

What Should I Think About During the Lord’s Supper?

by Erik Raymond

I remember as a new Christian looking around during communion and wondering what everyone was doing. Everyone looked like they were doing something. I didn’t know. Because of this, I’m always happy to answer the question when asked, “What should I think about during the Lord’s Supper?”

The Lord’s Supper is loaded with meaning. It is an ordinance or command, instituted by Jesus to remind his disciples that forgiveness and fellowship are at the heart of the church’s life together. It has been said before that in baptism the new Christian goes public with their profession of faith. In baptism, we are saying publicly, “I am with Jesus and his people.” In the Lord’s Supper, we are pledging our ongoing faithfulness to Christ and his people. We are saying that we are still needy of God’s grace in Christ; we are committed to loving Christ and his people; we are saying we are still with Jesus and one another. Baptism then is the front door along with church membership, and the Lord’s Supper is the dining room table where we renew our vows of faithfulness to Christ’s Word. Naturally, then, the Lord’s Supper is for those who profess faith in Christ. The Supper is a sign of fellowship with Christ and his people.

How should you take communion? I’m not talking about the form of being served, but what should be going on in our hearts and minds as we partake?

Here are some things to consider. Let’s call them the five looks.

Look Up – Since God has invited us to his table, it is appropriate for us to acknowledge he is central. He invites us to his table through Christ. When you celebrate the Lord’s Supper with your church family, look up and consider who God is. He is the unchanging God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. He is the God who has loved even you and me.

Look In – When we look up at who God is, then we have a better view of ourselves. The supper affords us this opportunity. In 1 Corinthians Paul gives instructions for the church when they take the Supper. We see several warnings for those who would come, take and eat.

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. (1 Cor. 11:27-28)

Consider if there are sins to confess before the Lord. We don’t live a secret life; the Lord sees it all. To pretend that you are living in a bubble is to act like there is no God. And to be guilty concerning the body and the blood means to eat in a way that dishonors Christ. Therefore when you come to the Lord’s Supper, it is a time to consider your own heart before the Lord. It is a time to clear accounts and confess sin. It’s a time to make sure you that you are genuinely clinging to Christ for your righteousness. There is a need for self-examination.

Look Back – But there is another look. The Lord’s Supper points us back. You’ll notice in the Last Supper that Jesus uses the elements to instruct us about the cross (Matt. 26:17-30). He uses the simple elements of bread and the cup to show that he has broken his body and spilled his blood for us. Jesus says “this is the blood of the covenant.” It’s a vivid image. Jesus is saying that through his death he will bring in the benefits of the New Covenant. Look at Jeremiah 31:31-33.

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The promised new covenant is here. God forgives sinners through the new covenant. It has a better priest and a better sacrifice. The blood of the lamb is sufficient to save sinners like you and me. The cup looks to the cross.

You know in the Passover meal this would have been the third cup of wine, the cup of blessing. Jesus is saying that his blood on the cross is the cup of blessing. At the Lord's Supper, we partake of this blessing. We are regularly reminded that through the body and blood of Christ, on the cross, he secured our standing in a New Covenant. The Lord's Supper makes us look back.

Look Around – The Lord's Supper also makes us look around. We read in 1 Corinthians 11:28-29:

Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Paul is dealing with an issue in the Corinthian church. There's a lot of selfishness. And we know that selfishness is the root of all sin. He is warning the church to examine their hearts and lives together. There is a need to discern the body. This means to know that you are part of a church family. This local church together is composed of different people with different experiences and various issues. But at least two things are in common: We are sinners, and we are united together by faith in Christ. Therefore, if there are outstanding relational issues, they need to get worked out. We don't just bury stuff under the rug. We have to deal with it. If it's a sin, then it needs to be dealt with biblically. If there are issues of disagreement, we need to do our best to work it out. The Lord's Supper is the regular reminder that we are good with Jesus and that we are good with one another. If one or both of these is not true, then we should not take the Supper. If we are, then we are to enjoy this meal as we look around together, acknowledging the bond of unity.

Look Ahead – Did you notice that Jesus anticipates another meal? He says that he will not drink this cup again until he does in the coming kingdom with his people. He's anticipating another meal. And when we take the Lord's Supper, we are too. We are looking ahead to another meal with Jesus and his people. We are looking forward to the great marriage supper of the lamb when the entire church is gathered together to boast in the great saving work of Christ. In Revelation 19:6-9 we read of this great multitude gathered together from all nations and all time. And we will rejoice and exult and give him the glory!

When you take the Lord's Supper, consider these five looks:

1. Look Up – God has prepared the feast
2. Look In – self-examination
3. Look Back – at the cross
4. Look Around – at your fellow church members
5. Look Ahead – to the marriage feast

As we do we'll be reminded again that forgiveness and fellowship are at the heart of our lives together as Christians.