

# ***Spirit Filled Worship*      Sharing the Lord's Supper**

## **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

This week we are going to explore in greater depth Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper as he addressed a particular situation in the church at Corinth. In doing so we will distil some principles that we can apply to us in our situation today.

### **Introduction**

Paul uses the words "the Lord's Supper". Down the centuries, various names have been given to the meal that Jesus gave us:

Eucharist      Holy Communion      Mass      Breaking of Bread

Which do you prefer to use and why?

How important is it for you to take Communion?

Some folk view it as 'the heart of worship'. What do you think?

### **The passage**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

- What sort of things did some of the Christians at Corinth do which showed Paul that there were divisions among them?
- Paul's aim was to heal those divisions. Why did he refer to Jesus's Last Supper?
- How did Paul know what happened at the Last Supper?
- What did Jesus mean by saying "This is my body", when He took the bread into His hands?
- "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (11:25) In what ways was that covenant 'new'?
- Paul mentions some serious consequences for the Corinthians who take communion in an unworthy manner (11:17-32). Does this still apply? How would you define an "unworthy manner"?

### **Research**

The accounts of the Last Supper in the New Testament are not the same. Compare 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 with Luke 22:17-20 and Mark 14:22-24.

a) What words are the same in all three accounts?

b) What words do we find in Mark and 1 Corinthians, but not in Luke?

The Gospel of John does not record the giving of the bread and wine at the Last Supper. Some people think that Jesus's words in John 6:53-59 are a veiled reference to Holy Communion, spoken in anticipation of the Last Supper. What do you think? What did Jesus mean by "eat my flesh" and "drink my blood"?

### **Issues** (*Leaders to select from the following*)

- In what ways are Communion services today different from those celebrated by the Christians in Corinth?
- Some Christians like to have Communion every week. Others think that is not desirable. What is your view?

- Roman Catholics hold very different views on Communion to Protestants. What differences are you aware of?
- In one of our Eucharistic prayers, we say “send your Holy Spirit that this bread and this wine may be to us the body and blood of your dear Son”. In what sense can bread and wine be to us the body and blood of Christ?
- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in Communion?
- N. T. Wright, in his book “The Meal Jesus Gave Us” says that Jesus is present in the service of Communion “feeding us with Himself”. In what way does the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine do this?
- Communion is meant to unite us as ‘one body’. Yet it has so often divided Christians. Why?
- Some Christians like to receive the communion wine in separate glasses. Why? Why do Anglicans insist we must all drink from the same cup?

## Reflection

The account of Jesus on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35 has influenced our understanding of Holy Communion. This painting by Caravaggio, which hangs in the National Gallery, called “The Supper at Emmaus”, painted in 1601, attempts to capture a particular moment in that account.

What does that account, and this painting, say to you?



## During this Week

Read the accounts of the Last Supper in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and imagine yourself there with Jesus. Record your impressions.