

# Week 2: Eating Together

1 Corinthians 11:17-34 *Study in response* to February 3, 2019.

**life together**

A people apprenticed to  
the Life of Jesus

## Special Practice: Eat a Meal Together!

Arrange for your group to gather earlier than usual and to **eat a meal together** - potluck, a simple meal (e.g. soup and buns), or order pizza. Plan to include **a loaf of bread and grape juice/wine** (with consideration for any personal or dietary issues within your group). You may also choose to include children in this time together. Use paper plates if it makes things easier. Most of all, cover your home in prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to meet your group as it gathers together.

## Beginning Your Gathering

If possible, seat everyone around a table, with the food in the centre. If an appropriately-sized table is not available, try to create a space where everyone can be seated near one another, and no one feels excluded. Once everyone is seated, use the following prayer guide for your time together.

### Welcome & Lord's Supper: (5 minutes)

- *[With bread and a pitcher of juice in front of him/her, the Leader (standing) begins the meal by leading a thanksgiving for the supper you are about to share, and for the Lord's Supper - the body and blood of Jesus.]*

**Leader:** The Lord be with you!

**Group:** And also with you!

**Leader:** Welcome in the name of Jesus Christ! We gather here as apprentices of Jesus to learn to be loved by Jesus, to be led by Jesus, to become like Jesus, to lead others to Jesus. Many of the most sacred moments of Jesus' ministry took place around a table. May each one of us find great joy and spiritual nourishment as we also gather together to share a meal in the presence of Jesus.

**Group:** Amen!

**Leader:** Each time we gather together, we remember that very special meal that Jesus ate with his disciples, where he showed them his love by washing their feet, taught them the new command to love one another, and revealed a new covenant in his blood.

- *Any member of the group reads **1 Corinthians 11:23-24** as the Leader **breaks/tears the loaf in two**. The loaf is then passed each direction around the table for members to take a piece.*

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you are the Bread of Life, given for the life of the world. Your body was broken on the cross, so that we, a broken and divided people, could be made whole, and could become your body on earth, living for the sake of the world. We eat this bread to remember you. *The group eats the bread together.*

- *Any member of the group **offers thanks for the meal**, and the food is served. When all have food on their plates, any member of the group reads **1 Corinthians 11:25-26** as the Leader **raises the pitcher of juice** above the table. The pitcher is then passed around the table to fill each cup with juice. When all have been served...*

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, you offered your blood as a sign of the new covenant between God and humanity - a covenant of steadfast love that reconciles all things to yourself. Your sacrifice cleanses us from the stain of our sin and opens the way for fellowship with God. For this, we give you thanks. *The group takes a drink of the juice.*

### Eating Together: (30-40 minutes)

- *Now enjoy your meal together! As you catch up on one another's lives, ask a couple of intentional questions such as, **"What are you giving thanks to God for in this season?"**, **"What is one thing you are asking Jesus to do in your life these days?"** or **"What did you think of this week's teaching about eating together?"** As needs are mentioned, take a moment to pause the conversation and pray for that person.*
- *After everyone has had enough, pause conversation and invite group members to offer **brief prayers of thanksgiving to God** or **words of encouragement** to the group (or specific people).*
- *Close by reading **Psalm 103:1-12** or **Ephesians 1:3-10** and/or singing the **Doxology**.*
- *Take some time to clear the table; then pour the coffee, serve dessert, and return to the table/circle.*

## **Listening to God's Word:** (20 minutes)

*Gather as a whole group, and read the following:* Acts 2:42,46 says "They [the new family of Jesus] devoted themselves... to the breaking of bread.... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." The *Communion meal*, aka *the Lord's Supper* and *the Eucharist*, has been at the centre of Christian worship and community since these first days of the church. Birthed in the soil of the Jewish Passover meal, the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper became a tangible sign of the redeeming work of Christ. It also became a symbol of the constant and shared dependence of the Body of Christ on the nourishment that comes from Christ, its Head. Finally, this special meal became a foretaste of God's hospitality and generosity toward all peoples and nations – a place where all who have trusted Christ are welcome at the heavenly banquet of the Lamb. Whether looking *back* at the finished work of salvation, *around* at our new spiritual family, or *forward* to our certain hope of resurrection, the Lord's Supper is a sign, a witness, and a foretaste of *the reconciliation of all things, and all people, in Christ* (Ephesians 1:9-10). This rich meaning is surely in Paul's mind as he admonishes the Corinthian believers for their careless and unjust celebration of the Lord's Supper. As we read **1 Corinthians 11:17-34** together, consider: **Who or what do you relate to in this teaching, and why?**

1. **Tell the Story:** From memory or by reading, listen together to **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**.
2. **Rebuild the Story:** With Bibles open to **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**, verse by verse, identify...
  - *"Who, What, Where, When, How"?* *Where did the leader add or omit details?*
3. **Debrief the Story:** Respond to these questions:
  - *Who or what do you relate to in this teaching, and why?*
  - *What incongruence does Paul sense between the church's celebration of the Lord's Supper and its common life together (v 18-22)? What might be an equivalent in our community (especially at Life Group)?*
  - *What are the consequences of their failure to practice the Lord's Supper in a "worthy manner" (v 30)? Why do you think that's happening?*
  - *What are they instructed to do in order to restore the integrity of this meal among them? What would be an equivalent in our own practice as Christ's Body?*

## **Listening to One Another** (10 minutes)

After you have completed this conversation, discuss the following questions together:

- ❖ *How is experiencing the Lord's Supper as a meal with family different from the ritual experienced with the larger body of Christ? What new feelings, concerns, or insights come to light?*
- ❖ *How does eating together express "the reconciliation of all things in Christ"? What does this require of us who participate in it (toward one another, toward "outsiders," toward God)?*
- ❖ *Our practice of the Lord's Supper today included the ritual elements of bread and juice/wine; it also followed the practice of the early (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century) church's practice of a time of free worship, thanksgiving, and Spirit-filled encouragement and exhortation. What was that like for you?*
- ❖ *Have you experienced the Lord's Supper in an environment of incongruence (where there is injustice, exclusion, bitterness, unforgiveness, unresolved hurt)? How could this group be "ministers of reconciliation" for you?*
- ❖ *What are some ways our group could elevate the role of eating together (both in ordinary meals and the Lord's Supper) in our shared apprenticeship to Jesus?*

Then, using **the Lord's Prayer** (Matthew 6:9-13) as a guide, based on what you've shared together, spend time listening to God and praying for one another.

## Leader Notes

Note to **Yorkson Leaders**: Due to Sunday's potluck, Pastor Jeff's message will have been significantly shorter than Pastor Matthew's version at Walnut Grove. This study guide on 1 Corinthians 11 should be useable as provided, without direct reference to the sermon. The experiential nature of the meal will be a good spark for meaningful discussion in itself.

- If at all possible, please make the meal and Lord's Supper an indispensable part of your meeting. It will include some "out-of-the-box" experiences (both for you as a leader and for your group members); these are often the best way to provoke discussion and learning!
- While there are some facilitated elements that are valuable to include, please also just enjoy the fellowship you share together as a group around the meal. But also try to make it more than just a pleasant evening with friends. As a leader, however, try to facilitate intentional conversation that goes beyond the surface, with a deep awareness of the presence of Jesus. In addition to the questions included in the guide, consider questions like:
  - What's a recent time when you came to see God or yourself in a new way? What did you do with that insight?
  - What's a passage of Scripture that you're finding especially meaningful to you right now?
  - What's one memory from your early days as a Christian that you cherish especially? Why?
  - What's one memory from your childhood that formed your idea of who God is? How has that changed as you've grown older?
  - Where's a place you've seen God at work in your daily life? In your neighbourhood? In your workplace?
- From what Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 11 and our knowledge of the ancient world, it appears that the more wealthy members of the church, who had more margin in their day, were arriving to the church gatherings much earlier than the poorer day labourers. As would be their "right" in stratified Roman culture, the rich would launch into the meal without waiting for their poorer brothers and sisters, and would eat so much that very little was left when they arrived. In other words, they had not allowed the reconciling gospel to break down the barriers of injustice and inequality that divided people in the wider culture. As you draw parallels between this dysfunction in the Corinthian church and today, help the group think...
  - *Beyond the meal... what are other things in Christian community that are meant to be shared, but that some are excluded from (e.g. access to resources, to community, invitation to "social" connection)? How does this happen?*
  - *What are some of the ways we divide ourselves from others (e.g. marital status, age, stage of life, disability, mental health, spiritual "maturity," etc.)?*
  - *What are ways that our group could be more intentional about a kingdom-oriented inclusivity?*
- You might also want to discuss: What might be the limits of a kingdom-oriented inclusivity? On what basis?
- Try and have a discussion about the future role of eating together in your shared lives together. Discuss how you can aim for eating together in a way that remains focused on Christ and that practices inclusivity, not just surface social connection common to our meals with friends.