

Communion Table Talks

By

Matt Dabbs

<http://mattdabbs.wordpress.com>

These talks are designed for taking the Lord's Supper at tables and having a discussion led at each table in order to take the Lord's Supper in a more communal manner.

The Body of Christ

Story – My first Lord’s Supper: What are you supposed to do?

- Bread – think of Jesus’ body
- Juice – think of Jesus’ blood and ask for forgiveness

That is exactly what I did exclusively for the next 7 years.

Monte Cox/Lord’s Supper:

He was teaching about how rituals bring about change in our lives. He used the example of the Lord’s supper and how these physical objects (bread and juice), the passing, the taking, the communing are all physical acts but they have a deeper and more profound spiritual meaning. We remember Christ and as a result, something happens within us, together as a body. Cox...opened up the Bible to **1 Cor 11:17-32**

Paul introduces a problem they were having. They had no unity. They had lost their love. They were in competition mode with the other Christians in the church. It wasn’t pretty or pleasant.

First, when you meet together – more harm than good

While meeting you “take the Supper” but you really aren’t taking the Lord’s Supper. Why? Because the spirit in which you eat it contradicts the very supper they are taking.

Vertical dimension:

We tend to focus on the vertical dimension of the supper. Like my dad told me...when you take the bread think of his body on the cross and the juice, picture the blood. Pray to God for forgiveness of your sins. That is all right and good. I still do that.

Horizontal dimension:

Paul is saying that the vertical dimension is not enough. You can’t get the God part just right if you don’t have the others part right. In the next chapter he will say that we are all Christ’s body culminating in 12:27 – “Now you are the body of Christ”

So what does it mean for us to discern the body of the Lord or else we bring judgment on ourselves? Paul was not judging them for the vertical dimension but the horizontal.

Joining element of Christ’s body:

Christ’s body unifies us as believers. We are the body and he is the head. We are all joined together in perfect unity through Christ and the symbol of his body.

So when we take the supper and we discern the body let us remember what that means both vertically and horizontally.

What does that look like? – Look around you. Pray for someone you know is hurting. Serve others. Let it go beyond those walls into the rest of your week to be mindful of each other.

The Body of Christ

Read Isaiah 53:4-9

What kind of suffering did Christ endure? Why did he have to go through that?

Verse 6 says “The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all” – *What do you think that means?*

What sort of feelings do you have for Christ knowing that he died in our place?

When you take the Supper do you usually have more an attitude of sadness or celebration? How do we find that balance?

The Bread

- Pray for it a prayer of thanksgiving
- Pass it and take it together

As we break that bread in our hands it reminds us that Christ’s body was broken because of us but also for us. We are in this together.

Are there any people in your life you are having conflict with? Remember that they are a part of Christ’s body as well. How does that thought and breaking this bread motivate you to do all you can to reconcile that situation or forgive that person?

Read Isaiah 53:10-12

What do you think Isaiah meant when he said God would have Jesus see his offspring and prolong his days?

- Although Jesus had no physical children his resurrection paves the way for him to have us as his spiritual children, born again through Christ.

The Juice

- Pray for it and ask God for forgiveness for our sins
- Pass it and take it together

What do you think Isaiah meant in verse 12 when he said the messiah would “pour out his life unto death? How is that connected with the juice we are about to take?

Every single person in the world is someone Jesus died for. *When you consider that statement does it make you see people in a different light?*

Take requests & Pray for the needs of the group

Community

What sort of barriers to community does our world put up around us?

- Technological
- Cultural (racial barriers, socio-economic, etc)
- Homes – built to isolate rather than connect

Can you name three people you sat near this morning in class or worship?

- If we have a hard time remembering it might be because we need to recognize our brothers and sisters in Christ more deeply when we assemble together.

We can easily be conditioned to live very isolated lives. The truth is, God made us for community - **Read Genesis 2:18**

Why do we, as Christians, really need each other?

The Lord's Supper is one of the most meaningful ways we worship God as a community.

The Bread

- Pray for it a prayer of thanksgiving
- Pass it and take it together

How does the sacrificed body of Christ encourage you to live a pure life?

Read Eph 2:11-13

Paul points out that for millennia there was a separation between Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews). *What does Paul say was the solution that broke through that wall of separation?*

How does the blood of Jesus unite us? Why is that important?

The world we live in produces barriers to community – Jesus breaks those down. No racial barriers. No socio-economic barriers. Just Christians.

The Juice

- Pray thanksgiving for the cup and the blood of Jesus Christ. Thank God for the cleansing and washing away of our sins. Thank God for our unity through the blood of Christ.
- Pass it and take it together

What does the blood of Christ mean to you? How does it enrich your walk with God?

Close in prayer – This time is especially for any needs among the people at your table. Take requests & Pray for the needs of the group

Basin & Towel (Service)

Jesus was a servant. He taught that the greatest among us are those who serve (Matt 23:11). Jesus didn't just preach about service. He was a servant. One of the greatest examples of that was how Jesus washed his disciples' feet.

Read John 13:1-5

The end of verse one tells us that Jesus wanted to show his disciples "the full extent of his love". *How did he show them that in these verses? How does serving others show that we are people who love?*

13:2 tells us that Judas was already set to betray Jesus and a few verses later in 13:10 we learn that Jesus knew what Judas was going to do and yet Jesus washed his feet as well. *How easy is it to love and serve those who are set against us? How does Jesus example challenge us to serve people like that all the more?*

Read John 13:12-17

Jesus says that we too are to wash each other's feet. While we don't wash feet to show hospitality today, *how else might we serve in a way that fulfills Jesus' command to wash the feet of others? What result does Jesus say will come if we do that?*

The Lord's Supper is a time when we remember our Lord together. As we break the bread and take the cup let us remember to love and serve one another as Christ served his disciples and let us remember to follow the example of Christ who served even his enemies in such a profound and loving way.

The Bread

- Prayer – Thanksgiving for Jesus' broken body on the cross
- Pass and eat together

The ultimate example of Jesus' servant nature is found on the cross. *How is the cross the ultimate example of serving others? How does it inspire you to live a life of service?*

Jesus' crucifixion opened the door for us to have access to God the Father. The blood that he shed was the ultimate sacrifice and service for us so let us remember and celebrate the love that drove Jesus to the cross.

The Juice

- Prayer – Thanksgiving for the blood of Christ and the juice that represents it
- Pass it and take it together

*How does the blood of Christ and the forgiveness of your sins inspire you to bless others?
How might you specifically go about showing Christ's love and service to others this week?*

Close in prayer – This time is especially for any needs among the people at your table. Take requests & Pray for the needs of the group

Thanksgiving

What are you thankful for? Why?

Read Matthew 26:26-30

When Jesus took the bread he gave thanks and broke it. Somehow those two things don't feel like they should go together. If the bread represents his body and he breaks that bread Jesus is showing that he understands what is going to happen to him. And yet he breaks that bread anyway.

Why is it hard to offer thanks in difficult circumstances?

Why is it hard to offer thanks sometimes when things are going well?

What is a circumstance you found yourself in that was really hard to still give God thanks through?

Read James 1:2-4

What backwards sounding thing does James tell us we should do when we suffer? How is that like what Jesus did in Matthew 26?

As we take the bread let us be thankful, just as Jesus was thankful.

The Bread

Pass and Pray for the bread it

Eat it together

As you reflect on the broken body of the Lord tell each other what you are most thankful for about Jesus.

The Cup

Again, Jesus was thankful for the cup. That cup represented the blood he was about to shed on the cross for our sins. It is no wonder that we are thankful for this cup and this blood but how amazing that Jesus was also thankful for the shedding of his own blood.

Pass and pray for the cup

Drink it together

Reflect on your thankfulness for the blood of Christ

Closing prayer – take prayer requests from your group and pray for the needs of the group. Make sure to pray for things you are thankful for in the prayer.

God's Family

One of the primary characteristics of God's family is holiness and purity. **Read 1 Peter 1:14-15**
What does Peter call Christians in 1:14? Look over at 1:17... What does he call God?
Because God is holy we, as his children, are called to be holy as well. *What does it mean to be holy?*

Read 1 Peter 1:18-22

What does Peter call Jesus in 1:19?
Why did Jesus have to be pure and holy in order for his blood to redeem us, like Peter says in 1:18-19?

If God and Christ are pure and holy it only makes sense that they are calling on us to be pure and holy as well. In verses 22 & 23 Peter connects that purity with love for each other. *Where does he say that love comes from?*

Do you ever struggle with your holiness and purity? How does the Lord's Supper unite Christians in holiness and purity?

The Bread

Pass the bread
Pray for the bread
Eat it together

What do you love about the people at the table with you?
How do you see Jesus in them?

The Cup

Pass the cups
Pray for the cups
Drink it together

Peter said it was the blood of Christ that redeems us and makes us pure. *How thankful are you that Jesus has washed all your sins away?*

How might you better represent the purity of Christ in your life? How might the people at the table encourage you in that?

Closing prayer – take prayer requests of the needs for those at the table. This is a time of sharing and praying.

Jesus the Lamb of God

Sin requires sacrifice. Because we have sinned our lives require a sacrifice to make those sins right with God. Fortunately for us Jesus stepped in and took the punishment for us.

Read 2 Cor 5:18-21

Reconcile is not a word we use every day. *How does Paul define it very simply in 5:19?*

We learn in 5:21 where all those sins went. *Where did they go?*

Jesus took our sins on himself because he was the sacrifice for our sins.

Read John 1:29 – What does John the Baptist call Jesus?

What were lambs used for in the Bible?

Jesus is our sacrificial lamb. He was killed for our sins and we should be thankful because on our own we had no hope. **Read Hebrews 9:26b-28**

Why did Christ die? Why is that important and relevant for us today?

Where would we be if Jesus had been unwilling to freely offer himself on the cross for us?

When we take the Supper we remember that Jesus Christ was the only perfect sacrifice able to forgive our sins forever. We couldn't do this on our own. We are totally dependent on Jesus as God's sacrificial lamb to open the door to a relationship with God.

The Bread

Pass the bread

Pray for the bread

Eat it together

When you realize that Jesus took your place, what would you like to say to God in response?

We often think of Jesus as a mighty lion but he was also an obedient lamb. *How does this bread challenge us to be obedient and submissive to God's plans for us?*

The Cup

Pass the cups

Pray for the cups

Drink it together

Jesus the Lamb of God paid the ultimate price for our sins. The blood he shed keeps flowing and flowing, washing and renewing every day. *When you drink the juice, what thoughts do you have about Jesus?*

Closing prayer – take prayer requests of the needs for those at the table. This is a time of sharing and praying.

Resurrection

If someone is going to be raised from the dead they have to die first. In the New Testament resurrection is not just something that happens after we die physically. There is also a spiritual death, burial and resurrection that we go through first.

Read Romans 6:2-4

How does Paul say we become united with Christ in his death and resurrection?

In Romans 6 Paul links Jesus' death and resurrection with our death and resurrection. In baptism we die to self and are raised to live for God. *How does the act of baptism resemble death and resurrection?*

Living a resurrected life means we have to put aside sinful ways and instead live for God

Read Romans 6:8-14

In verse 13 Paul says not to behave in sinful ways but instead to live a godly life, "offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life."

What does it mean to live "as those who have been brought from death to life?"

When we take communion it is a connection with our redeemer. It is a participation in remembering his body and his blood and how they unite us with God. When we take communion we are celebrating resurrection and we know it is not just Christ's resurrection that we celebrate but we know that He will one day raise us from the dead to live with him forever as well.

The Bread

Pass the bread

Pray for the bread

Eat it together

What do you remember about your baptism? What was Jesus doing through those events? How did you feel when you came up out of the water? Why is it important to be reminded of those events?

The Cup

Pass the cups

Pray for the cups

Drink it together

The next time Jesus drinks this cup will be in heaven with us. *How much hope does that give you? Why is that an important reminder?*

Closing prayer – take prayer requests of the needs for those at the table. If you have time left over spend some time fellowshiping with those at your table.

Statements from the Cross

According to the four Gospels, Jesus said seven things while he was on the cross. That sounds like a lot of things to say from the cross but considering that he was on the cross six hours that is just over one statement per hour. We don't know if he said anything else but we do have these seven statements recorded to build our faith.

Please read these aloud TWICE:

1. Father forgive them, for they know not what they do – **Luke 23:34**
2. Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise – **Luke 23:43**
3. [To Mary] Dear woman, here is your son...[To John] here is your mother – **John 19:26 & 27**
4. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? – **Mark 15:34**
5. I am thirsty – **John 19:28**
6. It is finished – **John 19:30**
7. Father, into your hands I commit my spirit – **Luke 23:46**

When you listen to what Jesus had to say while he was dying for our sins, which of those statements sticks out in your mind? Why?

What do we learn about how to treat others based on Jesus attitude toward those who were killing him?

Read Acts 2:23

Peter says that those he was preaching to, with the help of wicked men, killed the Messiah. *Had Peter's audience physically nailed Jesus to the cross? Were all 3000+ of them probably even present for the trial and crucifixion of Jesus?*

Why does Peter say they were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus?

What does that say about us?

It wasn't just Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus. Our sins put him on that cross because he was paying the price for us! **Reflect on that as you break this bread and drink this cup.**

The Bread

Pass the bread

Pray for the bread

Eat it together

The Cup

Pass the cups
Pray for the cups
Drink it together

John 19:28-29 Jesus said, "I am thirsty"...how appropriate it was that they gave him wine to drink. Here we are taking and drinking the cup that represents the blood that was shed for our sins and that brings us relief from everything that burdens us.

John 19:30 says, "When he had received the drink Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

Jesus paying the penalty for our sins was finished...but in many ways it was all really the beginning. *What does Jesus' death on the cross mark a beginning for? How does that affect us today?*

Closing prayer – take prayer requests of the needs for those at the table. If you have time left over spend some time fellowshiping with those at your table.