

AM I WORTHY TO TAKE COMMUNION?



²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ¹ Corinthians 11:27

Have you ever struggled with this passage? Wondered if you were worthy to take communion? I have, and I often worried I was bringing judgment on myself. However, as I've struggled through this passage, I would like to share what I learned with you.

I've had several Christian mentors, and, like Mary (Jesus' mother), there were certain moments or things they shared with me that I would treasure it up in my heart. One such moment was when a Chinese elder in Christ asked "how often do we take part in communion?" Growing up in an evangelical church, my thought was once a month plus special occasions (i.e. Easter), but to my surprise he quoted Acts 2:46 saying "...day by day...breaking bread in their homes...". I do not believe this is a requirement of believers, or salvific in nature, but I still found it to be enlightening and changed my perspective on the act of taking communion.

Lesson one: Communion can be a daily process.



After this conversation I decided to start taking communion on my own daily during my devotional time. But in doing this, I was also faced with many questions: How do I take it properly? What state should my mind be in? What should I think about, or imagine, or what kind of emotional feelings should I have?

Struggling with a mental health disorder growing up, I found that I started to get obsessive thoughts on how to "feel" the Lord's presence, especially when taking part in communion. Emotional feelings, and physical feelings are a God given gift but the truth is they're also temporary, and fleeting. This means that one moment I would feel

close to God, and the next I would feel distant. I developed a habit to take communion one day and then skip it the next, depending on how I felt emotionally.

Another concern was that my feelings that I relied so heavily on, were most times, physical sensations that my mind was translating as emotional reality. I.e. I might feel anxious and fidgety in my body and my mind would translate this as I've done something to bring condemnation on myself. When in reality,

AM I WORTHY TO TAKE COMMUNION?

my body was telling me I needed physical activity or exercise to burn the excess energy stored in my body.

Lesson two: Feelings are not truth.



The inevitable outcome of trying to use my emotions to connect with God led me – and probably you too – to think solely about myself and how God can make me feel better.

I found myself constantly focused on adjusting my internal feelings like a thermostat to be at a comfortable temperature, rather than simply focusing on the truth of God’s character and attributes apart from myself. It was no longer about Him, or scripture, but about me and how to make myself feel saved, or special, or intimate, etc. The other inevitable result of this way of thinking

is that if feeling good equals closeness to God, then feeling bad, depressed, or anxious equaled distance from God. This was a deeply flawed way of thinking which ended with a fluctuating, inconsistent relationship with God.

Lesson three: It’s not about me.



To break out of this obsessive habit, I began thinking with my logical mind and I asked the question, how did Jesus want us to take communion?

19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

The thought occurred to me: if we partake in communion to remember Jesus’ sacrifice, how or what should I be thinking of when remembering Jesus?

At first, I would try to imagine and visualize Jesus on the cross. Although this was more effective than trying to “feel God’s presence,” this was still inconsistent. Some days I could picture Jesus clearly, some

AM I WORTHY TO TAKE COMMUNION?

days I could not. Other times I would go into a deep imagination that would lead to excessive or extreme emotions. Again, emotions can be a good thing, but becoming overly emotional can also be a sign of instability. I.e. if we see a baby, or a puppy and become excessively excited or tearful, it might be a sign of something else going on inside.

Emotions aside, the other problem I faced with trying to imagine Jesus' sacrifice, is the fact that I was not present during the real event. How can I imagine something which I was not present for? The reality is, my visualization of this event is only going to be as good as what my imagination can construct in my mind. It's also going to be biased, based on my own world view, upbringing, culture, etc, or influenced by my internal state same as my emotions.

Lesson four: Imagination can only get me so far.



So it seems both emotions and imagination come up short... What is left? My conclusion to what I learned about communion was that when remembering Jesus, I need to remember the facts. First of all, before applying a specific scripture to my life, I need to look at the context that the scripture was written. When looking at 1 Corinthians 11:27, I should first look at the surrounding scriptures before and after verse 27.

20 So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for

when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

As you can see from the earlier scriptures, the Lord's supper was being abused by some of those within the fellowship who would eat and drink without any consideration for those "...who have nothing...". This has nothing to do with feelings but to do with the behaviour on how communion is taken with regards to our brothers and sisters.

28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. 31 But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. 32 Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

AM I WORTHY TO TAKE COMMUNION?

Similarly, the scriptures after verse 27 tells us that we ought to examine ourselves, not in feelings but in the facts about our attitudes and behaviours. When Paul says that we should be discerning about the body of Christ, he is referencing the Church body, not our own personal body. Remember it's not about me. It's about having an awareness of our brothers and sisters around us and keeping a behaviour and attitude in line with Jesus.

Furthermore, you will notice that the Lord's supper here is being practiced as a fellowship meal, this is why it says that some are eating their fill and getting drunk while others are going hungry. In this case, the way the Corinthians practiced communion might not be directly comparable to our own personal practices of communion or our fellowship practices at our church. This is yet another reason why the facts and the context of the scripture is so important. There are still applicable elements to our own practices of communion within this scripture, i.e. the examining of my own attitude and behaviours, and the taking of the bread and cup in remembrance of Jesus. But before I begin to start labelling myself as 'unworthy' of taking communion, I need to remember the facts.

Lesson five: Remember the facts.



There was a season I went through where I kept hearing about the creeds recited by the early church. It was thanks to Gary Habermas and other Christian scholars that I came to the revelation that the best way to take communion for someone like me, someone with a mental health obstacle, is to recite the facts of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension apart from feelings. Just as the early church did with the creeds.

This is the best way for me to take communion without having to rely on my emotions, physical sensations, or imagination, but to simply rely on the truth of the gospel itself. Because I have started taking communion in this way, I no longer feel as though I am unworthy to take it, but instead, it brings to remembrance the foundational truths of which we Christ followers stand upon and believe. I now take communion based on grace through faith founded upon truth, and no longer based upon my current emotional, physical or mental state. It's now about Him, and not about me.s

I have created a creed which I recite in my own personal communion with our Lord Jesus Christ. This creed is based upon the existing creeds and other scripture. I've included this creed in this blog in the following pages. May it be a blessing to you, and whoever you share it with, as it has for me.

AM I WORTHY TO TAKE COMMUNION?



Creed: I say this when taking the bread. You came to earth, born as a man¹, born of a virgin², born in the line of David³.

Baptized by John the Baptist⁴ tempted in the wilderness 40 days⁵, you lived a sinless life⁶ but became a curse for us all, for cursed is any man who is hung on a tree⁷.

You were anointed for your burial⁸ by Mary Magdalene, and crucified on a cross⁹ under Pontius Pilate, dying the death of a criminal, though you were innocent¹⁰ you went willingly to accomplish the Father's will, shedding your blood to atone for our sins¹¹ and bearing the full wrath of the Father¹² for only you could, For you are the son of God and God in the flesh¹³, the second head of the triune God, fully man, fully God.

When it was finished you cried out 'it is finished'¹⁴ and you relinquished your spirit; you were buried in the tomb of a rich man¹⁵, as it was prophesied in Isaiah 53:9. Then you descended to hell, into the belly of the earth¹⁶, but death could not hold you, for you are the living God¹⁷ and defeated him upon the cross.

3 days later you rose again¹⁸, just as you promised and prophesied you would. 'I lay down my life freely, no one takes it from me, only to take up again...and this is the command given to me by my father...'¹⁹. You were obedient to him in all things²⁰, learning obedience from the things in which you suffered.²¹

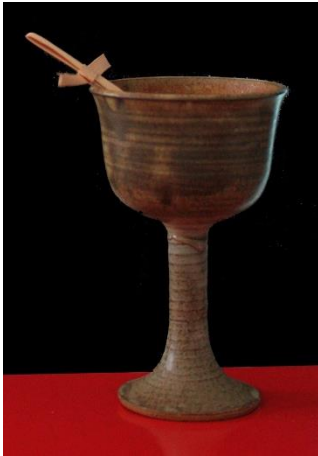
For 40 days you appeared to many witnesses risen again, to Cephas, Mary, and Mary the mother of James²²; to the disciples, and then to 500 witnesses simultaneously. Then to James, and then the apostles.²³

You then ascended into heaven and took your rightful place on the throne, confirmed by Stephen the first martyr,²⁴ and then finally witnessed by Paul, one abnormally born.²⁵

All testifying, that 'at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father.'²⁶

That all who believe in you²⁷ and who turn to you in repentance²⁸, putting their trust in you, and calling upon your name, shall be saved²⁹, and then sealed by the promised Holy Spirit³⁰. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us on our behalf³¹, and bears witness that we are children of God, crying 'Abba' father³². Your holy spirit sanctifies us³³ by leading us to obedience to your word³⁴, conforming us to your image³⁵ and who acts as a deposit, guaranteeing³⁶ the things to come.³⁷ Bringing to remembrance the promises of the riches, of your glorious inheritance for your Holy people; for us who believe³⁸. Promises of righteousness, peace, and joy,³⁹ along with all the fruits of the spirit⁴⁰, including your resurrection power working within us⁴¹, unto eternal life and abode with you forever in your kingdom when you return to take us home⁴². Until you call us home, or return to judge the living and the dead⁴³. Granting us the right to look upon your face and see you just as you are.⁴⁴

AM I WORTHY TO TAKE COMMUNION?



Covenant: I say one of these verses when taking the cup.

“As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord. “My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,” says the Lord. (Isaiah 59:21)

“This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord.

I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds.”

Then he adds:

“Their sins and lawless acts
I will remember no more.” (Heb 10:16-17)

¹ John 1:14, Phil 2:6-9

² Matt 1:23

³ Matt 1:1

⁴ Mark 1:9, Matt 3:13, Luke 3:21

⁵ Matt 4:1-2, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-2

⁶ Heb 4:15, 1 Pet 2:22, 2 Cor 5:21, 1 John 3:5, John 19:4, 1 Pet 1:18-19, Isa 53:9

⁷ Gal 3:13

⁸ Matt 25:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, John 12:1-8

⁹ Phil 2:8

¹⁰ John 19:4

¹¹ Gal 1:4, 1 John 2:2, Heb 9:14 & 24-28

¹² Isa 53:4-6

¹³ John 1:1-3&14, Col 1:15-20, 1 John 4:2

¹⁴ John 19:30

¹⁵ Mark 15:42-46, John 19:38-42, Matt 27:57-60, Luke 23: 50-54

¹⁶ Eph 4:9, Acts 2:24, 1 Pet 3:18-20

¹⁷ Matt 16:16

¹⁸ Luke 24:7, 1 Cor 15:4

¹⁹ John 10:17-18

²⁰ Phil 2:8, Rom 5:19, John 14:21, John 8:29

²¹ Heb 5:8

²² Matt 28:1, Mark 16:1

²³ 1 Cor 15:5-7

²⁴ Acts 7:55-56

²⁵ 1 Cor 15:8

²⁶ Phil 2:10-11

²⁷ John 3:16-17

²⁸ Acts 20:21, Acts 3:19, Matt 3:8, 2 Pet 3:9, Rev 3:19, Matt 4:17, Eze 18:32, et al

²⁹ Rom 10:13

³⁰ Eph 1:13

³¹ Rom 8:26

³² Rom 8:15

³³ Titus 3:5, Rom 15:16, Rom 8:13

³⁴ 1 Pet 1:2

AM I WORTHY TO TAKE COMMUNION?

- ³⁵ Rom 8:29
- ³⁶ John 14:26
- ³⁷ Eph 1:14
- ³⁸ Eph 1:18
- ³⁹ Rom 14:17
- ⁴⁰ Gal 5:22-23
- ⁴¹ Eph 1:19, Eph 3:20
- ⁴² John 14:1-2
- ⁴³ 2 Tim 4:1
- ⁴⁴ Matt 5:8, 1 Jon 3:2