process)

God “forsook” Him for a while

Jesus Took our Punishment

**Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.**

**But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.**

**We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.**

**For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.**

from Isaiah 53

The Body was Broken

In what ways?

The scourging

This was so painful and violent that it killed many
Pilate presented Christ to try to obtain sympathy and save His life

The crown of thorns

Meant to humiliate the King of the Jews

The nails in the hands and feet

Done so that the agony would be prolonged,
especially in breathing, etc

The spear in the side

To ensure that he was dead before the Passover overtook them
The flow of blood and water was sufficient evidence

But no bones were broken

The Crown of Thorns

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium
and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him.

They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him,
and **then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head.**

They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him.

"Hail, king of the Jews!" they said.

They spit on him, and took the staff
and struck him on the head again and again.

After they had mocked him,
they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him.

Then they led him away to crucify him.

Matthew 27:27-31

Cactus Spine Encounter when hiking near Tuscon

Drinking Blood Prohibited for the Jews

But you must not eat the blood;
pour it out on the ground like water.

Deuteronomy 12:16

... because the life of every creature is its blood.
That is why I have said to the Israelites,
"You must not eat the blood of any creature,
because the life of every creature is its blood;
anyone who eats it must be cut off."

Leviticus 17:14

God worked this contrast with old and new ideas of drinking the blood
to emphasize the value and meaning of the later symbol
of drinking Christ's blood.

The Flow of Communion

Communication demands a form of flow -
a flow of information;
we must be connected
like the subway needs power to get anywhere.

The vine feeds the branches, and
the branches bear fruit.

We must not restrict the flow
between ourselves
or between us and God.

To properly commune,
we must live within (abide in) each other.

No one has ever seen God;
but if we love one another,
God lives in us
and His love is made complete in us.

1 John 4:12

The Flow of Communion Needs a Connection

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener...

Remain in me, and I will remain in you.

No branch can bear fruit by itself;

it must remain in the vine.

Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches.

If a man remains in me and I in him,

he will bear much fruit;

apart from me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not remain in me,

he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers;

such branches are picked up,

thrown into the fire and burned.

If you remain in me and **my words** remain in you,

ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

This is to my Father's glory,

that you **bear much fruit**,

showing yourselves to be my disciples.

John 15:1-8

The Complete Connection

There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called in one hope of your calling;
one Lord,
one faith,
one baptism;
one God and Father of all,

who is **above** all,
and **through** all,
and **in** you all.

Ephesians 4:4-6

God is everywhere: around, through, and in us...

The Flow of Love

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians,
and **opened wide our hearts** to you.

We are not withholding our affection from you,
but you are withholding yours from us.

As a fair exchange —
I speak as to my children —
open wide your hearts also.

2 Corinthians 6:11

May the Lord make your love
increase and overflow for each other
and for everyone else,
just as ours does for you.

1 Thessalonians 3:12

Communion in Song: May I Call You Father?

May I call you Father?
May I call you Friend?
Oh, I've hurt you Jesus,
I've hurt you with my sin.

Father Please forgive me -
I'm young and can't survive
Without the peace of mind
That only you provide.

Reid Lancaster

Without the Shedding of Blood... (OT)

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up... Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant...

[Moses] sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness**.

Hebrews 9:1-4, 21-22

The Old way was meaningful, but insufficient

When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that **only once a year**, and never without **blood**, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings — **external regulations applying until the time of the new order**.

Hebrews 9:6-10

Without the Shedding of Blood... (NT)

The New Way Requires a New Mediator

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place **once for all** by **his own blood**, having obtained eternal redemption.

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are **outwardly** clean.

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself **unblemished** to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! **[inward]**

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Hebrews 9:11-15

Without the Shedding of Blood... (NT)

Christ Brought His Own Blood to the Innermost Sanctuary

It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a **copy** of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now **he has appeared once for all** at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed **once** to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Hebrews 9:23-28

The Blood that Continually Cleanses

There is a need for a true Realization of the magnitude of the glory of God;
Realization of His Goodness
Realization of the Depth of Evil
and thus the Blackness that Christ had to battle for us.

We must appreciate that we are continually cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Christ, being alive, can continually produce blood to cleanse us
because of his continual love and participation in that suffering.

But each of us only needs a drop of that blood,
which miraculously can cover us.

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you:
God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness,
we lie and do not live by the truth.

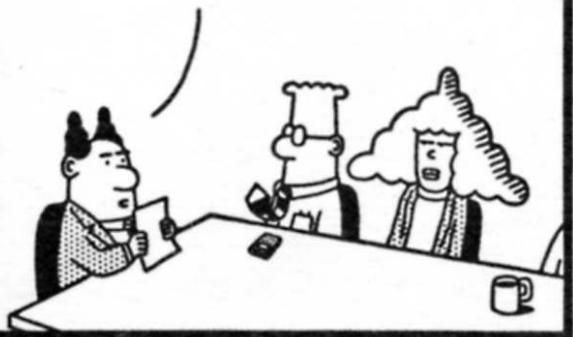
But if we walk in the light,
as he is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another,
and the blood of Jesus, his Son,
purifies us from all sin.

continually!

1 John 1:5-7

Communication with Passwords

YOU WILL NO LONGER
HAVE ACCESS TO CODE
ON ANY SERVER BUT
YOUR OWN.



IS IT MY IMAGINATION,
OR ARE ALL OF OUR RULES
DESIGNED FOR THE SOLE
PURPOSE OF BEING HUGE
INCONVENIENCES?



9-10-05 © 2005 Scott Adams, Inc./Dist. by UFS, Inc.
AND STARTING TODAY,
ALL PASSWORDS MUST
CONTAIN LETTERS,
NUMBERS, DOODLES,
SIGN LANGUAGE AND
SQUIRREL NOISES.



Do we purposefully make communication difficult?
Do we not really want people to know what we are thinking?

Communion in Song: Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
and all the world go free?

No, there's a cross for everyone,
and there's a cross for me.

The consecrated cross I'll bear
till death shall set me free;
and then go home my crown to wear,
for there's a crown for me.

Thomas Shepherd

The cross will ultimately be traded for the crown

A Much Better Sacrifice

**The OT sacrifice was that of a “dumb” animal,
that could not understand sin or punishment.**

**The NT sacrifice was that of a spiritual being (Son of God),
who understood the heights of Goodness
as well as the depths of Evil.**

**Higher forms of life have more of an understanding of pain than lower forms.
Christ,
as a supernatural being,
felt it more deeply than we could.**

Gordon Matthews

Comparison of the Old and New

Old	New
Blood of lesser being	Blood of greater being
Blood from a dead sacrifice	Blood from a living sacrifice
Imperfect mediator cleansed first	Perfect mediator needs no cleansing
Offered regularly to delay justice	Offered once for all to satisfy Grace
Brought to a copy of the sanctuary	Brought in person straight to God
Only allowed in once a year	Returned to God and stayed
No real intercessory power	Intercedes (advocates) for us

The New is totally superior to the Old

Conquering the Darkness

There is a need for a true Realization of the magnitude of the glory of God;
Realization of His Goodness
Realization of the Depth of Evil
and thus the Blackness that Christ had to battle for us.

We must recognize that there is an enemy - one who always opposes God.

Christ bore our sins - He took the punishment that was due us.
He was in the “grave” for three days.
He was separated from God (this is my definition of hell).
He symbolically, at least, took our sins to the other side and left them.
He emerged victorious, and rose from the dead.
He was received by God in heaven
(after mentoring his disciples for a time).

The light shines in the darkness,
but the darkness has not understood [comprehended, or overcome] it.
John 1:5

The Power of Creation vs Love

Someone has wisely said that
while God merely spoke the entire universe into his existence,
an act that cost him no real labor or anguish,
to take away the sin of the world cost him his own life-blood.

We cannot as mere mortals,
ever understand totally the agony that Christ went through for us,
the weakness that he endured
in spite of his own awesome power.

But we can understand the greatness of his love for us,
and we can remember it
(and act on it)
all of our lives.

The agony, in human terms, still represents only a minute
fraction of the true suffering of Christ (God).

The Blood Never Fades Away

**When I was a Scout we regularly visited
the Chickamauga and Shiloh Civil War battlefields.
I would love to visit Gettysburg someday,
where Lincoln wrote the greatest eulogy ever written by man.**

**These are generally beautiful places
with grasslands and woodlands.**

**You have to use your imagination
to describe the war and bloodshed that occurred there,
because it seems so peaceful now.**

**When we take our communion,
we are in a similar peaceful zone.**

**We are participating in a memorial,
but we may not understand exactly the actual blood and passion
of the actual events of the crucifixion.**

**In the battlefield, the blood of so many soldiers
has been washed away thousands of rains.**

**With Christ the blood is still in the presence of God
and not just a memory;
its power will never fade away.**

The Symbols of Bread and Blood

The act of “breaking bread”
is a very normal act in the process of eating at the table.

Why on earth (or in heaven for that matter)
would we need the symbols to be transformed (transubstantiated)
to the actual, physical body and blood of Christ?

This sounds almost like sacrilege, a limitation of the spiritual power of God.

We only have a portion;
but it is a very filling sustenance;
only a taste is needed to absorb
the True Spiritual Nourishment that Christ offers.

Partaking of these symbols
of the body and blood
(and understanding their deep meaning)
knits us closer together in fellowship.

Any meaningful “transubstantiation” must occur in our minds.

The Sacrifice of Love

... David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem. David longed for water and said,

"Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water
from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!"

So the three mighty men broke through the Philistine lines,
drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem
and carried it back to David.

Because of the prohibition to drink blood?

But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the LORD.

"Far be it from me, O LORD, to do this!" he said.

"Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?"

And David would not drink it.

2 Samuel 23:14-17

Look at what is common but different:

servants sacrifice their lives and blood for their king
our King sacrifices his life and blood for his people (subjects)

See the eagerness with which David's men ran to the battle line;
Jesus came to us in a similar rush.

David treated the water as blood sacrifice and poured it out;
he would not drink for his own pleasure.

We must treat Christ's sacrifice with the same sacredness.

The Absorption of Suffering

Power,
no matter how well-intentioned,
tends to cause suffering.

Love,
being vulnerable,
absorbs it.

In a point of convergence
on a hill called Calvary,
God renounced the one
for the sake of the other.

Phillip Yancey in The Jesus I Never Knew

The awesome fact that Christ can **absorb**,
not only our sin,
but our suffering if we will let him.

A Taste of Death (1)

I was working out the other day and a friend of mine and I began talking about some of the things that we did to get some exercise when we couldn't make it to the gym.

He mentioned that he sometimes used a wire to jump rope with.

And then he just sort of added that when he missed and the wire hit his back he felt just a little of what Jesus felt so long ago.

It is amazing how the conversation was suddenly transformed, changed from a routine discussion of our daily exercise regimen to that which was truly important.

Suddenly, we were talking about Christ, and I felt a closer kinship to my friend.

He obviously held in great esteem the sacrifice that Christ endured for us.

He was awed by it, to the point of being proud to partake of even a little taste of it.

A Taste of Death (2)

**But we see Jesus,
who was made a little lower than the angels,
now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death,
so that by the grace of God he might **taste** death for everyone.**

Hebrews 2:9

**William Barclay says that a better translation is that
Christ drained the cup of death for us.**

**In other words,
He did not just taste it,
but he drank all of it.
He gave it all for us.**

A Taste of Death (3)

Then he took the cup,
gave thanks and offered it to them,
saying,
"Drink from it, all of you.

This is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many
for the forgiveness of sins...

Matthew 26:27-28

In whatever we do,
we must decide that we will see things
in light of what Christ suffered for us.

And then in whatever we do,
we will be motivated to glorify Him more.

Consider the Joy of Christ

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
the author and perfecter of our faith,
who for the **joy** set before him endured the cross,
scorning its shame,
and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

'He himself endured a cross...because of the **joy** he knew would follow'

☒ Hebrews 12.2

(Phillips)

There is no easy way.

Only when we have gone 'to the cross'
can we know the **joy** of victory.

Charlie Shedd

By being obedient to death on the cross,
God makes every knee to bow to Christ.

see Philipians 2:5-12

Joy may be more complex than we would like to think.

Consider the Joy of Job

Oh, that I might have my request,
that God would grant what I hope for,
that God would be willing to crush me,
to let loose his hand and cut me off!

God “forsook”
Christ, too

Then I would still have this consolation —
my **joy in unrelenting pain** —
that I had not denied the words of the Holy One.

Job 6:8-10

Job was able to endure the pain,
knowing that he had maintained his integrity
(completed his task).

Dad's Life in Communications (1)

My Dad told me that I should learn how to speak in public,
as I would use this skill a great deal.

I thought he was nuts,
but he was right!

He loved technology more than farming (he was an early techno-geek)
He had 8 and 16 mm movie cameras when he was a very young man.

Not many people had any kind of personal camera equipment
in the 1930's and 1940's,
much less movie equipment

He gave us the link to our past (communicating that past to us)
and showed us living, moving grandparents
whom some of us had never actually seen

This now provides the means of linking the family together,
as we have copied these onto video tape and CD-ROM
before they deteriorated

He worked at the Lyric movie theater in his youth as a projectionist

Dad's Life in Communications (2)

**He got a job with the Signal Corps in World War Two and Korea,
building, checking, and repairing radio communications equipment**

He had his own business repairing radios and TV's.

**He got his amateur “ham” radio license so that he could talk to people
all over the world;**

he has cards from many countries documenting these “contacts”

**He worked for a summer at KNLS after he retired as a radio engineer
for the World Christian Broadcasting system,
which broadcasts to millions in Russian, Chinese, and English**

**He worked with World Bible School,
where he sent lessons out to many people in Africa
and other parts of the world
who wanted to hear the gospel;
he received many interesting letters from those who were grateful.**

**He learned computers so that he could work this better.
He used the two finger method.**

He worked teletype and computer-based “packet” radio

Dad's Life in Communications (3)

**He seemed to delight in long-distance communication,
but he still had great difficulty standing up in front of people to speak**

**He would want you all to know about God's love for us,
and his means of bringing us home to him.**

Communion in Song: Be With Me, Lord

Be with me, Lord, I cannot live without Thee,
I dare not try to take one step alone,
I cannot bear the loads of life, unaided,
I need Thy strength to lean myself upon.

Be with me, Lord! No other gift or blessing
Thou couldst bestow could with this one compare--
A constant sense of Thy **abiding presence**,
Where'er I am, to feel that Thou art near.

T.O. Chisholm

A Full-time Job

I used to think that Christ's job was done at the cross,
that afterwards he could go back
to whatever he was doing before he came to earth.

But his commitment to us goes much, much deeper than that.

We know that he carried,
as his offering,
his own blood into the very presence of God on our behalf.

And Christ remains at the right hand of God
to make continual intercession for us.

He is there now, and will be until the end.

Likewise, our commitment to His sacrifice goes much deeper
than just this memorial here.

We must always remember.

Completely Separating us from Sin

One of the most interesting miracles that Jesus performed
was when He walked on the water,
and allowed Peter to do the same.

It was such a profound moment that none of the other apostles
even thought about trying it,
but Jesus could have had them all hovering above the sea
if it had been His will.

Even when Peter began to doubt,
Jesus could have kept him from sinking into the sea.

We might think that in a similar way
He can keep us all from sinking into something much worse.
Through His power we are kept separate
from the stain of sin and out of the grasp of its consequences.
Like Peter, we may lose sight of that power momentarily,
but we are firmly in His embrace
and there is nothing that can separate us from Him.

They Gave Him Gall to Drink

There they offered Jesus wine to drink,
mixed with gall;
but after tasting it,
he refused to drink it.

Matthew 27:34

Those in charge of the crucifixion of Jesus
offered Him wine mixed with gall for His terrible thirst,
but after tasting its bitterness,
he refused to drink more of it.

In the midst of his physical suffering and the burden of our sin,
He had to deal with a bitter aftertaste that He couldn't wash out.
He had to endure it.

Charlie Shedd

Jesus refused to deaden the pain or lessen the burden.

Taste the Bitterness

In chemistry class I was once offered “limeade”...
but it turned out to be green soap.
It took a while to get rid of the aftertaste.

Now I was surprised by the soap,
but Christ knew exactly what he was getting into,
and accepted it for us.

We commemorate the bitterness of His death,
but we also celebrate the cleansing of the palette
that was a result of His resurrection victory.

We must partake of this communion with our whole hearts
so that we may not leave Him any residual bitter aftertaste.

A Shocking Communion (1)

**The center of our worship time
is our communion with the Lord in memory
of His broken and bleeding body,
which He gave for us.**

We don't always think about it like we should.

**I remember that once when I was drinking of the fruit of the vine,
it went down the wrong way and burned my throat.**

**I was annoyed by this at first,
but then I thought that this was very little to complain about
in comparison to the great pain that the Son of God endured for me.**

Then I began to appreciate that I was in a very small way sharing in his pain.

A Shocking Communion (2)

**It would be interesting to see how many people
would come weekly to partake of the communion
if it were really a painful experience.**

**Let us say that it was in the form of a set of electrodes
that we must take hold of to receive an electric shock.**

**How many of us would eagerly grab hold
so that we might share in the sufferings of Christ?**

Would you want to “share” that as often as possible?

A Shocking Communion (3)

**Shock treatment is the kind of approach
that we use on dumb cattle that we want to stay within the fence.**

**All of us are capable of thinking at a level much higher than that
if we will just apply ourselves.**

**God chose something mental, reflective;
we should be able to consider the magnitude of the sacrifice of Christ
without being prodded in such a way.**

The problem is that we just do not think that much about it.

**There have been too many times in the past
that I just mechanically took part in the communion service
without really doing my part.**

A Shocking Communion (4)

Therefore, 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.

A man ought to examine himself
before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

For anyone who eats and drinks
without recognizing the body of the Lord
eats and drinks judgment on himself.”

1 Corinthians 11:27-29

We must examine ourselves and think about the body
to truly commune with Christ.

We cannot take this segment of our worship lightly,
for Christ certainly did not take his crucifixion lightly!

There have been too many times in the past
that I just mechanically took part in the communion service
without really doing my part.

Regeneration

**Communion should be a point of regeneration,
for in that activity we should touch the body of Christ weekly.**

**We must think of our relationship with Christ
in more than just a general sense:
it must always be related to the cross.**

**The communion must be a continual consciousness
of Christ's sacrifice.**

**'The bread and blood are to see the reality of the cross.
It is not just a fairy tale,
like 'Once upon a time in a far away land...'**

**The communion should be within us
a very real re-living of the sacrificial experience of Christ.**

Communication - Learning

Have you ever wanted to learn how to do a backwards flip?

**You can read about this,
but you can't really learn how
from rules and steps found in a document.**

**We know the beginning and end positions -
but we can't practice the in-between positions (in the air)**

**It is not a blind leap -
It is not jumping into the air and flying on faith;
You must have special equipment and helpers.**

How did the first person learn how to do it?

Communion in Song: O Master Let Me Walk with Thee

**O Master, let me walk with thee
in lowly paths of service free;
tell me thy secret; help me bear
the strain of toil, the fret of care.**

**In hope that sends a shining ray
far down the future's broadening way,
in peace that only thou canst give,
with thee, O Master, let me live.**

Washington Gladden

Christ Remembers

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened,
who have **tasted** the heavenly gift,
who have **shared** in the Holy Spirit,
who have **tasted** the **goodness** of the word of God
and the powers of the coming age,
if they fall away,
to be brought back to repentance,
because to their loss
they are **crucifying the Son of God all over again**
and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Hebrews 6:4-6

How does Christ feel when we sin?

I think of Christ as remembering his crucifixion every time that we fail him.

Perhaps we should remember how closely entwined our sin is
with his sacrifice,
and continually renew our dedication to him.

The Agony

**When I think about the agony as Jesus prayed before the crucifixion
(Matt 26:36-44, Mark 14:32-40, and Luke 22:39-45),**

**I think not only about him anticipating his pain and death,
but also that he will have to bear the weight of our sins.**

**Perhaps He is looking with horror at the evil in the world
– how badly we treat each other.**

**And I think that maybe part of His agony is
that he is looking with horror
at my heart.**

The Body is More than the Physical Christ

The writer in Hebrews 10 talks about how we can come into the presence of God with confidence through the cleansing power of Christ's blood (vs 19).

Then he follows this with the fact that we ought to work hard to encourage others (vs 25), and build them up into the same position of strength with their Lord.

When we partake of the Lord's Supper, it should be with His entire body (1 Cor 11:29) in mind.

This includes the earthly body, which is the church.

We should leave this communion with a heart to treat each other better

Communication - Learning



Communication - Perfect Sacrifice

**We communicate by our actions:
“Actions speak louder than words!”**

**Christ's perfect sacrifice
was a perfect way to communicate love.**

Communion in Song: Bind us Together, Lord

Bind us together Lord,
Bind us together,
With cords that cannot be broken.

Bind us together Lord,
Bind us together Lord,
Bind us together with love.

Bob Gillman

Sensitivity

**Sometimes we get a scratch or cut that bleeds
and we don't even know it.**

(Of course, many times we over-react)

**But Jesus felt the slightest touch
when the woman with the issue of blood touched Him.**

**He had great sensitivity,
and this makes the cross so much more powerful
if you think how much he suffered for each wound.**

Who Can Redeem a Life?

**No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him
- the ransom for a life is costly,
 no payment is ever enough -
that he should live on forever and not see decay.**

Psalm 49:7-9

No mere human can redeem -- It takes the blood of Christ.

Critical Point

The crucifixion is really the focus,
or the critical point of all of history.
The Old Testament points to it,
and we all look back on it now.
In remembering the death of Christ
we are linked to his whole life,
his whole ministry,
his whole reason for being here on earth.

The greatest negative in the universe is the cross...
the greatest positive is the resurrection.

Watchman Nee

This “negative to positive” represents a huge swing in only three days.

God's View Point

The Bible distinguishes itself from other realms of religious literature in that it not only tells us to love our fellow man, but it shows us in a tragic, intimately personal example just what that love really means.

This suffering of Christ's is the focus of our attraction to him, as we see what he endured because of his love for us.

We should no longer ask
'Why does God allow suffering?'

He alone has the right to ask that question,
for he watched his Son die in agony.

He pushes the question right back at us!

And He did that because He loved us
and wanted to save us from our sin.

I have a point of view.
You have a point of view.
But God has view.

Madeleine L'Engle

A Critical Point, A Critical Time

The communion is also to be a critical point in our own lives.

**We are the closest to Christ each time we partake of it,
or at least we should be.**

We must make crucial decisions of dedication each time we partake of it.

**We should not have to be jolted by an electric-like shock
whenever we stray a little bit off course.**

**We should embrace our part in the true fellowship of believers,
remembering the way Christ loved us and died for us,
and committing ourselves constantly
to the relationship that we have with Him.**

Sharing the Suffering

Several passages in the New Testament indicate the attitude of the apostles in regard to sharing the sufferings of Christ.

It has been 'granted' to us to suffer for the sake of Christ, as though it was a gift.

We have the opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ and thus in the resurrection.

For it has been **granted** to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him...

Philippians 1:29

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of **sharing** in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead....

Philippians 3:10

Is it Finished?

"It is finished."

It is hard for us to know the intonation with which these words
of the dying Christ were spoken.

If they came as the sufferer's sigh of relief,
they must also have been the worker's glad cry of achievement.

Everything had been done that could be,
man had been offered a sight of God as He really was.

For those of us who believe that,
in seeing Jesus,
we see God,

the Cross is not a coarse framework of blood-stained wood,
but the most precious emblem of man's dearest hopes;

it is the great pledge which we sorely need,
that love is stronger than hate,
grace than sin,
life than death.

H. R. L. Sheppard

Our search for deeper communion should\ never be finished!

The Ultimate Question: Do We Really Know Christ?

We sometimes assume too much in our relationships!

Many will say to me on that day,
'Lord, Lord,
did we not prophesy in your name,
and in your name drive out demons
and perform many miracles?'

Then I will tell them plainly,
'I never knew you.'
Away from me, you evildoers!
Matthew 7:22-24

We need to make sure that we truly know Him!

Outline of the Class

Communion with Christ

I Introduction

- Objectives of Class
- Discussion of Communication
- Description of the Event (Last Supper)
- History (Connection to Passover)
- Interpretation (Table or Altar)

II Need

- Our point of view
- God's point of view

III What God/Christ did

III Our Response **What do we do?**

IV The Value and Meaning of The Communion

- Joy
- Love
- Fellowship
- Communication / Prayer
- Images and Symbols
- Kingdom
- Service
- Teaching

V End Game

Communication - What Children Understand

I told my daughter we were going to church to **worship** God, and she wanted to bring a bar of soap along to "**wash up**" Jesus, too.

Something was lost in the translation when I explained that God gave us **everlasting** life, and my son thought it was generous of God to give us his "**last wife**."

My proudest moment came during the children's Christmas pageant. My daughter was playing Mary, two of my sons were shepherds and my youngest son was a wise man [who] ... stepped forward wearing a bathrobe and a paper crown, knelt at the manger and announced, "We are the three wise men, and we are bringing gifts of **gold, common sense and fur**."

Anonymous

Communion in Song: Nearer My God, to Thee

**Nearer, my God, to thee,
nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross
that raises me.**

**Still all my song shall be,
nearer, my God, to thee;
nearer, my God, to thee,
nearer to thee!**

Sarah F. Adams

Go to Him (1)

There is a difficult journey that each one of us must take.

The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place
as a sin offering,

but the bodies are burned outside the camp.

And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate
to make the people holy through his own blood.

Let us, then,

go to him outside the camp,
bearing the disgrace he bore.

Hebrews 13:11-13

“Outside the Camp” - like the town garbage dump.

Go to Him (2)

**Under the old law,
the blood of the sacrifice was offered in the place
most intimately connected to God,
but the unused carcass was disposed of
without any apparent ceremony
outside the gate of the city.**

Perhaps it was burned to eliminate the risk of contamination.

**What a dishonorable end, though,
to the instrument of the people's salvation!**

**The unused carcasses are simply thrown away, like a milk carton or can.
Our bodies are similarly tossed away when the contents (the soul) is released.**

Go to Him (3)

**Christ's body met such an end as well,
but in this case it was also a beginning.**

**Christ came to us,
in a reversal of death:
an incarnation.**

**Death is reversed again at
Christ's resurrection**

**It was a difficult and mostly unpleasant journey
that he accomplished without falling to sin even once.**

**He came to fellowship man,
and through that fellowship to save him.**

**Christ was our sacrifice,
but because He was so much more superior than the priests,
he took His blood into the direct presence of God (Hebrews 9:24-25).**

**His body was resurrected rather than burned,
and after showing itself in triumph on earth
it eventually was taken into heaven.**

Go to Him (4)

**The idea of going outside the camp
to share in the disgrace of our sin
is very powerful.**

**I am reminded of Thomas,
who though we remember him as the 'doubter',
was author of one of the greatest expressions of love for Christ,
"Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:16)**

Thomas was willing to stick to Him no matter what the future held.

Go to Him (5)

**We must decide to go to Him with the same attitude,
even though the journey may be hard.**

**Communion is all about participation with Christ
in His love for God and all mankind.**

**We can erase the disgrace that He suffered
by returning His love and sharing His shame.**

**This is parallel to the idea of denying ourselves,
taking up our cross and following Him (Luke 9:23).**

**And then one day we will go to Him in another sense,
for He has prepared mansions for us
so that we may always be with Him (John 14:2-3).**

**He will welcome us there
because we chose to have fellowship with Him
for better and worse.**

We have all been “outside the camp” at one time or another.

Groundswell of Support (1)

“It’s a Wonderful Life” is one of my favorite movies. It is the story of George Bailey, who begins to feel like it would have been better if he had never been born. Throughout his life he had worked to do good in his community. He wanted to kill himself because his life insurance policy would solve his financial problem.

The greatest scene in the movie is at the end, where the whole town turned out to help him when they heard that he was in trouble. They flocked to him and gave to him of themselves because of the difference he had made in their lives.

Groundswell of Support (2)

When Christ was crucified; there was no overwhelming groundswell of support from those He had helped. There were only a few hesitant people who wanted to see what was happening, but were afraid to be associated with Him lest they be caught as well. Christ was taken outside the city and hung on a cross, and almost no one was there to help Him. He died feeling forsaken even by God.

Having a crowd riot at Christ's crucifixion would not have really helped, for Christ had to die and be resurrected so that we would all have the chance for eternity with God. The support developed later.

Think of the overwhelming response of the multitudes of those who love Christ and gather around His table to fellowship with Him. Christ would rather have us come now!

We too must pledge to give of ourselves in thanksgiving because of the difference He made in our lives.

Focus on Those that Love You

Jesus once spoke of a rich man who mistreated a poor man named Lazarus. When the 'rich' man died, and realized the eternal nature of things, he asked that Lazarus go back to the rich man's brothers and warn them so that they would believe.

What if, when Jesus was raised and returned to the world, he went back to those that killed him? Couldn't He have converted some of His enemies? What a hubbub that would have caused!

But, as William Barclay noted, after the resurrection Jesus never appeared to anyone except to those who loved Him. Now I can understand that. After all the loving self sacrifice, He just wanted to be around His own people, to those He held precious. Christ played his hand, He had won the game, and now he just wanted to celebrate with his friends.

This communion is about love; it only means something to us and to Him if we truly love Him. These symbols only have power if we love Him.

Do we have room for Christ in our hearts?

William Barclay stated in one of his books that 'there was no room for Christ at the inn, the only place that there was room for Him was at the cross'.

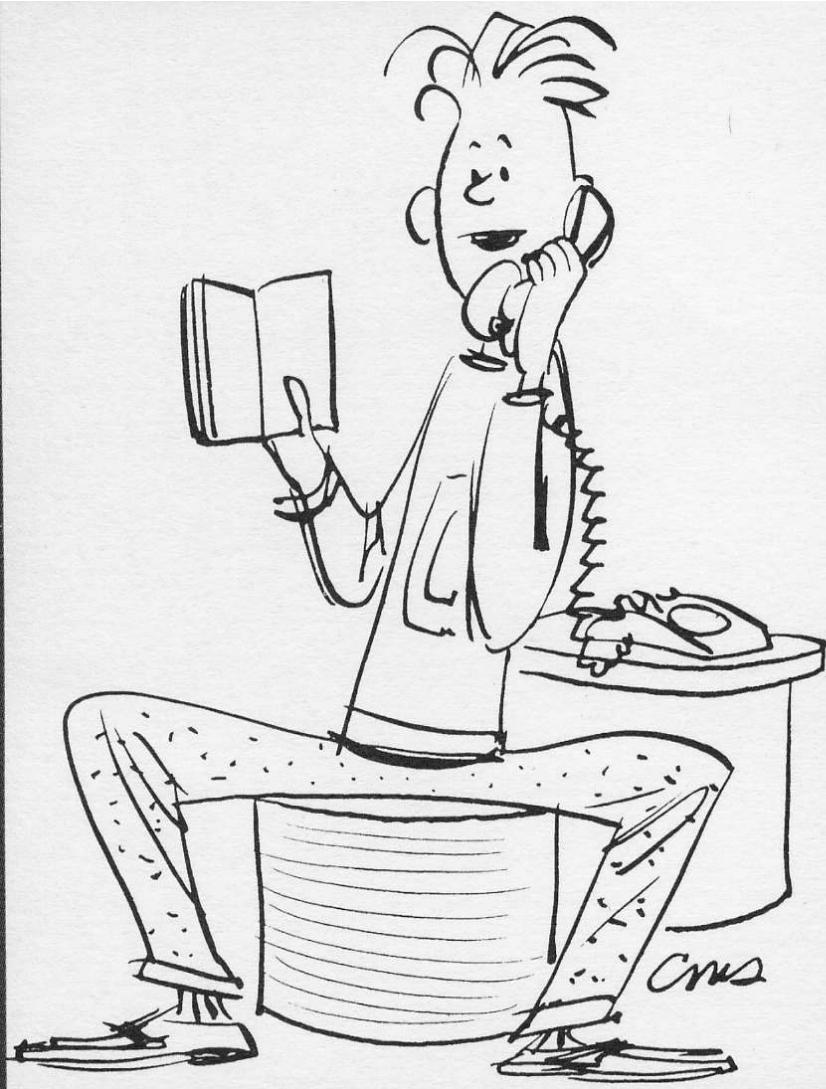
This is something to think about, but we need to realize that there is also room for him in our hearts, if we will only let Him in.

To help keep that room in good living condition, we have the privilege of partaking of this memorial by straightening it up for Him.

Remember the woman that made a room for Elijah to stay in whenever he passed by (2 Kings 4:8ff).

We must do something similar.

Communication - Not through Osmosis



"I THINK I'VE MADE
ONE OF THE FIRST
STEPS TOWARD
UNRAVELING THE
MYSTERIES OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT. . .
I'M STARTING
TO READ IT!"

Communion in Song: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts

How we Respond

We go to Him

We give Him Room in our Hearts

We share His Suffering

We bear the Scars, the Marks

We bring the best of our Heart to Him

We act as the shadow, even the body, of Him

Go to Him Outside the Camp (other notes)

The unused carcasses are simply thrown away, like a milk carton or can. Our bodies are similarly tossed away when the contents (the soul) is released.

Christ's body met such an end as well,
but in this case it was also a beginning.

Christ came to us,
in a reversal of death:
an incarnation.

Death is reversed again at
Christ's resurrection

It was a difficult and mostly unpleasant journey
that he accomplished without falling to sin even once.

He came to fellowship man,
and through that fellowship to save him.

Sharing the Suffering (1)

Several passages in the New Testament indicate the attitude of the apostles in regard to sharing the sufferings of Christ.

It has been 'granted' to us to suffer for the sake of Christ, as though it was a gift.

We have the opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ and thus in the resurrection.

For it has been **granted** to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him...

Philippians 1:29

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of **sharing** in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead....

Philippians 3:10

Sharing the Suffering (2)

We must realize that we do not have to suffer to be a Christian.

**It is not a requirement,
but it most certainly is likely to be a consequence.**

**We see that the symbol of Christianity is the cross,
not a mattress or a lounge chair.**

**We cannot participate passively in it as we would a football game,
sitting back in the comfort of our own home,
not really aware of the intense pain felt
by those whose bones are broken out on the field.**

**It is not necessary to suffer,
but we certainly need to be ready for it.**

**And this is something that regular contact
with the broken body of Christ
can enable us to do.**

Sharing the Suffering (3)

**Likewise, pain is not essential to salvation,
but it is a natural consequence of living.**

**It was necessary for Christ to suffer;
indeed he refused anything that might deaden the pain (Mark 15:23).**

**Christ had to be in complete control at all times,
and would not let his mind be numbed.**

**He shared our existence and pain with us
(and we will share His suffering with Him)**

Sharing the Cross

**Then Jesus said to his disciples,
"If anyone would come after me,
he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**

Matthew 16:24

We must remember that this was said before Christ was actually crucified.

But what does it mean exactly?

What is our cross?

How can we take it up?

**Christ is indicating here that there must be
a definite sharing of the suffering that he was about to undergo.**

The Cup of Suffering

...shall I not drink of the cup which the Father has given me?

John 18:11

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you,
and I **fill up in my flesh what is still lacking**
in regard to Christ's afflictions
for the sake of his body,
which is the church.

Colossians 1:24

This analogy of the cup can be applied in an interesting way
to Paul's statement.

Paul seems to be comparing his life to a cup,
which is to be placed under a faucet
from which flows the continuing stream
of those things to be suffered by the body of Christ.

Christ, on earth, has already filled his cup there.

Paul is then saying that he is more than happy
to fill his cup to the brim there, too.

Fellowship with Blessing as well as Suffering

**In the memorial of the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper
we rejoice in Christ's suffering for us,
having a very blessed fellowship and communion with him.**

We usually think only of the blessings relating to this act.

**But the Greek word for fellowship, "Koinoneo",
also implies a sharing.**

But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings...

1 Peter 4:13

**As we have fellowship with him in our communion,
to what extent are we willing to have fellowship with his suffering?**

Spiritual Jet-Stream



**Christianity's chief symbol is a cross,
not a mattress.**

Arthur Vogel, Is the Last Supper Finished?

Communication - Write Clearly

**Build the altar of the LORD your God with fieldstones
and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God.**

**And you shall write very clearly all the words of this law
on these stones you have set up.**

Deuteronomy 27:6, 8

Communion in Song: Where No One Stands Alone

Once I stood in the night with my head bowed low
In the darkness, as black as could be

And my heart felt alone

And I cried oh Lord

Don't hide your face from me

Hold my hand all the way

Every hour every day

From here to the grave

I know

Take my hand

Let me stand

Where no one stands alone

Mosie Lister

Sharing the Suffering

Several passages in the New Testament indicate the attitude of the apostles in regard to sharing the sufferings of Christ.

It has been 'granted' to us to suffer for the sake of Christ, as though it was a gift.

We have the opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ and thus in the resurrection.

Paul seems to be comparing his life to a cup, which is to be placed under a faucet from which flows the continuing stream of those things to be suffered by the body of Christ.

Christ, on earth, has already filled his cup there.

If we share the suffering, there should be a mark or scar.

Communion Scars (1)

I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Galatians 6:17

Paul carried his communion to the point of actually having scars.

We know of the great sufferings that he went through
for the sake of the church.

Should we not also have a distinguishing mark
that sets us off as Christians.

Can he have followed far,
Who has no wound?
No Scar?

Amy Carmichael

Communion Scars (2)

**Ask and it will be given to you;
seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.**

**For everyone who asks receives;
he who seeks finds;
and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.**

Matthew 7:7-8

Christ is knocking on the door of our heart.

**As John Stott says,
“The hand that knocks is scarred.”**

The same could be said of His heart (pierced, touched).

We have the glorious privilege of being sought after and loved by Christ.

**He offers to share with us all of the Good things
that He has in a great banquet [communion feast?],
and we see the prelude to this every time
we share in the communion.**

Let us carry the scars of our communion with honor.

Communion Scars (3)

The nail scars weren't the only ones He retained.

In John 20:27 Christ also referred to the spear wound in His side.

Many believe the spear wound in Jesus' side pierced His heart.

This suggests a picture of the bride of Christ.

His betrothed has come from His side like the first woman from Adam's.

**Not from His rib, however
– from His heart.**

Beth Moore, Jesus, the One and Only

The Mark of Christians

**By this all men will know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another.**

John 13:35

Think about the face of Christ

**at that moment of agony when he announced,
'Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do'.**

**Many of us are able to forgive and forget
after the pain of being hurt has gone away.**

But Christ was able to do that at the most intense moment of his pain.

And so should we:

**this is the mark,
then that sets us off from the world.**

**No matter what the scars of battle are,
we show this kind of love,
because it was shown to us,
and because we know it is right and good.**

Should we use the Good China at the Feast?

Some people pay a lot of money for their good china -
but then they rarely use it.

Were you taught that you were supposed to “wear your best clothes”
to church as a show of respect to God?

Do we use our regular dishes to feed our dogs or cats?

Can we use paper plates for our guests?

What is meaningful and proper?
What should we bring to the table?

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes.

Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.

1 Peter 3:3-4

There is a parallel about how much we are involved in the communion.

There should be no difference between Sunday (good china and clothes)
and other days.

Being the Shadow of Christ

Helping someone when they need help (like moving)
but also needs emotional support as well.

We don't need to do big heroic things,
but be like a dust particle that falls from Christ.

This doesn't have to be not anything like what Christ does
but consistent with his love and sacrifice.

We are the shadow of Christ -
we are the projection of Him onto others,
and onto the world.

Of course we are His body and the representation of Him on earth
We may be just a bare taste of what Christ is really like,
but nonetheless we can be useful and effective.

... people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats
so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.

Acts 5:15

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and
aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were
cured and the evil spirits left them.

Acts 19:11-13

Communication - Words can have many Meanings



Communion in Song: How Deep the Father's Love for Us

How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure

How great the pain of searing loss,
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the chosen One,
Bring many sons to glory

Behold the Man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice,
Call out among the scoffers

It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished

Stuart Townend

How we Respond

We go to Him, stay by Him, and don't forsake Him (patiently).

We give Him Room in our Hearts.

We share His Suffering and bear the Scars, the Marks.

We bring the best of our Heart to Him.

We act as the shadow, even the body, of Him.

We carry Him as precious cargo.

We consider that He continually cleans up after us.

We must commit to Him as He has to us.

**We must obey because we understand our Father's business
and agree with it.**

We must understand that His Grace covers us.

**We understand that Christ, though obedient, was a volunteer
and that He bore the tremendous burden of our sin.**

We approach our communion and worship with maintained intensity.

We try to imitate Him.

We soak in the Reality of the Spiritual.

We communicate all these expressions of his grace to us to others.

How do we Carry Christ?

How do we carry someone that we love?

I am told that my Dad carried me around like a football.

But I have a precious grandbaby, Cara,

and I am extremely careful about how I hold her.

When she was an infant, I made sure that her head was supported
and that she could not roll off of my lap.

She has a special seat at her home, a special changing station,
a special car seat,

and other special devices that keep her from being harmed.

We don't really let them go completely even when they grow up;
think about the joy of communicating with them
when they are on their own.

If we love Jesus then we ought to be careful how we carry Him as well.

Not that He is an infant, though,

but it is the relationship that we have that is fragile.

I don't want to damage it by dropping it.

How did He Carry Us?

God, through Christ, has carried us tenderly
because He loves us.

There you saw how the LORD your God carried you,
as a father carries his son,
all the way you went until you reached this place

Deuteronomy 1:31

Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob,
all the remnant of the people of Israel,
you whom I have upheld since your birth,
and **have carried since you were born.**

Isaiah 46:3

Where do we Carry Him?

**When we take the communion,
do we think of Him as away off in heaven
or perhaps just sort floating above us?**

Do we sense His presence at all?

**Or do we truly carry Him in a special place in our heart
where we hold Him close?**

**The heart is the only place where our relationship to Him
can be truly protected.**

And we need to keep Him there all through the week.

The Broken Body of Jesus

... Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus.

Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus,
but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders.

With Pilate's permission,
he came and took the body away.

He was accompanied by Nicodemus,
the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night.

Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes,
about seventy-five pounds.

Taking Jesus' body,
the two of them wrapped it,
with the spices,
in strips of linen.

John 19:38-40

Go to Him (Part 2)

There is an Old Testament story where a man of God is killed by lion after being misled by another prophet.

The “false” prophet felt remorse for his sin and wanted to go to him in burial.

So the prophet picked up the body of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back to his own city to mourn for him and bury him.

Then he laid the body in his own tomb, and they mourned over him and said, “Alas, my brother!”

After burying him, he said to his sons, “When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones.

1 Kings 13:29-31

Just when we think that, for whatever reason, our lives are ebbing away into total despair – helpless and hopeless – it’s time to join Jesus in his tomb and quietly lie beside him, “bone to bone.”

F. LaGard Smith

[Remember Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones coming to life.]

Prophecy to dry bones and they will come to life;
Christ resurrection gives us life.

Stay by Him (1)

My God, My God, why have thou forsaken me?

Matthew 27:46

Think about this: How could God forsake Christ?

He was his only begotten Son

He was a perfect (sinless) person

But God “forsook” Christ

so He could (in a sense) stand by us.

But there is a place where someone has testified:

**“What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
a son of man that you care for him?**

Hebrews 2:6

What a contrast!

Why has my God stood by me? (or, all of mankind)

We are totally different from Christ

We are hostile in our minds (Colossians 1.21)

We are all sinners (Romans 3.23)

Yet God stands by us

Stay by Him (2)

... the Lord stood by my side and gave me strength...

2 Timothy 4:17

Why does God do it?

Because He loves us so much!

You see, at just the right time,
when we were still **powerless**,
Christ died for the ungodly.

No value, worthless

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person,
though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners,
Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6-8

But because of his great love for us, God,
who is rich in mercy,
made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions -
it is by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:4-6

How can we not return the favor and stand by Him?

Don't Forsake Him (1)

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened,

who have tasted the heavenly gift,

who have shared in the Holy Spirit,

who have tasted the goodness of the word of God

and the powers of the coming age,

if they fall away,

to be brought back to repentance,

because to their loss

they are crucifying the Son of God all over again

and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Parallels to the Prodigal Son

Hebrews 6:4-8

When we commune, or fellowship, or sharing

— this indicates a deep commitment to following him

through anything and everything.

When you share an experience,

you cannot really give it back if you decide that you did not like it.

We become woven into it,

and to try to turn back rips the fabric beyond repair.

God wasn't just playing around when he sent his son to die:

he was playing for keeps.

Don't Forsake Him (2)

The sufferings and rejections of Christ.

First, the prayer of anguish; not granted.

Then He turned to his friends. They are asleep - as ours or we, are so often, or busy, or away, or preoccupied.

Then he faces the nation; the very nation that he brought into existence. It condemns him.

There is the State; it claims to be just on a rough, worldly level. Yes, but only so far as is consistent with political expediency.

There is still an appeal to the people - the poor and simple whom he had blessed, but they have become overnight a murderous rabble shouting for his blood.

There is, then, nothing left but God. And to God, his last words are 'Why has thou forsaken me?'

We must not let Christ experience this forsakenness again.

**We must not forsake Him as did even his apostles,
right after the sacred communion that they shared together.**

But I am afraid that this is what we do so many times.

C.S. Lewis

Don't Forsake Him (3)

**Jesus today has many who love his heavenly kingdom,
but few who carry his cross;
many who yearn for comfort,
few who long for distress.**

Plenty of people he finds to share his banquet, few to share his fast.

**Everyone desires to take part in his rejoicing,
but few are willing to suffer anything for his sake.**

**There are many that follow Jesus
as far as the breaking of the bread,
few as far as drinking the cup of suffering;
many that revere his miracles,
few that follow him in the indignity of his cross.”**

Thomas a Kempis

Don't Forsake Him (4)

We must stick to Him like glue,
dogging His every step.

Fortunately, many did not forsake Christ.

Even many that we have just mentioned came to their senses
once the confusion wore off and turned back
to follow Him and even die for Him.

After the apostles were flogged for their preaching, they
“left the Sanhedrin,
rejoicing because they had been counted worthy
of suffering disgrace for the Name.”

Then they went out and continuously put themselves in the same peril.

They understood that now that once Christ had risen physically,
the church was His body,
and there were still sufferings aimed at that target.

Don't Forsake Him (5)

**The communion that we have with the Lord
is so precious and needful to us.**

**It is a sharing;
Christ also needs to know that we feel His pain,
even if it is only in some small way.**

**We must take great care with it,
as we would the actual broken body of Jesus,
not to hurt him any more,
but to grow in our love for him every time that we partake of it.**

**We must be willing to share in that suffering,
bearing our cross with joy as we march onward to victory.**

**I wonder about Christ's view of all of this;
what does he think of it all?**

**I see him remembering his suffering every time that we sin;
in a sense we are grinding his nose in it.**

**We know that the memory of the cross is precious to him;
it must be precious to us as well.**

He Hasn't Forsaken Us

Christ lived among men for more than 30 years.

He got to see us as the sinners we are.

You would have thought that Christ would have given up on us.

But,

**He still went voluntarily,
out of love,
to the cross...**

And died for us!

How do we treat our Waitress?

Think of a waitress who has to continually clean up after her customers.

Consider two different customers [sort of like a parable!]:

One who is sloppy and doesn't care:

he spits on the floor,
throws food,
and scatters food everywhere;
he is rude, insulting, and hateful

He is a great annoyance and burden to the waitress .

The other is just clumsy:

he knocks over his drink again and again,
drips ketchup as he eats,
but she knows that he has a good heart;
she remembers feeding her small children.

The waitress loves him because they have a good relationship.

She may someday refuse the first customer's business;
but never the second's.

Which category do we fall in?

Christ continually cleans up after us

**But if we walk in the light,
as he is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another,
and the blood of Jesus, his Son,
purifies us [continual cleansing] from all sin.**

1 John 1:7

Eternal Commitment (1)

**In your relationships with one another,
have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:**

**Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.**

**And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!**

Philippians 2:5-11

Eternal Commitment (2)

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.
And died for us!

Philippians 2:5-11

I used to think that Christ's job was done at the cross,
that afterwards he could go back
to whatever he was doing before he came to earth.

But his commitment to us goes much, much deeper than that.

Eternal Commitment (3)

For Christ did not enter a sanctuary
made with human hands
that was only a copy of the true one;
he entered heaven itself,
now to appear for us in God's presence.

Hebrews 9:24

Christ carried,
as his offering,
his own blood into the very presence of God
on our behalf.

Christ Jesus who died -
more than that, who was raised to life -
is at the right hand of God
and is also interceding for us.

Romans 8:34

He is there now, and will be until the end.
Likewise, our commitment to His sacrifice must go deep.
We must always remember and focus on it.

Picking up the Cross

**Then Jesus said to his disciples,
“Whoever wants to be my disciple must
deny themselves
and take up their cross [daily]
and follow me.”**

Matthew 16:24

**Clarence Jordan, author of The Cotton Patch Version,
once had a pastor proudly point out a \$10,000 cross
erected atop his church.**

**Jordan remarked,
“Time was when Christians could get those crosses for free.”**

**We may feel lucky that we don't live in an era
where they hand out such “free crosses”,
but we still must see our “work”
as a definite commitment to that level of dedication.**

The cross is not just a decoration, and we are not just onlookers here.

Communion is a participation in a fellowship with Him.

We must also pick up our cross.

Unbreakable (1)

I am sure that we have all had kitchenware
which is labeled 'unbreakable'.

What a blessing to have something that is difficult,
if not impossible, to ruin.

I wish everything that I owned had this characteristic,
though the term engineer-proof is not really a possible thing.

Jesus gives us some hope
when he describes God's word as something which cannot be broken.

... Scripture cannot be set aside (or broken, KJV) ...

John 10:35

It is great to be able to trust in something so completely,
knowing that it will never fail.

The idea of something that never fails is basically the same idea.

How many of you have had a car break down and leave you stranded,
or had the TV go out in the middle of a crucial football game.
Think about how frustrating this is!

Unbreakable (2)

God also uses the word ‘unfailing’ in regard to his love for us.

This phrase occurs 35 times in the Bible,

all in the Old Testament,

27 of these in the book of Psalms.

There is no greater phrase to me in all the Bible

than this idea of unfailing love.

This is the way God loves us as His children.

It is expressed in God’s love is overpowering

and we can count on it forever.

I am convinced that neither death nor life,

neither angels nor demons,

neither the present nor the future,

nor any powers,

neither height nor depth,

nor anything else in all creation,

will be able to separate us from the love of God

that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35

Obedience

Understanding:

**if we love Him we will obey His commands;
it shows we “know our Master’s business” John 15:15**

**This is not just about obeying commands -
we must “get it”!**

Jesus asked:

**“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’
and not do the things which I say?”**

Luke 6:46

You are my friends if you do what I command.

**I no longer call you servants,
because a servant does not know his master’s business.**

**Instead, I have called you friends,
for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.**

John 15:14-15

“Why were you searching for me?” he asked.

“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:49

Opportunity

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying,
“I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

Jesus replied,
“Let it be so now;
it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.”

Then John consented.

Matthew 3:13-15

You can almost see John doing a double-take
as he is standing up to his waist in the Jordan...

Turning to invite the next person in line to come down into the water,
John suddenly recognizes the face.

F. LaGard Smith

We would normally be in horror of thinking
that we might suddenly come face to face with God;
but instead of condemning,
Jesus asks John to do something great for Him.

Comparative Response (1)

**Jonah ran from his responsibilities
when God told him to preach to the people of Nineveh.**

**In one of the most memorable childhood Bible stories of all,
Jonah was swallowed by a big fish
as he was trying to escape from God.**

**Jonah definitely did not agree with God's love
as it was being extended to them and to those who were his enemies.**

His eventual obedience was outward only.

He didn't really care what God wanted.

**He hoped with all of his might that God would still destroy the city,
and set himself up a booth on a hill nearby
in hopes of watching a great show.**

**But when God saw how the people of Ninevah
truly humbled themselves and turned from their evil ways,
he had compassion**

and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

**Jonah definitely did not agree with God's love
as it was being extended to them and to those who were his enemies.**

Comparative Response (2)

What if Christ, like Jonah,

was forced to go to earth and preach to us against His will?

What if He had no love for us and did not want us to be saved?

What if He grudgingly obeyed

but even now waits up in heaven hoping

that God will still send us to hell?

We are so fortunate that He does not have that attitude.

He loves us and willingly gave Himself up for us.

Love for our enemies is one of the hardest things to keep in our hearts.

Christ showed us the way when he said,

“Forgive them, for they know not what they do”

to those of us who were causing his death.

And He died for us while “we were yet enemies”,

to save us.

Note the contrast:

Jonah, the servant of God, did not respond to God.

The Ninevites, enemies of God (and Jonah), did respond to God.

Controlled Response

[story of dog straining at leash, pulling its owner along]

That scene reminds me of me!

I want to get way out ahead of God, pulling and straining,
choking on my own eagerness,
not having much fun at all.

And God is saying,
“Slow down. Take it easy. Heel!
You’re only hurting yourself.
Let’s enjoy the morning.
Let’s enjoy the walk together.

Charles Swindoll

We need to keep our enthusiasm under control,
led by God,
not trying to drag him where we want to go.

A Sense of Forgiveness (1)

Do we truly feel the depth of God's Grace?

**Most everyone knows how Joseph forgave his brothers
after they sold him into slavery.**

There is a great parallel here in our own forgiveness by Christ.

**There should be a very close communion
with the one who forgives and thereby saves you.**

**But Joseph's brothers were never totally sure
that the forgiveness was for real and forever.**

We may similarly feel unsure.

A Sense of Forgiveness (2)

The brothers had a greater sense (or understanding) of hunger or need, as they were in a terrible famine.

They had a direct feeling of guilt for what they had done, and they had a sense of physical nearness and touch with Joseph.

But they were still worried that their forgiveness would not last past Jacob's death.

Perhaps they should have gathered together more often to commune together.

So Joseph indeed forgave them and embraced them.

Our forgiveness, from God's Grace, is also forever.

And we just need to fully embrace and understand it that we are fully forgiven through Christ.

Running the Bases

Sometimes when I try to worship

I feel like I am tagging first base as I run hard for second.

But tagging is not good enough;

we must have more of a solid, meaningful interaction.

We rush by the crucifixion scene

as we might an injured animal along the road.

We don't want to see it;

we don't want to spend enough time for it to impact us.

We must stop and feel the wounds, though,

as Thomas once was allowed to do.

We should be stunned by the power of God's Goodness,

as Paul was stopped in his tracks on the road to Damascus.

We must slow down our lives for a moment

and be sensitive to the full impact of God's gift.

Wait for the Lord

**Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.**

Psalm 27:14

**We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.**

Psalm 33:20

**Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when people succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked
schemes.**

Psalm 37:7

LORD, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God.

Psalm 38:15

**I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.**

Psalm 130:5

**We have to stop trying to commune with Christ
without slowing down to worship.**

Example: checking oil in mower while it is running.

Plunge into the Depths

Have you ever tried skimming stones across a lake?

When I try to thank God for sending Jesus to die for my sins,
I feel so inadequate to truly appreciate the depths of this sacrifice.

One way to picture this is to think of plunging into a pool of water.

When you do there is a sudden resistance to your movement;
you have to spend more time in its presence,
and getting out takes a bit of work.

But there is such a breathtaking feeling of diving in the water
and being totally submerged in it.

We all need to take the plunge into the presence of the cross,
and understand more fully the wonderful grace of God.

Intensity

Think of a stage actor
that must put out the same level of emotion into their performance
every night.

How can they do it?

There is a parallel to our own involvement,
or communion with Christ.

We must find a way to keep ourselves “pumped up”.

We are not “performing”,
and neither is Christ
when He daily intercedes for us.

Greeting those we love can always be enthusiastic
because we love them,
so it is with Christ dealing with us or us remembering Him.

We all need to take the plunge into the presence of the cross,
and understand more fully the wonderful grace of God.

Projection of God's Passion (1)

So many times God has to make a representation to us
of things that are simply too wonderful for our tiny minds to grasp.

The streets of gold and the fires of hell I believe fall into this category.

God must project,
or fold His truth into our little space,
for us to see at least a glimmer of it.

How can God describe His love for us?

He sent His Son to die for us,
and that cup of death was full to the brim with pain.

But that was really the punishment for one man.

And Christ died for all mankind - billions and billions.

Projection of God's Passion (2)

There is another level to this as well,
for he bore not only our stripes but our sin.

This is where we really fail to understand the magnitude of this event.

God's passion for us is shown in how much He hated Evil,
and in how much more He loved us.

It's a little like the complex electronic logic
that lies underneath our cell phones or computers.

We take its operation for granted.

We may appreciate it,
or enjoy it,
but we cannot understand it.

Thank Goodness we don't have to.

And we don't have to fully understand the depth of God's love.

But we need to realize
that it reaches way, way beyond what we can see.

Building a Temple (1)

**When Solomon dedicated the great temple for the worship of God,
He asked a crucial question, (2 Chronicles 6:18)**

**"But will God really dwell on earth with men?
The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you.
How much less this temple I have built!"**

**But something small and physical did contain Him (Luke 2),
for he put aside the glory of heaven
and folded himself into a human body
so that He might come to earth and draw us closer to Him.**

Peter also wanted to build a special structure to house Christ...

**Peter said to Jesus,
"Lord, it is good for us to be here.
If you wish, I will put up three shelters -
one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."**

Matthew 17:4

Building a Temple (2)

**Of this body Jesus said in John 2:19,
"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."**

**It was destroyed, in a sense,
but it rose again
so that through it we might have eternal life.**

**And we now worship,
not in an earthly temple,
but in our hearts
in spirit and in truth.**

Velveteen Worship (1)

**The children's story of the Velveteen Rabbit
has been a favorite for many years.**

**It has to do with the way a child takes a stuffed animal
and loves it so much he believes that it is real
(although adults naturally know that it isn't).**

**In the story a velveteen rabbit actually does become real
because of the child's great love.**

Velveteen Worship (2)

**In the church we have somewhat the opposite situation,
where we have something -**

**Christ -
that is very real
but we cannot feel it like a soft, furry toy.**

**We tend to need something physical to touch
to understand the actual reality of things
(Think about Thomas needing to touch Christ's wounds).**

Do we love Christ enough to make Him real in our hearts?

**Jesus said that we must become like children –
who are so able to believe.**

And do those “adults” around us realize that our Christ is not for real?

Velveteen Worship (3)

**This communion with Christ's life and sacrificial death
that we participate in offers us a chance
to embrace the reality of God's love.**

**We can't make Christ real –
He is that already.**

**If He doesn't become real to us,
then we cannot be involved in true worship.**

And our church will fail to make Christ real to those lost in the world.

Let us in this moment worship Him with all of our hearts.

Velveteen Worship (4)

Do we get a “warm fuzzy” feeling from our worship?

Is it even that strong?

Or does it go much deeper than that?

**God is spirit,
and his worshipers must worship
in the Spirit and in truth.**

John 4:24

**The Velveteen Church would make Christ real to the world
in spirit and in truth.**

Birdsong (1)

**Not long ago we took a trip to the mountains
and stayed a night in a small cabin.**

**There was an incredible songbird in the area,
and I was able to record its music.**

**It is so wonderful (I am so delighted)
to hear the songs of birds in the morning air.**

**But I actually care for them as well –
I like knowing that there is a real bird,
going through the cycle of life,
making nest, hunting food, having a family, etc.**

It wouldn't be the same to just play a recording.

**Their preservation becomes important,
not just as a whole species,
but for individual birds
that I may be able to spot and provide seed for.**

Birdsong (2)

God also loves us individually,
not just wanting to hear the background sounds
or hum of his human creation
while He does more important things.

He doesn't want a robotic praise chant from the masses,
but true worship from each soul in existence.

He loves us much more than the birds of the air.

So Christ came to die for each of us,
so that our individual efforts can blend
into a holy chorus of Love and worship.

In our communion we each sing our own song to Him.

Look at the birds of the air;
they do not sow or reap or store away in barns,
and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not much more valuable than they?

Matthew 6:26

Communion Coherence

Take every thought captive to obey Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

We must harness our thoughts and direct them in the proper manner.

There is a great power from this especially
as we focus our thoughts in prayer.

...The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its
effects

James 5:16

Think about the power of a group of Christians
as they meditate or pray together.

There is a similarity to a laser, where all the light waves are in sync.

Think of many minds excited by the same thoughts - “pumped up”
as they all worship together.

Think of the power of a concentrated, coherent beam of thought
directed to God through our fellowship.

And such prayer can truly avail much.

Communication - Mixing Theologies



Communion in Song: More Precious than Silver

Lord,
 You are more precious than silver,
Lord,
 You are more costly than gold.
Lord,
 You are more beautiful than diamonds,
And nothing I desire
 compares with you.

Lynn DeShazo

Go to Him (Part 2 - corrected)

There is an Old Testament story where a man of God is killed by lion after being misled by another prophet.

The “false” prophet felt remorse for his sin and wanted to go to him in burial.

So the prophet picked up the body of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back to his own city to mourn for him and bury him.

Then he laid the body in his own tomb, and they mourned over him and said, “Alas, my brother!”

After burying him, he said to his sons, “When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones.

1 Kings 13:29-31

Just when we think that, for whatever reason, our lives are ebbing away into total despair – helpless and hopeless – it’s time to join Jesus in his tomb and quietly lie beside him, “bone to bone.”

F. LaGard Smith

[Remember Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones coming to life.]

Prophecy to dry bones and they will come to life;
Christ resurrection gives us life.

Eternal Commitment (1)

In your relationships with one another,
have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Philippians 2:5-8

Eternal Commitment (2)

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

I used to think that Christ's job was done at the cross,
that afterwards he could go back
to whatever he was doing before he came to earth.

But his commitment to us goes much, much deeper than that.

Eternal Commitment (3)

For Christ did not enter a sanctuary
made with human hands
that was only a copy of the true one;
he entered heaven itself,
now to appear for us in God's presence.

Hebrews 9:24

Christ carried,
as his offering,
his own blood into the very presence of God
on our behalf.

[Look at my servant Job...]

Christ Jesus who died -
more than that, who was raised to life -
is at the right hand of God
and is also **interceding** [continually] for us.

Romans 8:34

He is there now, and will be until the end.
Likewise, our commitment to His sacrifice must go deep.
We must always remember and focus on it.

Picking up the Cross

**Then Jesus said to his disciples,
“Whoever wants to be my disciple must
deny themselves
and take up their cross [daily]
and follow me.”**

Matthew 16:24

**Clarence Jordan, author of The Cotton Patch Version,
once had a pastor proudly point out a \$10,000 cross
erected atop his church.**

**Jordan remarked,
“Time was when Christians could get those crosses for free.”**

**We may feel lucky that we don't live in an era
where they hand out such “free crosses”,
but we still must see our “work”
as a definite commitment to that level of dedication.**

The cross is not just a decoration, and we are not just onlookers here.

Communion is a participation in a fellowship with Him.

We must also pick up our cross.

[It may not be bloody, but it is there...]

Unbreakable (1)

I am sure that we have all had kitchenware
which is labeled 'unbreakable'.

What a blessing to have something that is difficult,
if not impossible, to ruin.

I wish everything that I owned had this characteristic,
though the term engineer-proof is not really a possible thing.

Jesus gives us some hope
when he describes God's word as something which cannot be broken.

... Scripture cannot be set aside (or broken, KJV) ...

John 10:35

It is great to be able to trust in something so completely,
knowing that it will never fail.

The idea of something that never fails is basically the same idea.

How many of you have had a car break down and leave you stranded,
or had the TV go out in the middle of a crucial football game.

Think about how frustrating this is!

Sometimes we have to manage house repairs.

Unbreakable (2)

God also uses the word ‘unfailing’ in regard to his love for us.

This phrase occurs 35 times in the Bible,

all in the Old Testament,

27 of these in the book of Psalms.

There is no greater phrase to me in all the Bible

than this idea of unfailing love.

This is the way God loves us as His children.

It is expressed in God’s love is overpowering

and we can count on it forever.

I am convinced that neither death nor life,

neither angels nor demons,

neither the present nor the future,

nor any powers,

neither height nor depth,

nor anything else in all creation,

will be able to separate us from the love of God

that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Unbreakable bond - super glue

Romans 8:35-38

Obedience

Understanding:

**if we love Him we will obey His commands;
it shows we “know our Master’s business” John 15:15**

**This is not just about obeying commands -
we must “get it”!**

Valentine present: Duty or Joy?

Jesus asked:

**“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’
and not do the things which I say?”**

Do you agree with God?

Luke 6:46

You are my friends if you do what I command.

**I no longer call you servants,
because a servant does not know **his master’s business**.**

**Instead, I have called you friends,
for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.**

John 15:14-15

“Why were you searching for me?” he asked.

“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:49

Opportunity

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying,
“I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

Jesus replied,
“Let it be so now;
it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.”

Then John consented.

Matthew 3:13-15

You can almost see John doing a double-take
as he is standing up to his waist in the Jordan...

Turning to invite the next person in line to come down into the water,
John suddenly recognizes the face.

F. LaGard Smith

We would normally be in horror of thinking
that we might suddenly come face to face with God;
but instead of condemning,
Jesus asks John to do something great for Him.

Stooping Down for Us

You stoop down to make me great.

2 Samuel 22:36, Psalm 18:35 NIV 1984

He treats us as something very worthwhile.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,
not looking to your own interests
but each of you to the interests of the others.

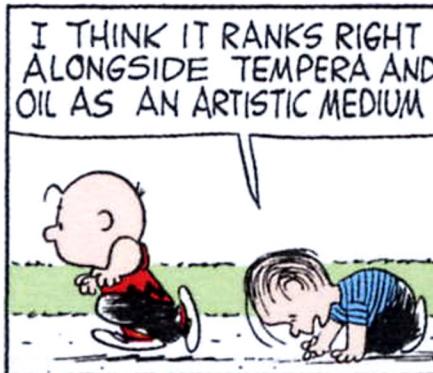
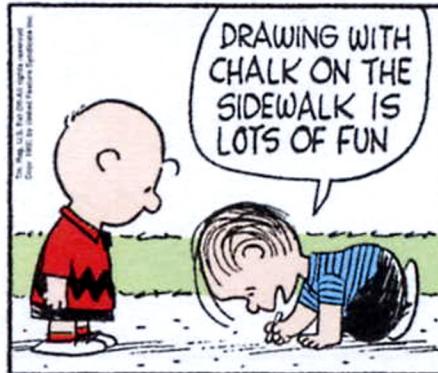
In your relationships with one another,
have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Philippians 2:3-5

He treats us as something great,
not just trash that he cleaned up and “allows” in.

God puts us on a pedestal,
and calls us His children.

Communication - Making it Last



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Communion in Song: Close to Thee

**Thou my everlasting Portion, more than friend or life to me,
All along my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.**

**Not for ease or worldly pleasure, nor for fame my prayer shall be;
Gladly will I toil and suffer, only let me walk with Thee.**

**Lead me through the vale of shadows, bear me over life's fitful sea;
Then the gate of life eternal may I enter, Lord, with Thee.**

Chorus:

**Close to Thee, close to Thee, close to Thee, close to Thee,
Then the gate of life eternal may I enter, Lord, with Thee.**

Fanny J. Crosby

Stooping Down for Us

You stoop down to make me great.

2 Samuel 22:36, Psalm 18:35 NIV 1984

This is a great summary of the gospel!

He treats us as something very worthwhile.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,
not looking to your own interests
but each of you to the interests of the others.

In your relationships with one another,
have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Philippians 2:3-5

He treats us as something great,
not just trash that he cleaned up and “allows” in.

God puts us on a pedestal,
and calls us His children.

Comparative Response (1)

**Jonah ran from his responsibilities
when God told him to preach to the people of Nineveh.**

**In one of the most memorable childhood Bible stories of all,
Jonah was swallowed by a big fish
as he was trying to escape from God.**

**Jonah definitely did not agree with God's love
as it was being extended to them and to those who were his enemies.**

His eventual obedience was outward only.

He didn't really care what God wanted.

**He hoped with all of his might that God would still destroy the city,
and set himself up a booth on a hill nearby
in hopes of watching a great show.**

**But when God saw how the people of Ninevah
truly humbled themselves and turned from their evil ways,
he had compassion**

and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

**Jonah definitely did not agree with God's love
as it was being extended to them and to those who were his enemies.**

Comparative Response (2)

What if Christ, like Jonah,

was forced to go to earth and preach to us against His will?

What if He had no love for us and did not want us to be saved?

What if He grudgingly obeyed

but even now waits up in heaven hoping

that God will still send us to hell?

We are so fortunate that He does not have that attitude.

He loves us and willingly gave Himself up for us.

Love for our enemies is one of the hardest things to keep in our hearts.

Christ showed us the way when he said,

“Forgive them, for they know not what they do”

to those of us who were causing his death.

And He died for us while “we were yet enemies”,

to save us.

Note the contrast:

Jonah, the servant of God, did not respond to God.

The Ninevites, enemies of God (and Jonah), did respond to God.

Controlled Response

[story of dog straining at leash, pulling its owner along]

That scene reminds me of me!

I want to get way out ahead of God, pulling and straining,
choking on my own eagerness,
not having much fun at all.

And God is saying,
“Slow down. Take it easy. Heel!
You’re only hurting yourself.
Let’s enjoy the morning.
Let’s enjoy the walk together.

Charles Swindoll

We need to keep our enthusiasm under control,
led by God,
not trying to drag him where we want to go.

A Sense of Forgiveness (1)

Do we truly feel the depth of God's Grace?

**Most everyone knows how Joseph forgave his brothers
after they sold him into slavery.**

There is a great parallel here in our own forgiveness by Christ.

**There should be a very close communion
with the one who forgives and thereby saves you.**

**But Joseph's brothers were never totally sure
that the forgiveness was for real and forever.**

We may similarly feel unsure.

A Sense of Forgiveness (2)

The brothers had a greater sense (or understanding) of hunger or need, as they were in a terrible famine.

They had a direct feeling of guilt for what they had done, and they had a sense of physical nearness and touch with Joseph.

But they were still worried that their forgiveness would not last past Jacob's death.

Perhaps they should have gathered together more often to commune together.

So Joseph indeed forgave them and embraced them.

Our forgiveness, from God's Grace, is also forever.

Satan is the one telling us that we are worthless and unforgiven - not God!

We just need to fully embrace and understand it that we are fully forgiven through Christ.

Back to Christ's “Job” (1)

Jesus told the story of a man who fell into the hands of robbers and was beaten and robbed (Luke 10:25).

A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

So too, a Levite,

when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan saw the man, took pity on him, and took care of him.

Now the priest and the Levite thought that they were being very spiritual. Their position was so lofty and their business so important that they let the man suffer.

Perhaps they were going to the temple services and were scheduled to read or lead in prayer!

But they totally missed the idea of what God really wants from his servants and his spiritual leaders. They were doing their duty; they were ‘keeping their promises.’

But in Luke 17:10 we see that those who have only done their duty are **unworthy servants**.

Back to Christ's “Job” (2)

Instead of being legalistic about this and saying

“I have kept my promise,”

we should say,

“I have loved with all of my heart.”

What if Christ had said, “Corban!” (Mark 7:1-13)

when it came to the dilemma that man found himself in.

What if he said,

“I must do the work of God here in heaven,

and I cannot come to earth to die for man.”

Nothing was more important to Christ

than the salvation of man,

not even equality with God (Philippians 2:6).

We must take a lesson from this great example of love,

and fulfill our duties with love.

Running the Bases

Sometimes when I try to worship

I feel like I am tagging first base as I run hard for second.

But tagging is not good enough;

we must have more of a solid, meaningful interaction.

We rush by the crucifixion scene

as we might an injured animal along the road.

We don't want to see it;

we don't want to spend enough time for it to impact us.

We must stop and feel the wounds, though,

as Thomas once was allowed to do.

We should be stunned by the power of God's Goodness,

as Paul was stopped in his tracks on the road to Damascus.

We must slow down our lives for a moment

and be sensitive to the full impact of God's gift.

Wait for the Lord

**Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.**

Psalm 27:14

**We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.**

Psalm 33:20

**Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when people succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked
schemes.**

Psalm 37:7

LORD, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God.

Psalm 38:15

**I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.**

Psalm 130:5

**We have to stop trying to commune with Christ
without slowing down to worship.**

Example: checking oil in mower while it is running.

Christ is the Door, and the Way

Therefore Jesus said again,

“Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep...

I am the gate;

whoever enters through me will be saved.

They will come in and go out, and find pasture.

John 10:7-9

Jesus answered,

“I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

Christ is the Door (or the doorman?) (1)

**Christ is the door,
but we treat him as we generally do a doorman.**

**We push past him,
barely acknowledging him for opening the door for us.**

**We are eager to get inside and see what we came to see.
But we wouldn't even get in
if it weren't for Christ being on duty.**

**He gave his life to open the door for us,
but do we really notice him
as we invoke his name in our prayers to God?**

**Do we think of him just as a servant,
and elbow him out of the way?**

Christ is the Door (or the doorman?) (2)

**Rather than a doorman with a shiny uniform, though,
we should see that he wears a crown of thorns
and the scars of his love for us.**

**We must remember that we cannot open the door by ourselves.
We rush by him.**

**We think the doorman is just there to provide a courtesy service;
to do for us something we could do ourselves.**

**We must look at the scars and blood and tattered clothes
and realize the we can't do it without him.**

Communication - Too Much Speaking?

**And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans,
for they think they will be heard because of their many words.**

Matthew 6:7

Many words do not mean real communication!

Communion in Song: Oh Lord, You're Beautiful

**Oh Lord, You're beautiful
Your face is all I seek.
For when Your eyes are on this child,
Your grace abounds to me.**

Keith Green

Plunge into the Depths

Have you ever tried skimming stones across a lake?

When I try to thank God for sending Jesus to die for my sins,
I feel so inadequate to truly appreciate the depths of this sacrifice.

One way to picture this is to think of plunging into a pool of water.

When you do there is a sudden resistance to your movement;
you have to spend more time in its presence,
and getting out takes a bit of work.

But there is such a breathtaking feeling of diving in the water
and being totally submerged in it.

We all need to take the plunge into the presence of the cross,
and understand more fully the wonderful grace of God.

Intensity

Think of a stage actor

that must put out the same level of emotion into their performance
every night.

How can they do it?

There is a parallel to our own involvement,
or communion with Christ.

We must find a way to keep ourselves “pumped up”,
or to keep our intensity level up.

We are not “performing”,
and neither is Christ
when He daily intercedes for us.

Greeting those we love can always be enthusiastic
because we love them,
so it is with Christ dealing with us or us remembering Him.

Projection of God's Passion (1)

So many times God has to make a representation to us
of things that are simply too wonderful for our tiny minds to grasp.

The streets of gold and the fires of hell I believe fall into this category.
Who cares if the streets are really gold if we are with God?

God must project,
or fold His truth into our little space,
for us to see at least a glimmer of it.

How can God describe His love for us?

He sent His Son to die for us,
and that cup of death was full to the brim with pain.

But that was really the punishment for one man.

And Christ died for all mankind - billions and billions.

Projection of God's Passion (2)

There is another level to this as well,
for he bore not only our stripes but our sin.

This is where we really fail to understand the magnitude of this event.

God's passion for us is shown in how much He hated Evil,
and in how much more He loved us.

It's a little like the complex electronic logic
that lies underneath our cell phones or computers.

We take its operation for granted.

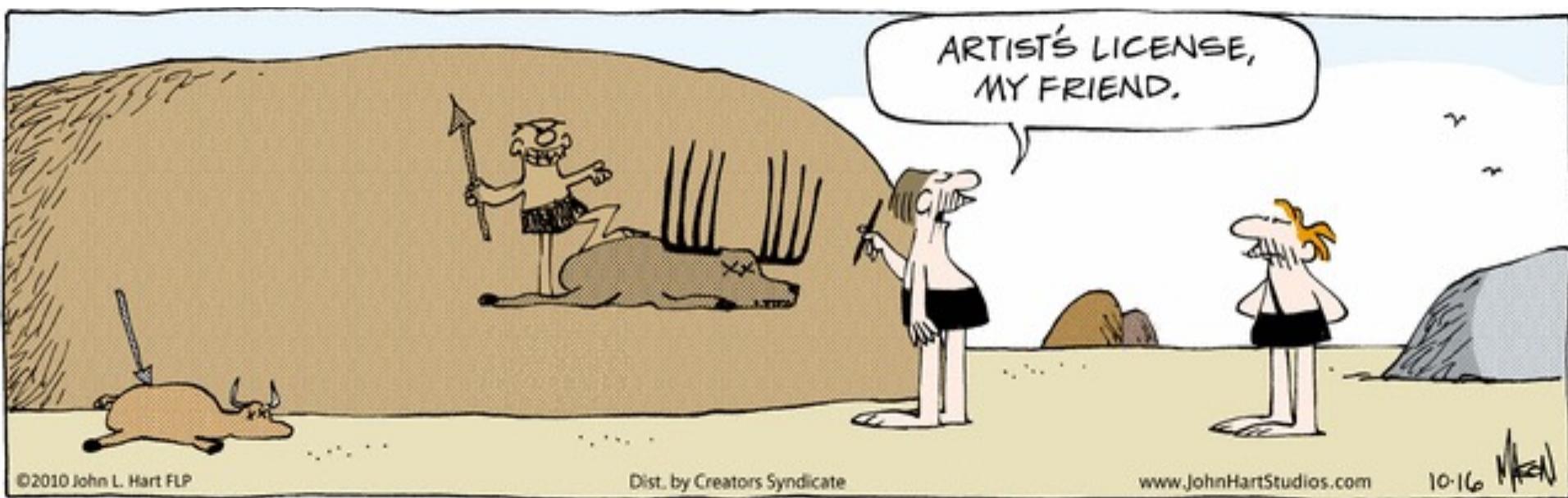
We may appreciate it,
or enjoy it,
but we cannot understand it.

Thank Goodness we don't have to.

And we don't have to fully understand the depth of God's love.

But we need to realize
that it reaches way, way beyond what we can see.

Communication - Don't Exaggerate!



Communion in Song: On Bended Knee I Come

On bended knee I come,
With a humble heart I come;
Bowing down before Your holy throne.
Lifting holy hands to You,
As I pledge my love anew,
I worship You in spirit,
I worship you in truth;
Make my life a holy praise unto You.

On bended knee I come,
With a humble heart I come;
Bowing down before Your holy throne.
As I look upon Your face.
Show Your mercy and Your grace.
Change my life, O Holy Spirit
make me fresh and ever new;
Make my life a holy sacrifice to You.
Make my life a holy sacrifice to You.

Unknown

Trying to Imitate God

**Do we worship God as the Great God of Creation
or the Great God of Love?**

What truly reveals the character of God?

The Creation?

**Only because He did that to create a home
for the object of His Love (us).**

Do we Create in response?

Do we Love in response?

Imitating the mind of God is not doable and not that useful.

**Imitating God's heart is can be done in a small and narrow sense,
but this is ultimately what it is all about.**

**We may try to get into the mind of God,
but the important thing is to get into His heart.**

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

It doesn't have to always be “Big” things

**We don't have to be Supermen,
Just do little things as much as you can
That are like what God would do.**

**We don't need a home run!
Just a single or a base on balls.
Or maybe even getting hit by a pitch!**

Remembering What God Did

Someone has wisely said that

**while God merely spoke the entire universe into his existence,
an act that cost him no real labor or anguish,
to take away the sin of the world
cost him his own life-blood.**

We cannot as mere mortals,

**ever understand totally the agony
that Christ went through for us,
the weakness that he endured
in spite of his own awesome power.**

The hard part is getting people to love (us).

**Christ gave up being like God to get us to love Him,
and He worked at times with man in a one-on-one setting.**

**But we can understand the greatness of his love for us,
and we can remember it all of our lives.**

And we must thank Him as deeply and as often as we can.

Building a Temple (1)

**When Solomon dedicated the great temple for the worship of God,
He asked a crucial question, (2 Chronicles 6:18)**

**"But will God really dwell on earth with men?
The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you.
How much less this temple I have built!"**

**But something small and physical did contain Him (Luke 2),
for he put aside the glory of heaven
and folded himself into a human body
so that He might come to earth and draw us closer to Him.**

Peter also wanted to build a special structure to house Christ...

**Peter said to Jesus,
"Lord, it is good for us to be here.
If you wish, I will put up three shelters -
one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."**

Matthew 17:4

Building a Temple (2)

**Of this body Jesus said in John 2:19,
"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."**

**It was destroyed, in a sense,
but it rose again
so that through it we might have eternal life.**

**And we now worship,
not in an earthly temple,
but in our hearts
in spirit and in truth.**

Communication - Recalling the Message

TMI: Too Much Information!

**Have you ever spoken before you fully thought things through?
Words cannot always be recalled.
The advice of the Guru.**

Communion in Song: The Old Rugged Cross

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
the emblem of suffering and shame;
and I **love** that old cross where the dearest and best
for a world of lost sinners was slain.

In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine,
a **wondrous beauty** I see,
for 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died,
to pardon and sanctify me.

Refrain:

So I'll **cherish** the old rugged cross,
till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will **cling** to the old rugged cross,
and exchange it some day for a crown.

George Bennard

The Value of the “Temple”

The ark of the covenant

- whatever became of it?**
 - 10 Commandments (law of the King)**
 - Aaron's rod (work of the priest)**
 - Manna (the nourishment of the Almighty God - El Shaddai)**

The temple

- destroyed, rebuilt, and a remnant now stands**

Christ's body

- crucified, raised, but not part of the spiritual being**

Velveteen Worship (1)

The search for what is truly Real

**The children's story of the Velveteen Rabbit
has been a favorite for many years.**

**It has to do with the way a child takes a stuffed animal
and loves it so much he believes that it is real
(although adults naturally know that it isn't).**

**In the story a velveteen rabbit actually does become real
because of the child's great love.**

A child believes so strongly it makes the toy a real companion.

Velveteen Worship (2)

The physical world is truly an illusion compared to the spiritual.

**In the church we have somewhat the opposite situation,
where we have something -**

**Christ -
that is very real
but we cannot feel it like a soft, furry toy.**

**We tend to need something physical to touch
to understand the actual reality of things
(Think about Thomas needing to touch Christ's wounds).**

Do we love Christ enough to make Him real in our hearts?

**Jesus said that we must become like children –
who are so able to believe.**

And do those “adults” around us realize that our Christ is not for real?

Velveteen Worship (3)

We are just pilgrims here (Hebrews 11).

**This communion with Christ's life and sacrificial death
that we participate in offers us a chance
to embrace the reality of God's love.**

**We can't make Christ real –
He is that already.**

**If He doesn't become real to us,
then we cannot be involved in true worship.**

And our church will fail to make Christ real to those lost in the world.

Let us in this moment worship Him with all of our hearts.

Velveteen Worship (4)

Do we get a “warm fuzzy” feeling from our worship?

Is it even that strong?

Or does it go much deeper than that?

**God is spirit,
and his worshipers must worship
in the Spirit and in truth.**

John 4:24

The True Reality leads to True Worship.

**The Velveteen Church would make Christ real to the world
in spirit and in truth.**

Birdsong (1)

Not long ago we took a trip to the mountains
and stayed a night in a small cabin.

There was an incredible songbird in the area,
and I was able to record its music.

It is so wonderful (I am so delighted)
to hear the songs of birds in the morning air.

But I actually care for them as well –
I like knowing that there is a real bird,
going through the cycle of life,
making nest, hunting food, having a family, etc.

It wouldn't be the same to just play a recording.

Their preservation becomes important,
not just as a whole species,
but for individual birds
that I may be able to spot and provide seed for.

Is it live, or is it Memorex?

Birdsong (2)

God also loves us individually,
not just wanting to hear the background sounds
or hum of his human creation
while He does more important things.

He doesn't want a robotic praise chant from the masses
(He wouldn't be pleased by it or with it),
but true worship from each soul in existence.

He loves us much more than the birds of the air.

So Christ came to die for each of us,
so that our individual efforts can blend
into a holy chorus of Love and worship.

In our communion we each sing our own song to Him.

Look at the birds of the air;
they do not sow or reap or store away in barns,
and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not much more valuable than they?

Matthew 6:26

Caring for the Turtles

**Soozie is a friend to all turtles (and other animals)
without knowing them personally.**

**We go snorkeling in search of them;
we are concerned (together) about their well-being.**

She loves the species.

**This is similar to the Love of God -
though he does know us personally (and intimately)**

Communication - Getting in Touch



Communion in Song: Tarry with Me

Now the shadows slowly lengthen,
Soon the evening time will come;
With Thy grace, O Savior, strengthen,
By Thy help I would go home.

Refrain:

Tarry with me, O my Savior,
Tarry with me through the night;
I am lonely, Lord, without Thee,
Tarry with me through the night.

Carolyn L. Smith

Outline of the Class

Communion with Christ

I Introduction

- Objectives of Class
- Discussion of Communication
- Description of the Event (Last Supper)
- History (Connection to Passover)
- Interpretation (Table or Altar)

II Need

- Our point of view
- God's point of view

III What God/Christ did

III Our Response

IV The Value and Meaning of The Communion

- Fellowship
 - Love
 - Closeness / Contact
 - Remembrance

Communication / Prayer

- Gift
- Joy

V End Game



How do we benefit?

Communion Coherence

Take every thought captive to obey Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

We must harness our thoughts and direct them in the proper manner.

There is a great power from this especially
as we focus our thoughts in prayer.

...The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects

James 5:16

Think about the power of a group of Christians
as they meditate or pray together.

There is a similarity to a laser, where all the light waves are in sync (phase).

Think of many minds excited by the same thoughts - “pumped up”
as they all worship together.

Think of the power of a concentrated, coherent beam of thought
directed to God through our fellowship.

And such prayer can truly avail much.

Focus: more power
and clearer image

Group Dynamics

Companions on a journey draw strength from the fellowship.

**The apostles with Jesus soaked up Truth
and strengthened their connection.**

The Holy Spirit later came to put it all together for them.

**They shared experiences traveling, going to parties, fishing,
talking to people, helping people, confronting hypocrites,
and feasting together.**

They also shared the garden of prayer.

**Many times we have our greatest fellowship with each other
camping, hiking, playing sports,
and especially during times of hardship.**

The Fellowship of the Cross

**The Ultimate Fellowship -
is hanging with Christ on the cross.**

**Our “fellowship” may not always be productive or positive immediately,
but the final benefit is worth it.**

**The Ultimate Victory -
Good over Evil
Life over Death
is being a part of the winning team.**

**The sting of death is sin,
and the power of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God!
He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

1 Corinthians 15:56-58

Beauty and Fellowship

Have you ever had a family get-together on a mountain retreat?

**We spent several days looking at the fantastic beauty of the mountains
through the mist and soaking in the great fellowship
of a wonderful family.**

**But the beauty and fellowship we see here
are only a glimpse of God's love.**

**We don't understand everything,
but we know that there is no greater expression of Love.**

**We now can experience something infinitely greater
than what we had earlier thought so fantastic:
the overpowering love of God
as shown through Jesus Christ and his self-sacrifice.**

**We can have the same type of view of the Grandeur of God
as we worship in our church buildings.**

Asleep or Anxious?

Contrast:

**Jesus was asleep and his disciples anxious
during the storm on the sea (physical peril);**

**Later, the disciples were asleep and Jesus anxious
in the garden (spiritual peril).**

**Note that each anxious group fussed on the sleepy group
about them not being supportive.**

Sequence of actions:

- 1) Description of the Situation**
- 2) Voice of Concern from the Anxious**
- 3) Jesus Scolds them**
- 4) Jesus' commentary or lesson**
- 5) The Disciples are Speechless**
- 5) The Next Move**

Fellowship in the Boat (1)

That day when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him and set out. Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. **There were also other boats with him. As they sailed, he fell asleep.**

Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat so that it was nearly swamped, and they were in great danger. But Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a **cushion**.

[Jesus is at peace]

The disciples went and woke him and said to him, "Lord, save us! Master, Master, we're going to drown! **Teacher, don't you care** if we drown?"

[The disciples were anxious]

He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"

[Jesus scolds them for their weakness]

Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25

Fellowship in the Boat (2)

Then he got up, rebuked the wind and said to the raging waves,
"Quiet! Be still!"

Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

[he gave the command]

Imagine stopping a tornado instantly

"Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

[he repeats the scolding]

They were amazed and terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? "What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

[the apostles could not answer Jesus]

[Once on shore, they continued their mission.]

Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25

Fellowship in the Garden (1)

Then Jesus went as usual to the Mount of Olives, a place called Gethsemane, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray. Pray that you will not fall into temptation."

[This is the prelude to the cross]

He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (James and John) along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

[Jesus is in a storm of emotion]

Going a little farther, about a stone's throw beyond them, he knelt down and fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "Abba, my Father, if you are willing, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not my will, but yours be done."

[Jesus is asking, beseeching]

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Fellowship in the Garden (2)

Then he rose from prayer and he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping, exhausted from sorrow.

[it is not that the apostles did not care; they all were exhausted]

"Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked. "Why are you sleeping? Get up, watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

[Jesus scolds them for not staying awake]

He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. **They did not know what to say to him.**

[the apostles could not answer]

Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46

Fellowship in the Garden (3)

So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

Then he returned to the disciples the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting?

Enough! Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

[He went to His trial to “end” the mission.]

Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46

Assuming a Language for Religious Communication



"PARDON ME, BUT I'VE NEVER TALKED WITH A NUN BEFORE. DO YOU SPEAK ENGLISH OR LATIN?"

God can confuse us easily:
Remember the Tower of Babel

Communion in Song: Precious Lord, Take my Hand

Precious Lord,
take my hand

Lead me on,
let me stand

I'm tired,
I'm weak,
I'm lone

Through the storm,
through the night

Lead me on
to the light

Take my hand precious Lord,
lead me home.

Thomas A. Dorsey

Asleep or Anxious?

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Fellowship in the Moments of Peril or Power (1)

**There were two times in Jesus' life
when someone slept at a very critical time.**

**The first time it was Jesus,
in the boat during the storm.**

**The apostles were worried,
but when Jesus awoke he stilled the sea,
and they were left speechless.**

**The second time
it was the apostles that were asleep
during the night of crisis in the garden.**

**But they were not able to help,
and when Christ asked about their faith,
again they were speechless.**

Fellowship in the Moments of Peril or Power (2)

**The apostles and Christ were together in fellowship in each case –
in physical and spiritual peril,
in power and in pain.**

**Each time the apostles were so in awe of Christ
they didn't respond well.**

**As we consider both the pain and power
of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection,
We must give our full attention in our response.**

Do you feel the Presence?

Walking with God:

Adam & Eve, walking with God in the garden
Enoch

Do you feel His Presence?

Do you ever feel that someone is with you?

**Ernest Shackleton felt the presence of someone else
when he was hiking over a glacier
to find civilization
after being shipwrecked in the Antarctic ice.**

**We have a God who travels by our side,
who tabernacles among us
through the vast and dreadful wilderness.**

Philip Yancey

**He won't totally clear and smooth the way;
but He will be with us no matter what.
He promises strength, not ease.**

The Presence Needed for Healing

How does the body heal itself?

How does the blood clot after a cut?

How is the infection prevented?

There is no signal to call out combat units,

but the needed materials continually flow through the neighborhood:

ready to act,

activated by the presence of air at the cut.

In a similar way,

God is always present,

ready to act.

He is not standing off, ready to come,

but He always present.

We must realize this.

Peace to the Christian is not the absence of trouble

but the presence of God.

Avon Malone

Touching the Infinite (1)

There is something totally amazing about the privilege of prayer.

**We can ask God for anything that comes to our mind,
no matter how great or small and have Him understand us.**

**Do not be anxious about anything,
but in everything,
by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.**

So very difficult!

Philippians 4:6

**This doesn't mean that He will give us any thing that we want;
but He is aware and cognizant of our requests,
and could if He give them to us if it fit into His plan.**

**To say that it depends on whether he wants to or not
ignores the complexity of what God is doing with regard to man.**

Touching the Infinite (2)

If we asked God to change a certain hair on our head from gray to black, he would hear us and consider that request.

This is just one event.

Think how many computer connections there would have to be to be in touch with all of the minds of mankind.

This is like knowing where a particular molecule of water in the ocean is.

Current computer technology is focusing on connecting many processors to achieve a computing power far beyond what we know of now.

The Internet also is made up of many, many connections between computers and people that know different things.

Think how amazing the telephone system is:
you can call a friend half a world away
and it sounds like you are in the same room.

Think about all of the possible interconnections;
every person in the world connected to every other person in the world.

And yet God is much more complex than this.

Touching the Infinite (3)

It is awesome to think of touching the infinite,
as we do when we talk to God.

High Flight

*Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds -- and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of -- wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up, the long delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,
Where never lark or even eagle flew;
and, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high, untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.*

John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

Touching the Infinite (4)

**This is the sort of thing that gives you goose-bumps,
if you really feel the presence of God as Magee did.**

**But it is a tremendous thing to think
that you have touched someone else's life.**

**I had a friend write to me once of how a certain comment of mine
had moved them deeply.**

I tried to think of exactly what that comment was, but I couldn't.

I had touched them without even realizing it.

Strange, isn't it?

Each man's life touches so many other lives.

**When he isn't around he leaves an awful hole,
doesn't he?**

Clarence, from It's a Wonderful Life

Touching the Infinite (1-4)

There is something totally amazing about the privilege of prayer.
It is awesome to think of touching the infinite,
as we do when we talk to God.

We can ask God for anything that comes to our mind,
no matter how great or small and have Him understand us.

This doesn't mean that He will give us any thing that we want;
but He is aware and cognizant of our requests,
and could if He give them to us if it fit into His plan.

To say that it depends on whether he wants to or not
ignores the complexity of what God is doing with regard to man.

God is much more complex than the interconnections of many computers;
He is in touch with each of us.

Touching the Infinite (5)

**We are all connected together,
not through the telephone or Internet or radio waves.**

**No man is an island entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the Continent,
a part of the main...**

**Any man's death diminishes me
because I am involved in Mankind;
and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee.**

John Donne

Whatever we do affects everyone around us.

**When we run wild and do whatever we want without looking out for others
we leave many wounded in our wake.**

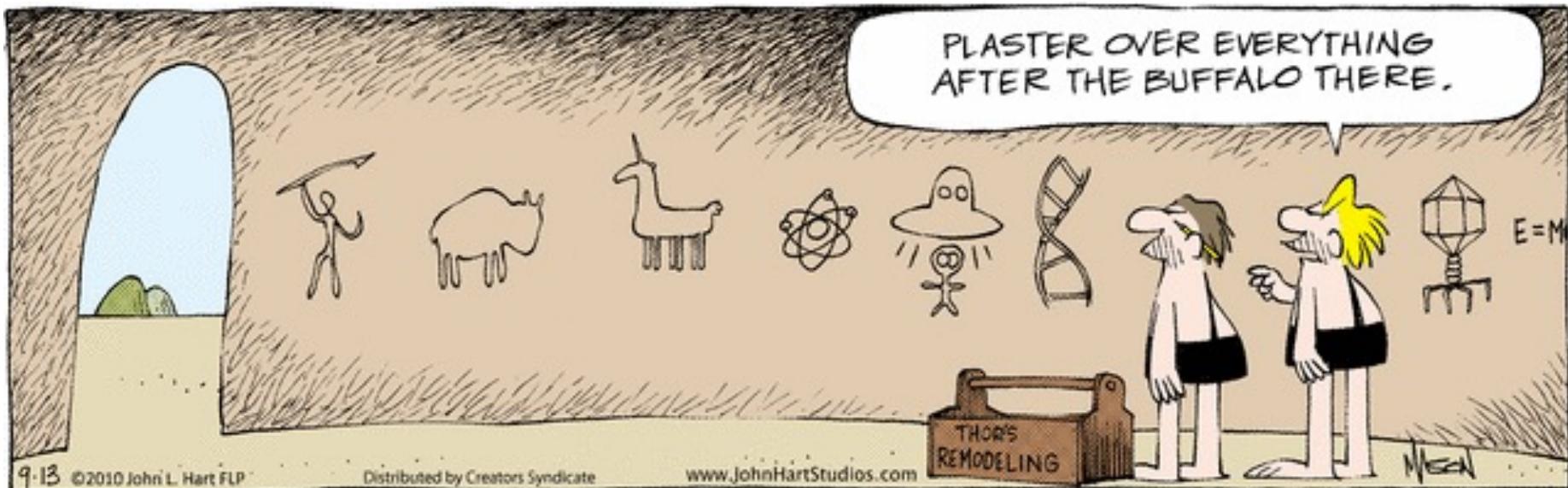
We must be careful not to use our connections in the wrong way.

**Paul describes the comfort of being “knit together in love”
(Colossians 2:2, KJV).**

**The relationships or connections that we have with both God and man
are so precious.**

Communication - Understanding

We don't always know what other people know.



Communion in Song: Jesus is Calling

**Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
calling for you and for me;
See, on the portals he's waiting and watching,
watching for you and for me.**

**O for the wonderful love he has promised,
promised for you and for me!**

**Though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon,
pardon for you and for me.**

Refrain:

**Come home, come home;
ye who are weary come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, O sinner, come home!**

Will L. Thompson

Communion interweaves us all (1)

The Vine and the Branches

I am the true vine,
and my Father is the gardener.

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit,
while every branch that does bear fruit
he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

Remain in me, as I also **remain** in you. remain: live

No branch can bear fruit by itself;
it must remain in the vine.

Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches.

If you remain in me and I in you,
you will **bear much fruit**;

apart from me you can do nothing.

This should flow naturally,
from the Good within us

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now **remain** in my love.

John 15:1-9

Communion interweaves us all (2)

God with us (Immanuel) is transformed to God in us

**The infrastructure is not important and is not kept;
it is what flows through to nourish the fruit that matters.**

**We are not important, in a sense, either,
compared to the fruit (Goodness).**

**Our purpose is to increase Good;
we are a conduit to provide the product;**

Jesus' earthly body was like this: non-lasting; a one-time use.

**Like a portfolio manager
whose job it is to increase
the value and benefit all**

Communion with God --> Communion with Man

The Jews would not willingly tread
upon the smallest piece of paper in their way,
but took it up;
for possibly, said they,
the name of God may be upon it.

The Jews treated a
paper with the name of
God with great respect!

Though there was a little superstition in this,
yet truly there is nothing but good religion in it,
if we apply it to man.

Trample not on any;
there may be some work of race there,
that you know not of.

The name of God may be written upon that soul you tread on;
it may be a soul that Christ thought so much of
as to give his precious blood for it;
therefore, despise it not.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Communion with God --> Communion with Man

Communion with God leads to communion with man

**Anyone who claims to be in the light
but hates a brother or sister
is still in the darkness.**

**Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light,
and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.**

**But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness
and walks around in the darkness.**

**They do not know where they are going,
because the darkness has blinded them.**

1 John 2:9-11

How do the sheep treat each other?

The Lord is our Shepherd...

Psalm 23

“As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says:
I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats.
Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture?
Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet?
Is it not enough for you to drink clear water?
Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?
Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink
what you have muddied with your feet?

“Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them:
See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.
Because you shove with flank and shoulder,
butting all the weak sheep with your horns
until you have driven them away,
I will save my flock,
and they will no longer be plundered.

Ezekiel 34:17-23

We must not push each other around!

Are we willing to Touch Him? (1)

**Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve,
was not with the disciples when Jesus came.**

**So the other disciples told him,
“We have seen the Lord!”**

**But he said to them,
“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands
and put my finger where the nails were,
and put my hand into his side,
I will not believe.”**

John 20:24-25

Are we willing to Touch Him? (2)

**A week later his disciples were in the house again,
and Thomas was with them.**

**Though the doors were locked,
Jesus came and stood among them and said,
“Peace be with you!”**

**Then he said to Thomas,
“Put your finger here; see my hands.
Reach out your hand and put it into my side.
Stop doubting and believe.”**

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

**Then Jesus told him,
“Because you have seen me,
you have believed;
blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

John 20:26-29

Are we willing to Touch Him? (3)

Sometimes when I meditate on the communion,

I try to think especially about the body of Christ.

It is much easier to consider the cleansing blood of Christ,

but I feel that we must pay attention to the other half of this memorial.

I conjure up an image of His body being carried to the grave,

a body now stained with sweat and blood.

Too many times in our imagination we don't see all of the details,

as when we think of laying down in a pleasant field

and leaving out the part about the chiggers and pollen.

But the body of Christ was certainly soiled.

The question we should ask is,

are we put off by it?

Would we be afraid to touch it?

Is it too dirty?

Are we willing to Touch Him? (4)

I think about the “funeral” of Christ. I have been to (too many) funerals, and many times driven in the long line of cars that proceed out to the cemetery for the burial. Throughout the proceedings there was a sense of dignity and ceremony which gave honor to the dead. But contrast this to the burial of Christ. It was just a couple of guys hurriedly trying to do something decent for their friend before the Passover period began.

We should be grateful to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus for performing this service. I can see them wrestling with the body, which was covered with blood, sweat, and other bodily fluids and was possibly beginning to stiffen with rigor mortis. They probably used sheet of some sort to wrap him up and carry him along to the borrowed grave. They took the time to wrap the body in spices with strips of cloth, for Nicodemus had brought 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes for this task.

Are we willing to Touch Him? (5)

I have been a pallbearer many times in my life, but I have never had to get this personal with the body. And remember that in those times that anyone who touched a dead body became ceremonially unclean. Some of the women had followed to see where he would be laid, for they would bring more spices as soon as the Passover services were completed. Did they say any words over the grave when they were done, I wonder? Surely there was a eulogy of some kind for their friend.

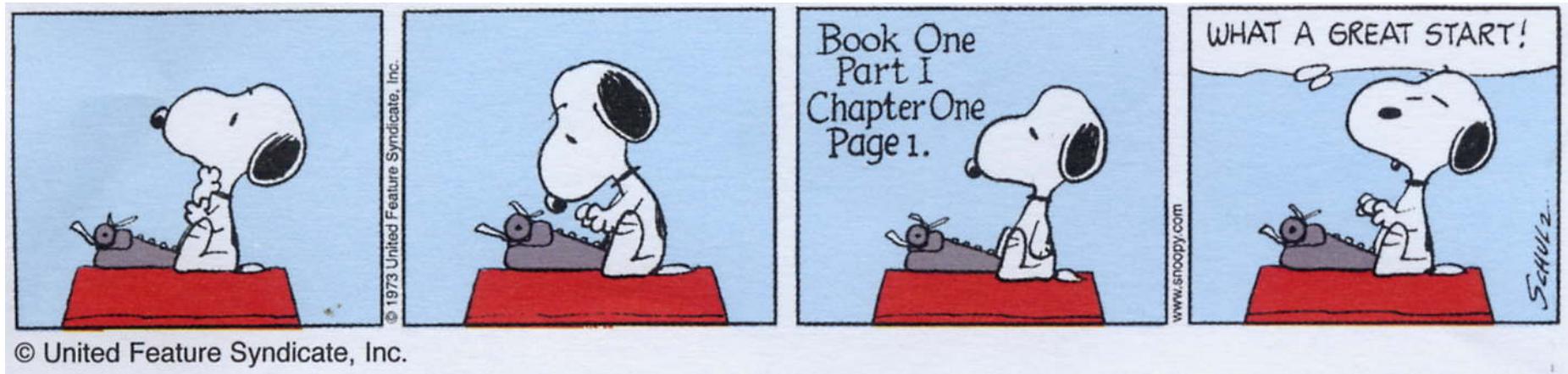
Are we willing to Touch Him? (6)

I am sure that many people touched Christ in the vitality of his life. When the woman with the issue of blood sneaked a touch and Jesus said “Who touched me?” the apostles wondered because there were so many in the throng that were touching him. But there were only a few who were there to touch him in the disappointment of his death.

**The woman with the issue of blood had the touch of faith,
as opposed to the touch of “doubting” Thomas.**

The woman with the issue of blood touched the hem of his garment. Again we must realize that this hem drug the ground and was most assuredly very dirty. This was the quality of life in this time of sandals and earthen streets. The image of the Peanuts character Pig Pen comes to mind. This is why washing the feet of visitors was a common act of hospitality. When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, he was not bothered by the filth, but his love overflowed in this act of cleansing.

Communication - Getting Started



Fortunately, God always starts the conversation with us!

Communion in Song: Precious Lord, Take my Hand

Precious Lord, take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn
Through the storm, through the night
Lead me on to the light.

When the darkness appears
And the night draws near
And the day is past and gone
At the river I stand
Guide my feet, hold my hand.

Thomas A. Dorsey

Are we willing to Touch Him? (1-6)

Thomas wanted to see the injuries of Christ before he committed.

He saw and believed.

Do we need to touch before we believe?

Christ said that we are blessed if we believe without seeing.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the bloody body and,
in spite of the risk, the dirt and blood,
their disappointment with what happened
and the absence of the apostles,
buried Him.

Did they say any words over the grave when they were done?

I am sure that many people touched Christ in the vitality of his life.
But there were only a few who were there to touch him
in the disappointment of his death.

The woman with the issue of blood had to stoop
to touched the dirty hem of his garment.

She had the touch of faith,
as opposed to the touch of “doubting” Thomas.

Are we willing to Touch Him? (6+)

When the woman with the issue of blood sneaked a touch
and Jesus said “Who touched me?”

the apostles wondered
because there were so many in the throng
that were touching him.

She seems to have been surprised that
He responded so personally to her.

Many people “touch” us in a similar way.

Some need something from us
and look for our response,
and we hopefully will not ignore them.

Are we willing to Touch Him? (7)

Jesus was not at all “put off “ by our sin or dirt. Remember that he touched the leper to heal him and the dead son of the widow and dead daughter of Jairus. He washed the feet of the disciples. We are all just as unworthy of such contact. Peter, when Jesus came to wash his feet, realized his filthiness and at first did not want Christ to dirty himself. In a similar way, I think that the woman with the issue of blood realized her uncleanness and tried to touch only the most unclean part of Christ. We must likewise realize our sin in the sight of God as we approach His throne through Jesus.

Christ offers his body to us. We must embrace it in the best of times and in the worst of times. Mary Magdalene, from whom seven devils had been cast out, embraced Christ in the garden when she realized who he was; Jesus had to ask her not to keep holding on to him. And I imagine that Thomas gripped him pretty hard when Christ asked him to touch the wounds in his hands and his side, for he exclaimed, “My Lord and My God!”

Are we willing to Touch Him? (8)

Christ carried our sins to the cross and yet was not stained by them. He went to the grave but did not see corruption. We must think about the earthly body that endured so much pain and trouble for us. It is not dirty, but most beautiful, for it represents God's greatest gift of love. We must hold on to it in our hearts not just when it appears pure and clean (as when our problems are small) but when it we don't want to (as when we struggle with disobedience and despair). We must truly remember the sacrifice of Christ for ever.

**As though we could “zap” the dirt out of something to clean it
(breaking it down and converting it to pure energy)
without damaging the object.**

**God cleanses us through the blood of Christ
without destroying us.**

Are we willing to Touch Him? (9)

Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor.

Martha served,

while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.

Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard,
an expensive perfume;

she poured it on Jesus' feet

and wiped his feet with her hair.

And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

John 12:2-4

Are we willing to Touch Him? (10)

He asked her,

“Woman, why are you crying?
Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said,

“Sir, if you have carried him away,
tell me where you have put him,
and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him

and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me,
for I have not yet ascended to the Father.

Go instead to my brothers and tell them,
‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father,
to my God and your God.’”

John 20:15-17

Are we willing to Touch each other?

Sometimes we see people touch others on the shoulder, shake hands, or hug others as we gather for our worship.

**Touch, though,
does not always mean closeness or communion
(consider the woman with the issue of blood, Luke 8:42-48),
but it is the beginning.**

Communication - Sounds that make Sense?



Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction?

Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes?

Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?

1 Corinthians 14:6-8

Communion in Song: Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Upon that cross of Jesus
mine eye at times can see
the very dying form of One
who suffered there for me;
and from my stricken heart with tears
two wonders I confess:
the wonders of redeeming love
and my unworthiness.

I take, O cross, thy shadow
for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than
the sunshine of his face;
content to let the world go by,
to know no gain nor loss,
my sinful self my only shame,
my glory all the cross.

Elizabeth C. Clephane

Becoming Close to God (1)

There is a closeness that we are privileged to possess as Christians, but we sometimes don't take advantage of it.

“and because you are sons,
God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,
crying '**Abba! Father!**'.

So through God you are no longer a slave but a son,
and if a son then an heir.”

Galatians 4:6-7

This cry 'Abba' is the typical way that a small boy called to his father.

**It is a very intimate, personal name,
showing the closeness that we should feel as God's children.**

**The question that we need to ask ourselves is,
are we really striving to be close to God?**

Becoming Close to God (2)

We sing songs so frequently that deal with this theme,
but do we really mean it?

Or are we actually playing some sort of spiritual 'tag' game,
where we run from him each time he gets close?

Some of us are afraid to get close,
not just to God,
but to other people.

We don't like to be touched.

We don't like to have our 'personal space' invaded.

We want to keep our 'self' secret,
so that others don't know what it is really like.

We forget that God knows our heart,
no matter how we try to hide it.

But we need to know God's heart

We simply need to humble ourselves before him
and seek a closer walk with him.

Becoming Close to God (3)

**God should be a powerful attractive force to us;
like a magnet,
he should draw us closer and closer to him all of the time.**

Is this really happening?

Are we attracted by his infinite goodness, power and glory?

**Do we want to go to heaven because we believe in Good
and want to be near the source of it?**

Do we agree with God?

Becoming Close to God (4)

Sometimes an animal can give us great lessons in this kind of attraction.
Have you ever had a dog will get closer and closer to you
as he tries to lick your face?
The very presence, or closeness,
of our master should make us feel the same kind of joy.

Go into the streets of any of our big cities around 10:00 at night, and you will see two different kinds of dogs. Some are being taken for their ritual evening walk by their devoted owners; others have just been shooed out of the house for a few minutes, to fend for themselves. The difference between them is striking. The loners just mooch around from one sniffing point to another. Obviously bored, they don't see any point in going anywhere, so they hang about within whistling distance of home and wait for the call to come in. They look only half alive by contrast with the other lucky dogs. As every dog knows, having your master with you makes all the difference. You may not know where you are being taken, but you know that you are being taken, and that's enough to fill your doggy heart with a joyous sense of anticipation.

Alan Hayward

Becoming Close to God (5)

Not everybody wants this.

**After Adam and Eve sinned,
they hid when they heard God walking nearby.**

Jonah attempted to flee to Tarshish to get away from God and his mission.

We all want to hide sometimes so that our guilt will not be known.

**But in Luke 12.2 we find that there is nothing hidden
that will not one day be made known.**

There is simply no way to hide from God.

**Getting far away will not help;
but getting close to him will.**

The idea of reconciliation is the idea of bringing close again.

**In Ephesians 2.12-18 we see that as sinners we became far from God,
but through Christ we now can become near.**

Becoming Close to God (6)

God recognizes our attempts to be close.

**In the story of the woman with the issue of blood
there was a tremendous press from the crowd,
but in spite of this Jesus knew that he had been specially touched.**

This kind of power is amazing.

This was a different kind of touch, a touch of need, a touch of faith.

**Trench states that there were others nearby
who surely had complaints as bad as hers,
but they did not touch with the touch of faith.**

He says that it is the same thing many times in the church.

**Many 'throng' Christ;
they are his in name.**

**They are near to him outwardly,
but they are 'touching' him
because they do not draw near in faith.**

Becoming Close to God (7)

Are we in a similar situation?

**Do we just put in our time here at the church services,
close to Christ in some physical sort of way,
but never allowing ourselves to reach out and touch him?**

**We have to be close enough,
we have to approach him and try to make that contact.**

**We sing of him standing at the door,
waiting for us to open it and let him in.**

And that is indeed what must happen.

**He is not going to force his way in
as the police would a trapped criminal.**

**He is going to gently plead
for us to get near enough to the door to open it.**

Communication - Unexpected

Miracle on 34th Street (1994 version):

Part of the miracle was when Kris Kringle communicated in sign language to a little deaf girl.



Communion in Song: Just a Closer Walk

I am weak but you are strong,
Jesus keep me from all wrong;
I'll be satisfied as long
as I walk, O Lord, Close to You.

Through this world of toils and snares,
If I falter, Lord, who cares?
Who with me my burden shares?
None but You, O Lord, none but You.

When my feeble life is o'er,
Time for me will be no more,
Guide me to that peaceful shore;
Let it be, O Lord, close to You.

Unknown

Proof of Love (1)

It's so easy for us to say the words, "I love you."

**We toss them around very recklessly to those around us,
but to be convincing we have to prove them by our actions.**

**When God created mankind,
He wanted us to know how much He loved us.**

**He could have just sent down the word that He loved us
and let us stew in our sin and suffering.**

**But He knew that He had to get our attention;
He had to prove it.**

**So He came down and touched us personally,
and by sharing our suffering and carrying our burdens
He made it clear that we were loved.**

**Very simply, Jesus died on the cross
so that we would know how powerful God's love was.**

**His body was broken and His blood flowed freely
so that we might be drawn to Him and saved forever.**

Proof of Love (2)

**Greater love has no one than this:
to lay down one's life for one's friends.**

John 15:13

**You see, at just the right time,
when we were still powerless,
Christ died for the ungodly.**

**Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person,
though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.**

**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Romans 5:6-10

**This is love:
not that we loved God,
but that he loved us
and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**

1 John 4:10

Proof of Love (3)

Imagine that you are walking along a river with a friend,
and your friend suddenly says to you,

“I want to show you how much I love you!”

and with that he throws himself into the river and drowns.

Would you say in response,

“How he loved me!”

No, of course not.

You'd wonder about your friend's mental state.

But what if you were walking along a river with a friend

and you fell into the river by accident,

and you can't swim.

or on purpose

What if he dived in after you and pushed you to safety

but was himself drawn under by the current and drowned.

Then you would respond,

“Behold, how he loved me!”

Tim Keller

Approach to God (1)

**How do we as sinners,
dare to approach the most Holy God?**

**We have previously discussed Hebrews 6:6,
and the awfulness of “crucifying Christ again”
if we turn our backs on Him
after experiencing the Great Good.**

Approach to God (2)

If we deliberately keep on sinning
after we have received the knowledge of the truth,
no sacrifice for sins is left,
but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire
that will consume the enemies of God.

Anyone who rejected the law of Moses
died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

How much more severely do you think a man
deserves to be punished
who has trampled the Son of God under foot,
who has treated as an unholy thing
the blood of the covenant that sanctified him,
and who has **insulted the Spirit of grace?**

For we know him who said,
"It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again,
"The Lord will judge his people."

It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10:26-31

Approach to God (3)

**The phrase 'insulted the spirit of grace'
is almost too much to consider.**

**How can we approach God
with this terrible responsibility towards his grace?**

How can we possibly come into the presence of God?

We are unworthy in the highest possible sense.

**Now this should not cause us to despair;
greatly to the contrary,
we should feel tremendous joy
that God had decided to account us
as though we were righteous
if we respond in obedience and love to his great grace.**

**But we must fully realize the implications of that grace
as far as our relationship to God
and our approach to him.**

Approach to God (4)

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:

Two men went up to the temple to pray,
one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself:
'God, I thank you that I am not like other men -
robbers, evildoers, adulterers -
or even like this tax collector.'

I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance.
He would not even look up to heaven,
but beat his breast and said,
'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other,
went home justified before God.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled,
and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

We are unworthy
in the highest
possible sense.

Luke 18:9-14

Approach to God (5)

**Look at the tremendous differences in approach
between these two men.**

**The Pharisee approached God
as someone basically on his own level,
who thought of himself
as someone worthy of the attention of God.**

**He deals only with the things he has done
which he decides must be acceptable to God.**

The Pharisee's perspective was based on specific acts

Approach to God (6)

The publican, on the other hand,
realizes that he simply is not worthy to approach God at all;
he is a sinner,
and depends totally on God's mercy
and not his own worth.

He would not even dare to look up
as though it were to the face of God,
because of his unworthiness.

And we read that he went down to his home
justified rather than the Pharisee.

The publican was
able to make the
connection with God

Christ says that we must humble ourselves
to approach the presence of God;
we cannot approach him otherwise
or he will indeed humble us himself.

The publican's perspective was based on general behavior

Approach to God (7)

Perhaps this has something to do with the next few verses

People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them.

When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.

But Jesus called the children to him and said,
"Let the little children come to me,

and do not hinder them,

for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

I tell you the truth,
anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child
will never enter it.

Luke 18:15-17

We must approach our God as a child,
as someone small and immature,
knowing the difference between father and son.

The disciples
tried to block
the approach

Approach to God (8)

Jesus looked at him and said,

**“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!
Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle
than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”**

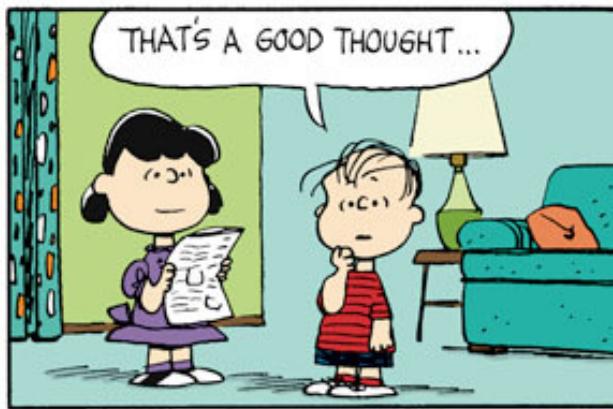
Those who heard this asked,

“Who then can be saved?”

Luke 18: 24-26

We must not assume that the rich have a better approach to God.

Communication - Too Literal?



Communion in Song: Without Him

**Without him I could do nothing
Without him I'd surely fail
Without him I would be drifting
Like a ship without a sail**

**Without him I would be dying
Without him I'd be enslaved
Without him life would be worthless
But with Jesus thank God I'm saved**

Mylon R. LeFevre

Approach to God (9)

Let us then **approach** God's throne of grace with **confidence**,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace
to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

Christ is the bridge that we confidently walk on.

**Our confidence is not placed in who we are
but what Christ has done.**

[PDE]

**Who can be more approachable than God?
The door is open for us and the invitations have been given out.**

[PDE]

Approach to God (10)

“Do not come any closer,”
God said.

**“Take off your sandals,
for the place where you are standing is holy
ground.”**

Exodus 3:5

We must respect Him and stand in awe of Him.

Approach to God (11)

Now when Joshua was near Jericho,
he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him
with a drawn sword in his hand.

Joshua went up to him and asked,
“Are you for us or for our enemies?”

“Neither,” he replied,
“but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.”

Then Joshua **fell facedown** to the ground in **reverence**,
and asked him,
“What message does my Lord have for his servant?”

The commander of the LORD’s army replied,
“Take off your sandals,
for the place where you are standing is holy.”

And Joshua did so.

The question is not
whether God is on our
side, but whether we
are on His

Joshua 5:13-15

He fell on his face, but he was asked to take off his sandals, too.

Prayer (1)

What physical attitude is best for approaching God in prayer?

standing

sitting

kneeling

prostrate (horizontal)

bowed head

face in the dust

hands spread out

facing a certain direction

fasting

wearing sackcloth

crying

And where?

on street corner

in a closed room

on a mountainside

a lonely place

the temple

on a cross

These are all Biblical examples

Prayer (2)

**When I was young I wondered about
what physical attitude we needed to have when we prayed.**

I realized that “you can pray in any physical attitude”.

**As I got older, however,
I feel a closer communion with God
when I am prostrate on the ground,
as if I am embracing God (and He is embracing me).**

Christ prayed with His face on the ground, and nailed to the cross.

Prayer (3)

**We need communion with God through prayer
whether or not we get what we want -
we just need to know that God walks with us**

**What would you do without prayer to God
when you lie awake thinking about your wife being sick,
or other people you love.**

We want to pray to someone who can change things.

Prayer (4)

Repeated prayer is good for us.

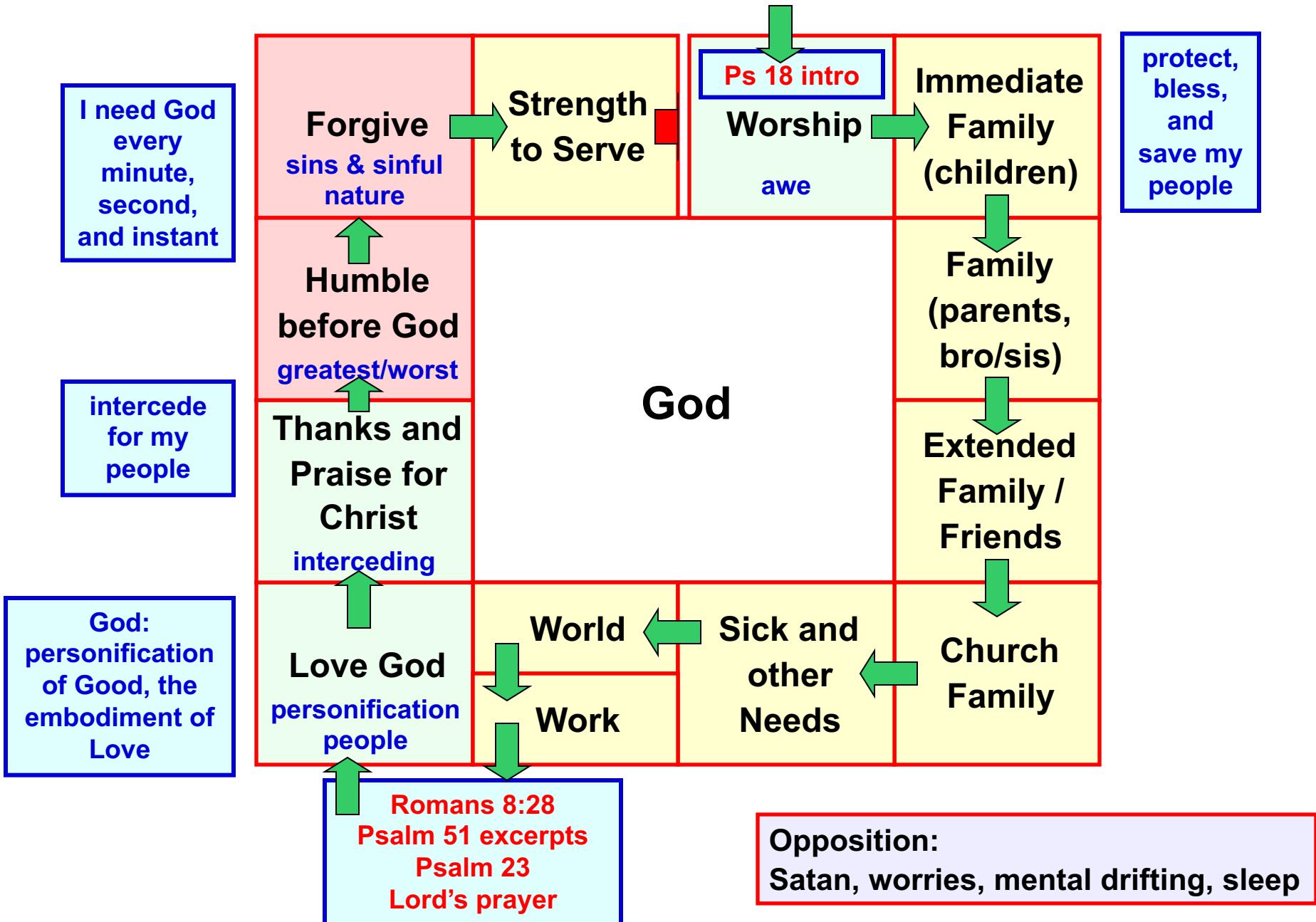
**We don't need to stop at three (Paul's thorn in the flesh)
anymore than we should limit the number of times we forgive.**

**God doesn't need to hear us but once,
but we need to meditate on our needs
and God's power to sustain us.**

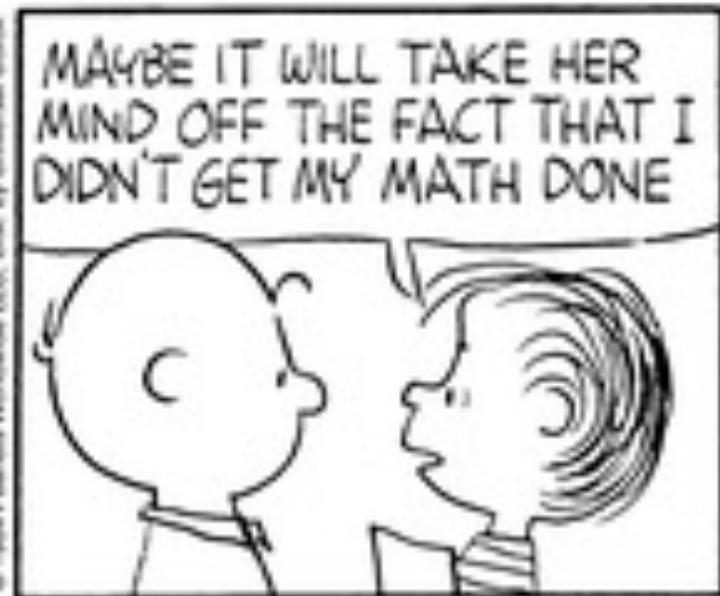
**Soozie needs to let me know what she wants from the grocery store,
because I cannot read her mind.**

But God knows what we need.

Prayer Theater



Communication - Clouding the Issue?



Communion in Song: I know who holds Tomorrow

I don't know about tomorrow,
I just live from day to day.
I don't borrow from it's sunshine,
For it's skies may turn to gray.
I don't worry o'er the future,
For I know what Jesus said,
And today I'll walk beside Him,
For He knows what is ahead.

Refrain

Many things about tomorrow,
I don't seem to understand;
But I know Who holds tomorrow,
And I know Who holds my hand.

Ira Stanphill

Physical Attitude for Prayer: On the Go!

The king said to me, “What is it you want?”

**Then I prayed to the God of heaven,
and I answered the king,**

**“If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight,
let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried
so that I can rebuild it.”**

Nehemiah 2:4-5 (from PDE)

**We can be moving and working, as was Nehemiah,
but generally we must be able to stop and concentrate.**

...pray continually;

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Paul’s admonition implies an ongoing conversation with God.

Physical Attitude of Prayer: Be Still!

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;

Psalm 37:7a

**Trying to do something
without stopping the process you are currently pursuing
can lead to disaster and danger:**

- checking oil in mower while running
- washing machine hookup without water turned off
- picking up a twig on the path while running (hurt my neck)
- not turning the electricity off (at church, at Bev's)
- other examples?

This is most embarrassing when you do it in front of others!

Physical Attitude of Prayer: Slow Down!

It is difficult (but not impossible) to commune without slowing down.

Sometimes we have to accomplish it in the heat of battle.

For more complete meditation, we must take time as Christ did - alone in the stillness of the mountain.

How many times does it take to bend down and pick something up?

- this increases as you get older**
- three is my current average**

I just need to slow down!

Physical Attitude of Prayer: Make the Connection!

I remember the time I tried to record a girl's wedding,
and they gave a donation in advance;
but the tape proved to be blank!

I put a lot of work into setting it up,
but somewhere there was a broken connection;
we had no audio, only hiss
(I'm sure the family was disappointed).

Another time for home movies at Christmas,
in a rush I did not get film with sound.
Zach got a drum set from Santa,
and while we have a record of him playing them,
you can only hear the whir of the projector.

There can be a parallel to our prayer if we aren't set up properly.

Prayer: Sounds of Silence

**But God can hear the sound of silence -
if the connection is made.**

**In the same way,
the Spirit helps us in our weakness.**

**We do not know what we ought to pray for,
but the Spirit himself intercedes for us
with groans that words cannot express.**

**And he who searches our hearts
knows the mind of the Spirit,
because the Spirit intercedes for the saints
in accordance with God's will.**

Romans 8:26-27

Prayer Theater - Added Thoughts

This is an example structure - not ordained by God

It may be beneficial to you

- David's story of a "Mecca" indicator in some airplanes

It helps with self-examination

- need more thanksgiving for blessings

Other things are added when the need is felt

When you awake at night, you can choose to worry or go through the prayer theater.

If you go to sleep, you can begin where you left off.

Prayer is a form of Renewal

Preparation for Renewal

The parable of the ten virgins and their lamps (Matthew 25:1-13)
showed that the girls needed
to keep renewing the supply of oil in their lamps
so that they could be kept burning low,
and then turned up quickly when called upon for light.

**We must continually renew our strength
through communion with God
so that we have sufficient strength to withstand
the great storms that assail the fortress of our soul.**

Prayer facilitates renewal.

Renewal

To be renewed

is to experience a fresh taste of God's glory.

Paul described it as being changed from glory to glory.

R.T. Kendall

But we all,

**with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,
are changed into the same image from glory to glory,
even as by the Spirit of the Lord.**

2 Corinthians 3:18

Renewal Scriptures (1)

Do not be conformed to this world
but be transformed by the **renewal** of your mind,
that you may prove what is the will of God,
what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

So we do not lose heart.
Though our outer nature is wasting away,
our inner nature is being **renewed** every day.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Therefore if any one is in Christ,
he is a **new creation**;
the old has passed away,
behold, the **new** has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Renewal Scriptures (2)

Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be **renewed** in the spirit of your minds, and put on the **new** nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24

...you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the **new** nature, which is being **renewed** in knowledge after the image of its creator.'

Colossians 3:9-10

It is essential to be transformed into the image of Christ, and be renewed every day in our drive for that goal.

Renewal and Cleansing

We need to tune-up our car,
to flush the radiator and change oil
regularly to keep the crud cleaned out of the system.
God offers us this cleansing and renewal.

... the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

... create in me a pure heart, O God,
and **renew** a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalm 51

Let the peoples **renew** their strength...

Isaiah 41:1

God has the power to renew us, heart and soul.

False Cleansing

Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas
to the palace of the Roman governor.

By now it was early morning,
and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness
the Jews did not enter the palace;
they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.

1 John 1.7

The Passover for these Jews
had nothing to do with Communion.

Complete Communion with Christ

Death (pain),
Burial (isolation),
Resurrection (freedom and victory) –
though constrained on earth again for 40 days
(no parallel intended)

We must encounter the cross, tomb, and resurrection.

Then Jesus told him,
“Because you have seen me,
you have believed;
blessed are those who have not seen
and yet have believed.”

John 20:29

We share the process of obtaining Life from Death.

Complete Communion in Baptism

**Baptism is a part of the communing process –
death, burial, and resurrection of Christ**

**... don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus
were baptized into his death?**

**We were therefore buried with him
through baptism into death
in order that,
just as Christ was raised from the dead
through the glory of the Father,
we too may live a new life.**

**If we have been united with him like this in his death,
we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.**

Romans 6:3-5

Communion for Resurrection

Once a dead man was thrown into the grave of Elisha -
He immediately rose to life.

Once while some Israelites were burying a man,
suddenly they saw a band of raiders;
so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb.

When the body touched Elisha's bones,
the man came to life and stood up on his feet.

2 Kings 13:21

We need the same close communion with Christ
to be raised again.

Commemoration of Passover and Communion

**One thing is perfectly clear –
from beginning to end
the Passover meal
was a commemoration
of deliverance,
of rescue
and of redemption.**

William Barclay

Communication - Connotation



"I'M LONGING FOR THE DAY WHEN PEOPLE WILL SAY THE WORDS 'TEEN-AGER' AS IF IT WERE A PERSON AND NOT A DISEASE."

Others: "(ugly) American", Church of Christ?

Communion in Song: Softly and Tenderly

Softly and tenderly
Jesus is calling,
 calling for you and for me;
See, on the portals
he's waiting and watching,
 watching for you and for me.

Refrain:

Come home, come home;
 ye who are weary come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
 calling, O sinner, come home!

Will L. Thompson

God wants a relationship with us.
We do not pursue someone who is not interested in us.

One more word on Prayer

On my bed
I remember you;
I think of you
through the watches of the night.

Psalm 63:6

Others were awake during the “watches” of the night.
God always watches for us.

... He will not let your foot slip -
he who **watches** over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who **watches** over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD **watches** over you ...

Psalm 121:3-5a

Value Added (1)

What makes something have value?

What makes coins have value?

- precious metal
- special markings
- age
- rarity
- beauty
- condition
- origin

Are we worth more (or less) than our “face value”?

Value Added (2)

When I was growing up I loved the mystique of old coins.
I didn't have many coins,
but I had a book that showed the value of any coin,
and I studied it all of the time
and looked through everyone's change.

The “Holy Grail” was the 1909S VDB penny,
and one is worth thousands of dollars today.



Value Added (3)

**Christ's body was as precious as any man's is,
but it had the added value of housing the unique Son of God
and was beautiful from the True Goodness
that poured from it.**

**Rather than being worth more for being in mint condition, however,
its extreme value comes
from being tarnished and broken for us.**

**Christ is the most precious thing that we can have –
and we must collect Him.**

**When we take the communion,
we should think about the Great Value
of the body and blood
that Christ sacrificed to save us.**

What Shall I Give? (1)

From the days of Cain and Abel,
God has made sacrifice a key to pleasing Him.
The nation of Israel was required to ransom their own firstborn
by giving one from their flock.
But the people never seemed to be able
to understand the meaning of it all,
and the magnitude of the gift
that we need to bring to God in our worship of Him.

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I give my **firstborn** for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Micah 6:7

What Shall I Give? (2)

Micah understood that no gift could be sufficient.

**You can sense the agony that he is in
trying to figure out what it would take to wash out his sin.**

**How could we give up something
so precious as our firstborn?**

**God gave Micah, and us,
a temporary yet still meaningful solution
to how we should live and worship:**

**He has shown you, O man,
what is good;

And what does the LORD require of you,
but to do justly,
to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God?**

Micah 6:8

What Shall I Give? (3)

But this was not the final answer.

As with Abraham

**before he sacrificed his son Isaac on the mountain,
God has Himself supplied the proper sacrifice.**

**He instead gave His firstborn for us –
the physical representation of Himself
on the cross
for the sin of our souls.**

**Our “firstborns” are safe –
and so are we.**

Water and Blood (1)

One of my favorite stories in the Old Testament
is found in 2 Samuel 23:13-17.

This is when David was holed up in a cave
near his home town of Bethlehem,
which was occupied by the Philistines.

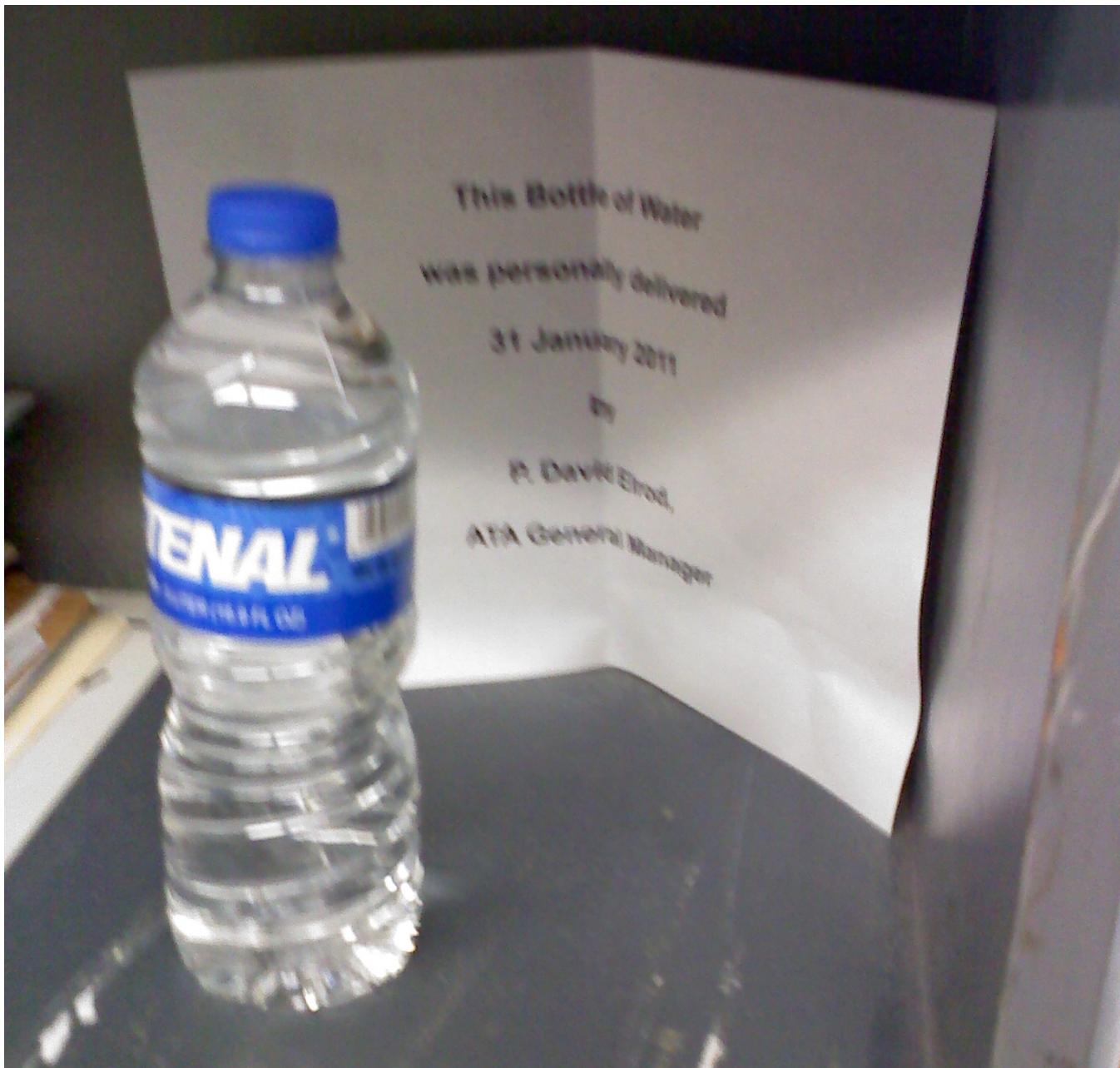
David sees the well by the gate
and remembers how wonderful the water was there,
and the Bible says that he longed for it out loud.

Immediately three of his mighty men
fought their way through the Philistine lines
and brought him some of that water.

They made a great sacrifice for their king.

David inspired such loyalty in his men - Does Christ do so in us?

Water Example



Water and Blood (2)

**Well, can you imagine their feelings
as they watched David pour it out?**

**Before we imagine too much
we must understand
that David greatly honored them in what he did,
because he offered it to the Lord.**

**In David's eyes
what was once very ordinary water
had gained great value
because of the sacrifice that had been given.**

**It was now worth too much
for David to even consider drinking it;
indeed David called it the life-blood of his men.**

David thought himself unworthy of it.

David passed the gift to a higher plane - sending the offering to God.

Water and Blood (3)

There is a great parallel between this event and our sanctification.

We also are really very ordinary by ourselves,
even sinful and unworthy of God's attention.

But He created us,
and he loved us,
even though as sinners
he could not receive us into His presence.

God longed for a people to love him and be like him,
but we were held captive by Satan.

Christ fought through the enemy lines
and brought those who would come with him to God.

In a sense very similar to the water which to David became holy,
we through the precious blood of Christ
now have a different value,
and we can be accounted acceptable in God's sight.

Water and Blood (4)

Christ's sacrifice has made us clean and holy...

**So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order
to sanctify the people through his own blood.**

Hebrews 13:12

**But we must be brought by him,
we must come to God through Christ
of our own will and love.**

**Regrettably, there are some who refuse
to let the greatest sacrifice in the world
move them.**

Remembrance (1)

**... these early followers of Jesus didn't get together
to celebrate his teachings
or how wonderful he was.**

Well, maybe they did...

**They came together regularly
to have a celebration meal for one reason:
to remember that Jesus had been publicly slaughtered
in a grotesque and humiliating way.**

Lee Strobel

Remembrance (2)

**We cannot truly commune
without spending time;**

**I don't think faith can develop
without some contemplative time.**

Lynn Anderson

Remembrance (3)

Perhaps one of the main reasons
that Christ spent time here on earth with the disciples
was to commune with them
and thus create the core of the church
that he would leave;
that all of the miracles and other works
were somewhat secondary to the relationship
that was developed.

The cross of course was and essential element of his presence.

There is communion
among the sheep in the True Pasture (Jeremiah 50: 7),
and with the Great Shepherd
(Psalm 23; John 10:11,14; Hebrews 13:20).

Closeness and Communion

We access more spiritual energy the closer we are to Christ:

- **knit together (Col 2:2);**
stitched together, like drawing shoelaces tighter;
- **in the presence of the spiritual field, like an AC transformer;**
we cannot take the energy of direct connection,
but we seek close proximity;
we wrap ourselves more tightly around the core,
embracing God more fully
- **signal strength for cell phone**
(do you hear me now? – change to “do you love me now?”)
- **difference between digital and analog**
higher/lower spiritual planes (like knowledge vs emotion)
use less power and better signal to noise –
we may need an upgrade in our relationship
- **tighten vacuum seal or water hose coupling**
closeness keeps the “system” from leaking
- **close contact**
like subway lights flickering, as you go along the track
- **a permanent bond is desired**
like glue

Benefits of the Communion

Fellowship with Members of Family / Kingdom

Presence of the Infinite Spiritual God

Spiritual contact or touch

Confident approach to God in spite of sin and guilt

Communication through prayer

Renewal and Cleansing of our spirit

Remembering and Understanding of the Value of the sacrifice / gift

Access to spiritual energy of Christ

Communion - Do all feel the same way?



Communion in Song: Beautiful Lamb of God

Beautiful Lamb of God

Guiltless and pure as snow

Gentle and merciful

Beautiful Lamb of God

Sent from the Father's love

Sent from the fold above

Sent to redeem us with His blood

Behold the Lamb of God

Suffering great pain for us

And by His wounds we all are healed

Like sheep we've gone astray

Each turned to His own way

But Jesus will take our sins away

Gary Miller

Remembrance (3)

Perhaps one of the main reasons
that Christ spent time here on earth with the disciples
was to commune with them
and thus create the core of the church
that he would leave;
that all of the miracles and other works
were somewhat secondary to the relationship
that was developed.

The cross of course was and essential element of his presence.

Father, I want those you have given me to be
with me where I am...

John 17:24a

Closeness and Communion - Flip Side

We must not get too close to evil influences
(where we may get stuck):

“Be careful,” Jesus said to them.

“Be on your guard against the yeast
of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Matthew 16:6

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.

For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?

Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?

What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?

For we are the temple of the living God.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16

Outline of the Class

Communion with Christ

I Introduction

- Objectives of Class
- Discussion of Communication
- Description of the Event (Last Supper)
- History (Connection to Passover)
- Interpretation (Table or Altar)

II Need

- Our point of view
- God's point of view

III What God/Christ did

III Our Response

IV The Value and Meaning of The Communion

- Fellowship
 - Love
 - Closeness / Contact
 - Remembrance
- Communication / Prayer
- Gift
- Joy

V End Game



Conclusion

Family Mission (1)

For God so loved the world that he **gave** his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not **send** his Son into the world to condemn the world,
but to save the world through him.

John 3:16-17

This is how God showed his love among us:
He **sent** his one and only Son into the world
that we might live through him.

This is love:
not that we loved God,
but that he loved us
and **sent** his Son
as an atoning sacrifice
for our sins.

1 John 4:9-10

Family Mission (2)

**Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world
and go to the Father.**

**Having loved his own who were in the world,
he now showed them the **full extent of his love.****

John 13:1b

**Greater love has no one than this,
that he lay down his life for his friends.**

1 John 15:13

Family Mission (3)

The Bible tells us that God “sent” or “gave” His Son to mankind.

**He did not order His Son as a Master would a slave, though,
but as a team member on a critical mission.**

**It was not an order,
but an appeal to love and concern for others.**

**It was a family mission to serve mankind,
and Jesus came and gave His life for that cause.**

**We can think of the communion as
a family memorial and meal.**

Family Mission (3)

**Now that we are sons of God as well,
do we not have the same mission?**

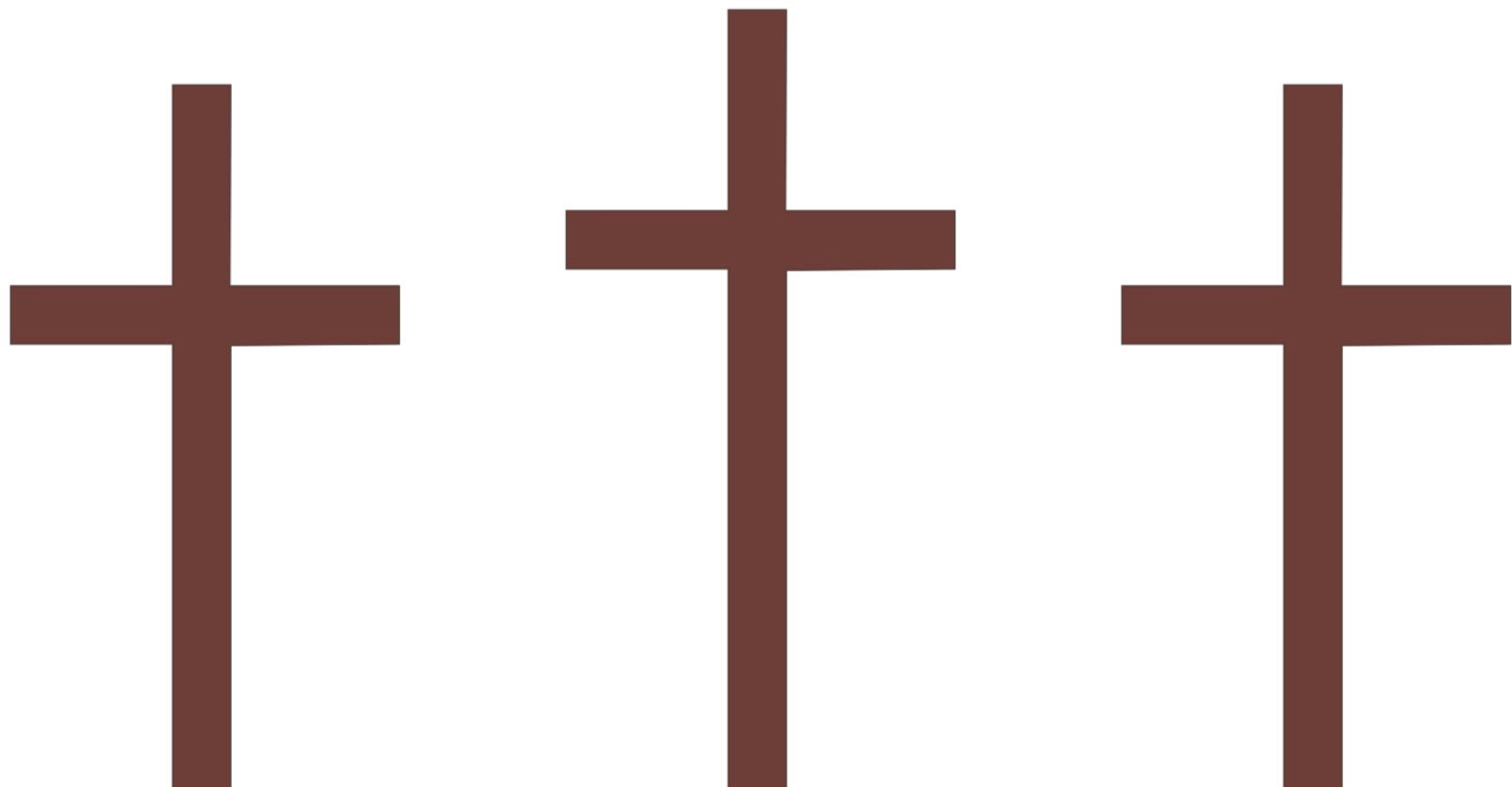
**Let's think about our responsibility to serve
as we remember His Sacrifice.**

It was not an order, but a call to arms or service.

**... whoever wants to become great among you
must be your servant,
and whoever wants to be first must be your slave --
just as the Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.**

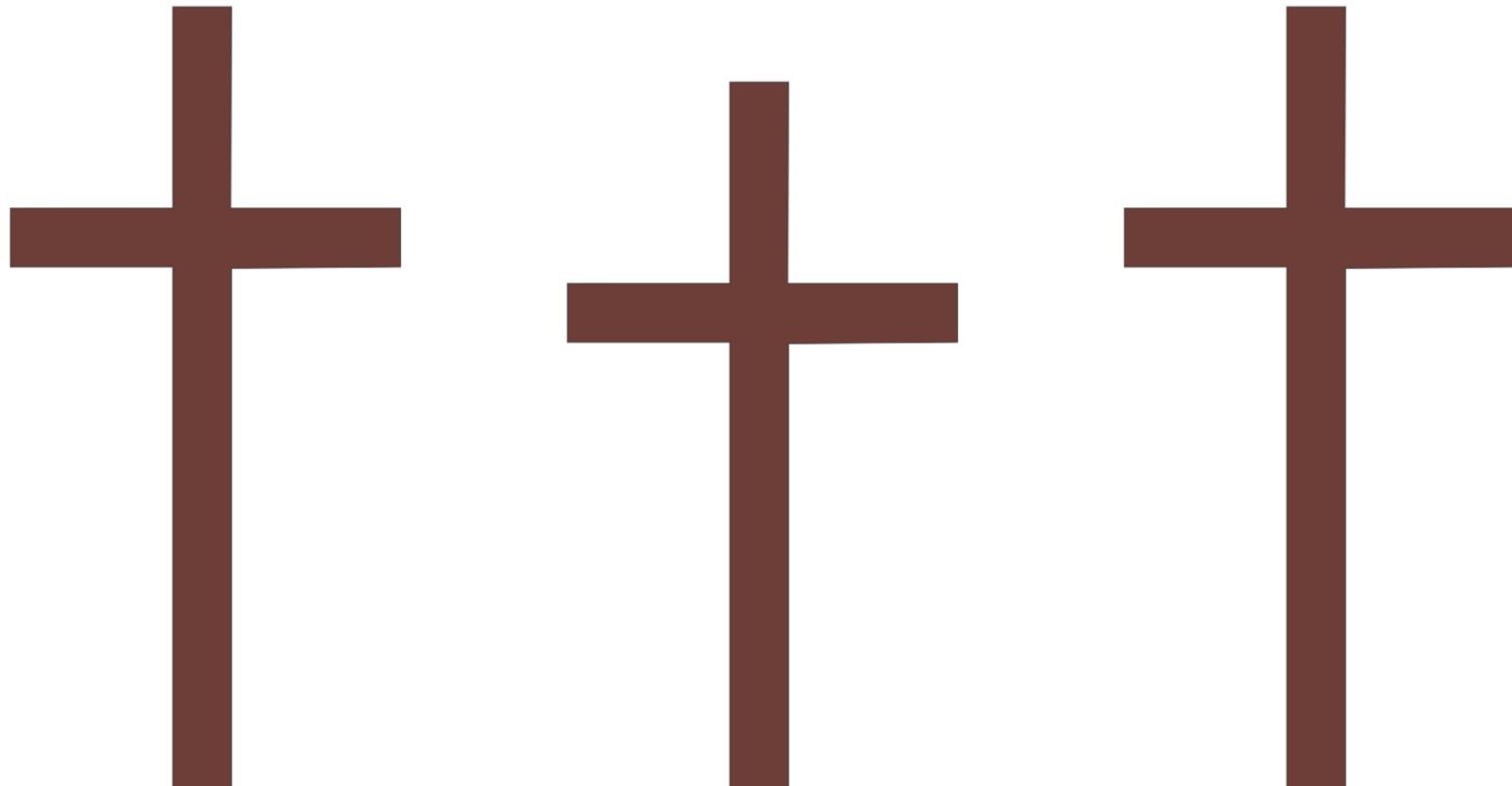
Matthew 20:26-28

Typical Triple Cross Pattern



Is this the way that Christ sees the arrangement?

Suffering Servant's View of Triple Cross Pattern



He lowered Himself and became a Servant for us

Humility with God

**There Jesus was stripped naked of his robe and dignity
so that we could be clothed
with a dignity and standing
we don't deserve.**

Tim Keller

Think of the story of the foundling in Ezekiel 16.

**Christ gave up His dignity
so that we could stand before God with (humble) confidence.**

Communion with God

Christ is in communion with God – interceding for us

**For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary
that was only a copy of the true one;
he entered heaven itself,
now to appear for us in God's presence.**

Hebrews 9:24

Communion with God

Christ lost that communion with God – for a brief time -- for us

**God turned away
because he could not bear to see your sin and my sin
on his Son.**

David Platt

**About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice,
“Eloi, Eloi, Iama sabachthani?” -
which means,
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**

Matthew 27:46

**Christ gave up communion with God for a time,
so that he could provide it for us forever.**

Communication from God through Christ

God speaks to man directly and through angels and prophets

**Jesus as an infant (without communication)
[but angels announce the Great Event]**

Then at age 13 He communicated well with the teachers (Luke 2)

He grew with God and man (in communication) (Luke 2:51)

**John 1: the word became flesh
but slowly... [from infinite to infant to infinite again]**

God proclaims: “This is my beloved Son, Hear Him!” (Matthew 17:5)

Communion in Song: Holy is the Lord

Why do I worship,
Why do I praise?

Why do I lift up my voice?

When I see the Savior
who died in my place,

I cannot help
but rejoice!

Why do I bow down,
Why do I stand?

Why does my heart love to sing?

When I call the Father
and He takes my hand,

I know I'm a child of the King!

Dennis Jernigan

Communion in Suffering and Glorification

**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit
that we are children of God,
and if children,
then heirs -
heirs of God
and joint heirs with Christ,
if indeed we suffer with Him,
that we may also be glorified together.**

Romans 8:16-17

[Communication]

Baptism: Communion in the Death, Burial, and Resurrection.

Celebrate the Final Victory

In our Wild West trip,
why did we go to the Little Big Horn?
(Soozie was not enthused);

This is where
one of the worst military disasters in the nation's history occurred.

It was a victory for the native Americans.

How do you explain the fact that it is such a memorial to others?

Similarly we celebrate the cross,
which seems to be a great defeat
but which was in fact a great victory!

Custer wanted to be President (King);
Christ actually is our King –
through the temporary illusion of defeat and ultimate victory.

Note that I am making no further parallels concerning the US Fifth Calvary
or the native Americans.

Is it Finished?

"It is finished."

It is hard for us to know the intonation with which these words
of the dying Christ were spoken.

If they came as the sufferer's sigh of relief,
they must also have been the worker's glad cry of achievement.

Everything had been done that could be,
man had been offered a sight of God as He really was.

For those of us who believe that,

in seeing Jesus,
we see God,

the Cross is not a coarse framework of blood-stained wood,
but the most precious emblem of man's dearest hopes;

it is the great pledge which we sorely need,
that love is stronger than hate,

grace than sin,
life than death.

[and Good over Evil]

H. R. L. Sheppard

Our search for deeper communion should never be finished!

Communion in the Garden

**The Garden is a Common Setting for Communion.
(credit to Kathleen)**

**Communion in the Garden (Adam and Eve);
the first actual recorded meal (fruit from the tree of life?)**

**Communion in the Garden (Jesus);
the upper room as a prelude
communion in terms of watching, sharing, and praying**

**Communion in the Garden (Heaven);
partaking of the Tree of Life again**

The Garden is an equivalent to the Feast

Renewal Examples (1)

The Covenant Renewed at Mount Ebal

Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses — an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the LORD burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings.

There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua copied on stones the law of Moses, which he had written. All Israel, aliens and citizens alike, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the LORD...

Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law — the blessings and the curses — just as it is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel...

Joshua 8:30-35

Communion depends on continual renewal.

Renewal Examples (2)

The Covenant Renewed at Shechem

Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

“Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness... But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! ... We too will serve the LORD...”

On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there ... he drew up for them decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

“See!” he said to all the people. “This stone will be a witness against us... It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.”

Renewal Examples (3)

Josiah Renews the Covenant

Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

He went up to the temple of the LORD with the men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets — all the people from the least to the greatest.

He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the LORD.

The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD — to follow the LORD and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book.

Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

2 Kings 23

Renewal Examples (4)

Ezra and Nehemiah Renew the Covenant

... all the people assembled as one man in the square... They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses...

... Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon... And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

Ezra opened the book. ... as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

The Levites... read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

Nehemiah 8

Renewal Examples (5)

Ezra and Nehemiah Renew the Covenant

Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.

Nehemiah 8

Communion and Hunger (Physical)

The poor were remembered.

**This was standard practice at the Passover time,
when the poor were helped to buy the wine
and when those who had nothing were invited
to share the feast.**

William Barclay

**When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat,
for as you eat,
each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else.**

One remains hungry, another gets drunk.

Don't you have homes to eat and drink in?

1 Corinthians 11:20-22a

Communion and Hunger (Spiritual)

**In the modern church
the Lord's Supper
is not in the physical sense of the term a meal.**

**It is the hunger of the soul
and not the hunger of the body
that it is now designed to satisfy.**

William Barclay

Feasting with, not on, each other

C.S. Lewis wrote a book entitled The Screwtape Letters, where Satan's angels feasted on the souls they caused to be lost.

Sometimes we feast on each other; emphasizing our failures.

We must commune with each other if we are to commune with Christ.

If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Galatians 5:15

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8

Eternal Feast (1)

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare
a **feast** of rich food for all peoples,
a **banquet** of aged wine -
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign LORD will **wipe away the tears from all faces**;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.

Isaiah 25:6-8

Think of the parallel to Revelation 21:4

Eternal Feast (2)

At the end of the story of the prodigal sons,
there is a feast of homecoming.

So too at the end of the book of Revelation, at the end of history,
there is a **feast**,
the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19).

The Prodigal God, Tim Keller

The more we thus share the Heavenly Bread between us,
the more we shall have.

The Prodigal God, Tim Keller

The Ultimate Question: Do We Really Know Christ?

We sometimes assume too much in our relationships!

Many will say to me on that day,
'Lord, Lord,
did we not prophesy in your name,
and in your name drive out demons
and perform many miracles?'

Then I will tell them plainly,
'I never knew you.'
Away from me, you evildoers!
Matthew 7:22-24

**How could they they
not know God?**

We need to make sure that we truly know Him!

Philippians 3:10

I want to know Christ

**-- yes,
to know the power of his resurrection
and participation in his sufferings,
becoming like him in his death,**

Philippians 3:10 NIV

Philippians 3:10 (enhanced)

[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him --
that I may progressively become

more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him,
perceiving and recognizing and understanding
[the wonders of His Person]

more strongly and more clearly,
and that I may in that same way come to know
the power outflowing from His resurrection

[which it exerts over believers];
and that I may so share His sufferings
as to be continually transformed
[in spirit into His likeness even]
to His death.

Philippians 3:10 Amplified New Testament

This is the drive for True Communion!