

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*Is It the Lord's Supper?*  
1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Important Suggestion

This session lends itself well to the celebration of taking the Lord's Supper (Communion, as it is often called). As you plan for that event, please be sensitive to the fact that some in your congregation may have previous problems with drinking alcohol of any type. Even a small taste of wine or being within smelling distance of wine could be dangerous. However, out of pride or embarrassment, they may not voice their problem.

Some may object to the use of wine because of personal principles. Others may object to it being served to or in the presence of younger children. For these reasons and more, non-alcohol grape juice is the choice of most evangelical churches except in certain areas of the world. Grape juice is a good choice. Please consider using it exclusively in your church for the Lord's Supper.

## ***Prior to this Coming Session:***

**All leaders:** If you decide to take the Lord's Supper during this worship session, contact each other during the week before and plan the celebration. It will be much more meaningful for the church. A simple procedure for celebrating the Lord's Supper in a home-based church is found on the final pages of this session.

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

Ask someone to do the reading **Here, at Your Table, Lord** ahead of time. Give them a copy of the reading which can be found on the last part of the materials for this session.

### **Bible Study Leader:**

### **Worship Time Leader:**

## **Music Sources:**

**Here, at Your Table, Lord**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 403, CCLI 105849 Public Domain or 2922580

**Let Us Break Bread Together**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 399, CCLI # 5206605 or 31013663

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Is It the Lord's Supper?*****Focal Text**

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

**Background Text**

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

**Main Idea**

Christians should celebrate the Lord's Supper so that it demonstrates respect for and unity with their fellow Christians and reminds them of how Christ gave his life for them.

**Question to Explore**

How can the Lord's Supper truly be the Lord's Supper?

**Teaching Aim**

To guide the church to analyze how their participation in their church's celebration of the Lord's Supper needs to change in light of Paul's teachings in this passage.

**Gathering together:**

Open with a hymn or song of praise that fits the theme of Jesus' death and resurrection.

**First thoughts:****For the leaders of today's session:**

**Plan ahead for a special project for children to do during the observance of the Lord's Supper. Or take time now to explain that today's lesson talks about a special teaching that Jesus gave us which they will understand better as they grow up. Ask them to listen carefully. Have a special treat of cookies and juice for the children to enjoy.**

Tell the church: Celebrating the Lord's Supper together is one of the most meaningful aspects of worshipping together. Although many churches have this as a part of their weekly worship service, many evangelical churches choose to have it periodically. One

of the reasons for that is to help us make it a special occasion. Paul's admonition to the Corinthian church was necessary because the believers had lost the significance of what they were doing. The meal of remembrance had disintegrated into a common meal. We will begin now to prepare our hearts for remembering the death of Jesus through participation in the Lord's Supper.

### **Reading:**

### **Here, at Your Table, Lord**

Here, at Your table, Lord,  
This sacred hour,  
O let us feel You near,  
In loving pow'r;  
Calling our thoughts away  
From self and sin,  
As to Your banquet hall  
We enter in.

Come then, O holy Christ,  
Feed us, we pray;  
Touch with Your pierced hand  
Each common day,  
Making this earthly life  
Full of Your grace,  
Till, in the home of heav'n,  
We find our place.

Words: May P. Hoyt; Music: William F. Sherwin, 1826-1888. Public domain.

As we examine the Scripture verses relating to how we are to observe the Lord's Supper, let us begin to prepare our hearts for the celebration. It is a celebration of remembrance of what Christ did for us.

### **Closing the Gathering Time:**

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *Is It the Lord's Supper?*

#### **Focal Text**

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

#### **Background Text**

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

#### **Main Idea**

Christians should celebrate the Lord's Supper so that it demonstrates respect for and unity with their fellow Christians and reminds them of how Christ gave his life for them.

#### **Question to Explore**

How can the Lord's Supper truly be the Lord's Supper?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To guide the church to analyze how their participation in their church's celebration of the Lord's Supper needs to change in light of Paul's teachings in this passage.

#### **Introduction to your personal study:**

In another instance of pagan influence creeping into church life Paul wanted to rectify the practice of indulging in gluttony and drunkenness at the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper leaving the poor, who needed nourishment, with unmet needs. The sense of community God so desires for his church consequently was suffering.

In many affluent cultures we assume that everyone's basic needs are met through social agencies, government programs and sometimes through church outreach efforts. It would be prudent to evaluate how effective your group is in accepting people from different economic backgrounds. Is your group quite homogenous? That is: Do most have similar incomes, educational backgrounds, lifestyles? Are any of these factors linked to an assumption of competence in spiritual matters? Prejudice against those with fewer material resources was not limited to Paul's era. Pray that yours will be an inclusive group of Christ-followers.

## Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

This passage pursues a second area of concern Paul had regarding worship practices in the Corinthian church. In the last session Paul began by affirming the church but this session begins with the words “I do not commend you” (v.17), describing his rebuke followed by instructions to this assembly with respect to their attitude toward the Lord's Supper. As a symbol of Christ's sacrificial death and atonement the Corinthians had allowed the significance of this ordinance (religious ceremony) to deteriorate into an episode of self-interest and greed.

Paul's account in this chapter represents the earliest scriptural reference to the Lord's Supper since historically it was written prior to the four gospels.

## Focusing on the Meaning:

### 1 Corinthians 11:17

Paul introduced a new topic of instruction. *The Message* says “**Regarding this next item, I'm not at all pleased.**” His indignation called for the Corinthians' full attention in order to address a serious problem. The gathering of the church was bringing out the worst in people rather than challenging them to honour and encourage one another.

### 1 Corinthians 11:18

Reports had come to Paul that the church had become divided into parties or cliques, a fact he did not seem to find unusual.

### 1 Corinthians 11:19

These divisions or factions focused on religious views, some of which were heretical. Belonging to one or another of these factions would separate those who earnestly followed Christ from those with self-chosen views and interpretations of Christ's teachings. The former would represent “the approved”; those who held beliefs that God (and Paul) would approve of.

### 1 Corinthians 11:20-22

The gathering for the Lord's Supper, as practised by the Corinthians, was not a genuine worship experience in Paul's estimation. It was common practice in the early church for believers to gather for fellowship meals that climaxed with observance of the Lord's Supper. He condemned the excesses and selfishness of the Corinthians that had been reported to him. This involved the wealthier people bringing an abundance of food with which to gorge themselves while leaving the poorer folk, who might have looked forward to this one substantial meal for the week, with nothing to satisfy their chronic hunger. Drunkenness was not unknown on these occasions.



In addition there was no order to the service. The rich made sure to take their food before the poor were allowed to participate. The *Agape* or Love Feast had been desecrated by these attitudes and the resulting behaviour. Rather than emphasize these economic differences Paul instructed the rich to satisfy their hunger at home. He was concerned that contempt for the poor and the shame that resulted indicated an underlying contempt for the church of God. Paul wanted to restore the original concept of sharing together in a fellowship context.

### **1 Corinthians 11:23-24**

Paul reviewed the correct order of service for the Lord's Supper – instructions he first received from the Lord. Bread and wine were common elements of a meal in the culture of the day. Jesus chose these food items to symbolize his body and blood in the ceremony of remembering his death. As our substitute his death is the means by which we sinners come into a relationship with God. We are to look back on this event as critical to our faith. The bread represents Jesus' body, damaged by the whip, the nails and the spear, broken by the sins of mankind, but readily given for us.

### **1 Corinthians 11:25-26**

The second symbol of Jesus' death is the contents of the "cup". Wine would have been used in the early church but wine is not a universal beverage and is not commonly used in evangelical churches today. The recurring use of the word "cup" indicates that the contents were to represent the blood shed by Christ to pay for the sins of the world. The drink also reminds believers to continue to look forward to the promise of Christ's return.

This ceremony, celebrated in community, brings the past and future together in a present experience centred on Jesus Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 11:27**

Having reviewed the correct method of sharing in the Lord's Supper Paul discussed the correct attitude of participants. He warned that those who refused to acknowledge the proper emphasis, as determined by Jesus at the Last Supper, would be held accountable. Believers are to remember that Jesus willingly suffered death on a cruel cross for the sins of all those who would accept his forgiveness. The act of remembering leads to gratitude, worship, and renewed spiritual vitality.

### **1 Corinthians 11:28**

Personal reflection is important prior to accepting the elements of the Lord's Supper. Paul expected believers to assess their attitudes and behaviour toward other Christians and toward their Saviour. Confession and repentance should follow. No one should then walk away from the table of remembrance judging themselves to be unworthy. By remembering the death of God's Son believers affirm the effective solution God had for their sin problem.

### **1 Corinthians 11:29**

Judgment awaits those who do not respect other believers in the “body” (of Christ) as they collectively join in the Lord’s Supper. It is a community of believers not a collection of individuals with selfish motives to indulge their appetites.

### **1 Corinthians 11:30-31**

Paul reinforced the idea of God’s judgment by itemizing some consequences he had observed when Corinthian believers ignored their obligations at the Communion table. Some were sick while others had gone to an early grave. He pleaded for a recommitment to the practice of personal self-judgment before the Lord’s Supper was received so that God would not exact judgment.

### **1 Corinthians 11:32**

God judges or chastises his people for the purpose of discipline; to teach us how to live as true followers of Christ so that we will not experience the fate of those who reject Christ and thus face eternal judgment.

### **1 Corinthians 11:33-34**

Paul summarized his instructions by encouraging his “brothers and sisters” to wait until everyone was assembled before the meal began. Those who found it difficult to wait were to eat at home before arriving for the communal meal. These observances would make it unnecessary for God to exact judgment on anyone.

## **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

Below is the “Teaching Aim” for this session.

“To guide the church to analyze how their participation in their church’s celebration of the Lord’s Supper needs to change in light of Paul’s teachings in this passage.”

In other words, your goal will be to lead your church to look at all aspects of your celebration of the Lord’s Supper: When, how, where, why, and with whom. Do you need to make changes? Are your attitudes toward those celebrations appropriate in the light of Paul’s teachings in the scripture passage? Emphasize the fact that the New Testament teaches us what to do (remembering Jesus’ sacrifice in a special moment by eating “unleavened” bread and drinking the “fruit of the vine”). It does not give us a prescribed formula of the way it should be done. But many people, especially those with an institutionally based church heritage will come with a mental picture of “how” it should be celebrated.

Don’t expect to make permanent changes. The celebration will change in the above ways as your church changes. But encouraging your home church to study the processes of the celebration as well as the teachings is crucial to your church enjoying and understanding the Lord’s Supper. You probably don’t have trained “preachers” to be the leaders and experts in the celebration. But, you, yourselves, are all you need. Enjoy studying it. Enjoy doing it.

## **For Personal Reflection:**

**What have I learned from this study?**

**What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

**What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***Is It the Lord's Supper?***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

**Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.**

#### **Focal Text**

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

#### **Background Text**

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

#### **Main Idea**

Christians should celebrate the Lord's Supper so that it demonstrates respect for and unity with their fellow Christians and reminds them of how Christ gave his life for them.

#### **Question to Explore**

How can the Lord's Supper truly be the Lord's Supper?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To guide the church to analyze how their participation in their church's celebration of the Lord's Supper needs to change in light of Paul's teachings in this passage.

#### **Connect with Life:**

If some in your group have participated in the Lord's Supper have them share how it was done in their experience and what was meaningful for them.

#### **Guide the Study:**

Call the group's attention with this: Why do we gather together like this? (worship, fellowship, learning, growth)

Say: We're going to read a verse written by Paul that seems to say sometimes believers do more harm than good when they get together.

Request a person to read 1 Corinthians 11:17

Tell them: Paul was writing to the church in Corinth but, as always when we look in God's Word, there are warnings and ideas for us to ponder too. Let's look at the reason Paul wrote these words.

Now have someone read 1 Corinthians 11:18-19

Ask: What were some reasons for divisions or cliques among Corinthian believers?

Encourage conversation with this question: Do we see these divisions in modern churches?

Add: Why do these divisions exist?

Confirm this understanding: In Paul's day, before the scriptures were complete, heresy or false teaching was a major concern. Paul indicated in v.19 that connection to a group that had moved toward this kind of teaching would distinguish the true believers from those with a false faith.

Encourage another person to read 1 Corinthians 11:20-22

Comment: It seems strange to think that Christians would engage in this kind of behaviour.

Let the group discover these faults: What are the practices that Paul criticized? (greed, drunkenness, partiality toward the wealthy, selfishness, lack of respect for the ceremony itself, lack of respect for the church, etc.)

Say: While Paul criticized the behaviour at the Lord's Supper, he was more concerned with the attitudes displayed by the behaviour.

See if the group can name some of these attitudes.

Ask: (optional: perhaps your group holds a Love Feast) How does the Corinthian format for the Lord's Supper differ from ours? (It was part of a fellowship meal called the *Agape* or Love Feast.)

Seek a person to read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Say: Paul reviews the order for celebrating Communion as this ceremony is called in 1 Corinthians 10:16.

Request someone to read this verse (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Continue: The Lord's Supper is also referred to by some as the *Eucharist* or "the giving of thanks". Paul reminds the Corinthians that Jesus instituted this ordinance just before his death. We need to be aware that words create mental pictures and definitions. The word "Eucharist", for many people, create a picture of a priest leading the celebration in a sacrament-based church denomination which teaches that Communion literally recreates the death of Jesus. That is to say, every time Communion is celebrated, Jesus literally dies again. We believe that Jesus only died once. Therefore, most evangelical churches avoid the word "Eucharist".

Read:  
Matthew 26:26-29

State and then ask: Jesus used the basic items of a meal to illustrate the significance of his death. Why is the symbol of the bread important? (God offers us the Bread of Life, his Son, whose body was broken like the bread at the Passover Meal. Even the poor could anticipate bread to eat. Some form of bread is eaten all over the world. This reveals the picture of Salvation, offered to us by God's grace through the death of Christ, and which is available to everyone. One does not need money enough for an expensive meal to receive it).

See if the group will briefly discuss this: Why is the symbol of the cup important? (It represents the blood that poured from Jesus' body to cleanse us from sin. Blood was part of the sacrifice for sin required in the Old Testament.)

Encourage opinions: How does the Lord's Supper bring the past and the future into focus? (We remember the event of Jesus' death and the promise it holds of his coming again.)

Seek another person to read 1 Corinthians 11:27-34

Look for answers: What warnings do we find in these verses?

1. We can face God's discipline if we do not respect the table of remembrance.
2. We need to "clear our conscience" by confession before participating in the ordinance.
3. We should not refuse to participate but rather humble ourselves before God and find his forgiveness.
4. We need to respect "the body", our fellow believers.
5. Don't use the elements of the Lord's Supper to satisfy physical hunger and thirst. Seek spiritual satisfaction.

## Encourage Application:

©2001-2010, Eternal Interactive, LLC, All Rights Reserved. [www.homechurchonline.com](http://www.homechurchonline.com)  
*Is It the Lord's Supper?* – 13-35-09-en

Unless otherwise noted, scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of International Bible Society.

This week the youth will remain with everyone else for the application of the Bible study and the closing prayer.

Conclude with this: The behaviour displayed in Corinth seems excessive to us. However it showed attitudes that are not so foreign to our contemporary churches. We can still be guilty of showing favouritism toward those who have more to offer the congregation. We may have selfish motives for our involvement or be unwilling to share. Some might hold back from a false sense of being unworthy to participate.

Close with this prayer: God help us to examine ourselves before you – not only our behaviour but our attitudes. Correct us where we are in the wrong. Help us to place great value on our fellowship experiences and each person who shares in this community of faith.

<b>Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.</b> Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.
---

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Is It the Lord's Supper?***  
**1 Corinthians 11:17-34****Beginning the Service:**

Sing the hymn **Here, at Your Table, Lord** or have the reading done again which was done during the Gathering Time.

Sing **Let Us Break Bread Together**, A Negro Spiritual which is available online.

**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

A new Kabyle believer has asked for prayer for the small group of believers that is currently meeting in his home. He has been threatened with the loss of his property, fines, and prison. His response was simple: "We choose to serve God rather than men" Pray that God will continue to bless the group with rich fellowship and spiritual growth. Also pray for the group to grow. Ask God to protect them from the relentless efforts of those who are seeking to prevent the spread of the awesome message of Christ's love."

**Sharing Guide:**

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.



## **Defining this Wonderful Celebration We Call the Lord's Supper**

We have examined this passage which reveals another problem with the Corinthian church. The observance of the Lord's Supper had become an occasion for gluttony and partying. Apparently the "Love Feast" (a tradition that began early in the church where the whole church gathered for a meal in conjunction with the Lord's Supper) had taken the place of the Lord's Supper in Corinth. This fellowship had degenerated into what one called a "schism supper". People were divided into groups during the meal. Some were eating much more than they needed. Others were going hungry. Paul could not commend the Corinthians because their meetings hindered rather than helped (v. 17). There were divisions in the fellowship (vv. 18-19), and there was selfishness demonstrated at mealtime (vv. 23-26).

This is especially heartbreaking when we remember the early expression of the believers' fellowship recorded in Acts 2:

### **What is the Lord's Supper?**

Paul explains that it is a memorial meal during which we remember Jesus died for us (vv. 23-25). It is a proclamation (v 26). As we take the bread and the wine we silently proclaim, "Jesus died for our sins and God raised him from the dead". It reflects on a promise (v. 26 "until he comes"). Jesus promised to dine with us when he returns (Matthew 26:29). The Lord's Supper is also participation with the living Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:16). Somehow mysteriously through the Spirit Jesus is present with us when we take the Lord's Supper. It is communion with him.

### **In what manner are we to observe the Lord's Supper?**

First, we are to observe in a manner worthy of its true significance (v 27). That involves a sense of reverence, a sense of the greatness of what Jesus did for us, a sense of unity, and a sense of appreciation for the church as the body of Christ (we all need each other; we are all inter-dependent). Second, we are to partake with careful self-examination (vv. 28-32). Finally, there is to be no thought of satisfying hunger in the taking of the bread and the wine, although a fellowship meal where everyone participates equally is permissible either before or after the Lord's Supper.

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper the night before he was crucified. It was after observing the Passover meal with his disciples that he initiated this tradition. He taught them they were to remember his death for them every time they partook of the supper. Paul says he passed this tradition on to the Corinthians. He himself had received it from others. The tradition has been passed on to every generation of believers since then. It is a practice for contemporary believers.

It is important for contemporary believers to understand why we observe the Lord's Supper and how we are to conduct ourselves when we do.

Read vv. 24-25 and comment that the bread and the wine help us to remember Jesus' body which he gave for our salvation and his blood which Jesus shed for our sin.

Read v 26. Say: Think how we are proclaiming the Lord's death in observing the Lord's Supper. Participating in the Lord's Supper is a testimony to our belief that Jesus died for us. Notice the words "until he comes". Observing the Lord's Supper enables us to look back at the first coming of Jesus and to look forward to his second coming.

### **Call to Commitment:**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-28. Explain to your church in your own words how important it is for us to make sure our relationship with the Lord is up-to-date, that there are no unconfessed sins. Add that it is also important that we are as right with other people as we can be.

### **Concluding the Service:**

Participate in the Lord's Supper using Mark 14:22-26 and/or Matthew 26: 26-30 as a guide. One person may read the scripture, another may pass around the bread (small pieces of cracker or flat bread) and grape juice. Two other people may pray following the eating of the bread and the drinking of the juice. Allow time for reflection and silent prayer.

If you wish, the following pages offer a simple, shared leadership celebration of the Lord's Supper. It can serve your church as a guide and gradually be changed to meet your needs and your confidence to design your own plan.

## Lord's Supper Suggested Celebration

This suggested celebration can be done by as few as two people or by as many as are present who are believing followers of Jesus.

Ask **person #1** to read Luke 22:14-20:

**Person #2** read: Today, we do not often follow the rituals for special meals of the Jewish society in Jesus' day. Few of us would be willing to "recline" at the edges of a low table. Nor would women and children be comfortable being left out of the meal, except to prepare and serve it to the men.

But there is no need to try. The point of the teaching and the practice of the Lord's Supper is not to mimic the ritual. Rather, it is to take time to remember what Jesus did for us.

**Person #2:** Pray, thanking God for this special time to remember what Jesus did for us when He died on a cross.

Ask **person #3** to serve the bread.

**Person #4:** Read John 6:58-59: ***"This is the bread which came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." Jesus said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.***

**Person #4** read: Now let's eat the bread that represents the body of Jesus which he permitted to be destroyed for our sins.

Everyone eats the bread.

Ask **person #5** to serve the grape juice.

**Person #4** read: 1 Corinthians 11:17-26.

**Person #5** read: Now let's drink the juice that represents the blood of Jesus which he shed so that we can live forever with Him.

Everyone drinks the juice.

Person # 6 read 1 John 1:7: ***“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.***

**Person #6** will now close the service with a prayer.