

Week 20 LEADER Discussion Questions

Text: 1 Cor 11:17-34

Icebreaker: Imagine you have an unlimited budget with unlimited space to host a meal. Who's invited and what are you serving?

1. Read this week's passage. What stands out to you from the text or from the sermon you heard Sunday?

2. From verses 17-22, what's the basic problem Paul is confronting the Corinthians about?

It's the issue of factions or divisions in the church, but more specifically, the problem is along socioeconomic lines so that the well-off are feasting while the poor are left without food. Unlike our regular practice at Calvary, the picture here is of a full meal that included the bread and the cup. Numerous factors could be contributing to the situation. For example, the poor may have work responsibilities that keep them from being able to show up as early as those who are wealthy, meaning that the food is gone by the time they arrive. The poor may also be shut out of the main meeting space where the rich are gathered since first-century churches often met in small spaces rather than large rooms like we have today.

Application: We may not experience the same form of problem today, but how might worship gatherings in our context exclude people in other ways? **The details are important here. What's happening in Corinth is not a matter of opinions or preferences not being met. The poor were being excluded from participating in worship through the Lord's supper. This isn't a conflict over worship styles—type of music, length of a service, etc., that may not be what we would prefer but that are available to all. One modern-day example could be that people with disabilities are being neglected while those without disabilities don't seem to even notice their exclusion.**

3. Verses 23-26 are a teaching that Paul himself had received when he became a Christ-follower. Given the situation the Corinthians are in, why is it important to Paul that they remember Jesus's death?

The accent of the Lord's Supper is on Jesus's death rather than the resurrection (however, notice that Jesus's death is proclaimed through it "until he comes"). The death of Jesus is set in a context of betrayal and ultimate self-sacrifice. In short, it is a reminder of the undeserved love, unmerited favor, and cost of what Jesus has done for us so that we can "have a seat at the table." That ought to have given the Corinthians a great

sense of gratitude toward God and a motivation to also give sacrificially of themselves for the good of each other.

Application: How do you think the memory of his death can help guide our own lives?

4. In verses 27-32, Paul includes a combination of warning and instruction about taking the bread and the cup. Why are the stakes so high with regard to participating in the Lord's supper?

The meal is directly linked to the act that brought salvation. If the Corinthians are too casual with it, they risk taking Jesus's death too casually. Jesus's death is what supplies justification from sin, so a flippant attitude toward the Lord's supper risks demonstrating a flippant attitude toward one's own salvation. We might imagine the harm that would come from being nonchalant or insensitive about the death of another person's friend or family member. How much greater harm, then, if we take the death of Jesus too lightly.

With all of that said, it's possible that someone could take the death of Jesus seriously but not understand how the bread and the cup are so closely linked to his death. This passage ought to correct a misunderstanding like that.

Application: How does this shape your own understanding of the importance of the Lord's supper? Does it match what you've already known to be true or is there something here that challenges you in a new way?

5. Verses 33-34 are the final and very practical word for the Corinthians on this issue. How would this instruction help them avoid the problem they're facing?

Paul is giving an immensely practical solution here for anyone whose appetites are getting in the way of what's good for the rest of the church. Don't show up starving if you can't control yourself!

Application: How do you think we might be most likely to misuse the Lord's supper today in our own setting? Is there something in this passage that can help us guard against it?