

AM I WORTHY TO TAKE COMMUNION?



How do we take Communion Worthily?

Have you struggled feeling worthy to take communion? I have. Reading 1 Corinthians 11:27 led me to question whether or not I was taking communion in an appropriate and reverent way, or if I was bringing judgement on myself. This is what I've learned.

I've had several Christian mentors, and like Mary (Jesus' mother), there were certain moments when one of these Christian elders would say something and I would treasure it

up in my heart. One such moment was when a Chinese elder in Christ asked me, 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 this mentor and brother quoted Acts 2:46 saying "...day by day...breaking bread in their homes...".



This was lesson one: communion is a daily process.

Learning this fact, I began to take communion on my own daily during my devotional time. I have not been disciplined to do it perfectly every day, but more often than not I take part in it. When I did this however, if you're like me, I had troubles knowing how to take it. What I mean is, what state should my mind be in? Other questions came up also, 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 when taking part in communion. Emotional feelings, and physical feelings are a God given gift but the truth is they're also fickle, and short lived. This meant 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 if I felt emotionally close to God or not. Another concern was that my feelings that I relied so heavily on, were most times, physical sensations that my mind was translating as emotions and reality. I.e. I might feel anxious and fidgety in my body

AM I WORTHY TO TAKE COMMUNION?

and my mind would translate this as I've done something to bring condemnation on myself. When in reality, 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, ultimately led me – and probably you too – thinking solely about myself and how God can make me feel better.

I found myself suddenly more focused on constantly 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.

And when reading 1 Corinthians 11:27, we have to read it in context with the rest of the chapter. In this case, verse 20 and 21 tells us the “unworthy” manner in which the Corinthians were eating,

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.

So, unless you and I are eating as gluttons and or drinking as drunkards without any second thoughts towards the well being of our neighbors, I think this lesson has little to do with us personally.



Which led to 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?

AM I WORTHY 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.[a]

The thought occurred to me that we are to partake in communion to remember Jesus' sacrifice. The logical question was to ask, how or what should I be thinking of when remembering Jesus?

At first, I would try to imagine and visualize Jesus on the cross. This was more effective than me trying to feel God's presence, but sitting in my imagination was still inconsistent most days. Some days I could picture Jesus clearly, some days I could not. Other times I would go into a deep imagination that would lead to excessive emotional expression. 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? This does not mean we do not use our imagination to try to visualize such things, after all, I myself am an artist who makes scripture art from his imagination inspired through scripture. But as I said, the reality is, trying to use my imagination for this event is only going to be as good as my imagination can construct in my mind. Which means its going to be biased based on my own world view, upbringing, etc, or influenced by my internal state same as my emotions.



Lesson four: Remember the facts.

If we cannot solely rely on our emotions and or our imagination, what is left? My conclusion to what I learned about communion was that when remembering Jesus, I need to 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.

AM I WORTHY TO TAKE COMMUNION?

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.

I have created a creed which is based upon the existing creeds and other scripture. I've included this creed in this blog in the following pages.

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 and became a curse for us all, for cursed is any man who is hung on a tree⁷.

You were anointed for your burial⁸, 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, where you defeated death, for death could not hold you, for you are the living God¹⁷.

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 then to the disciples, then to 500 witnesses simultaneously. Then to James, then the apostles.²³

Then you ascended into heaven and took your rightful place on the throne, confirmed by Stephen the first martyr,²⁴ and then finally to 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 and confessing your name, shall be saved²⁹, and then sealed by the promised Holy Spirit³⁰, who intercedes for us on our behalf³¹, and who 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 acting as a deposit, guaranteeing and bringing to remembrance³⁶ the things to come.³⁷ 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, and eternal life and abode with you forever in your kingdom when you return to take us home⁴² and 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