

Unity and the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a feast which symbolizes unity. This lesson looks at how the Lord's Supper is intimately intertwined with the concept of unity. Unity is not limited to a few external acts that brethren may agree on. It is infused in how we relate to each other all the time. The regular reminder of Christ's sacrifice in the Lord's Supper shows the very epitome of love.

1. Jesus expected his followers to be united.

- A. The first Christians were united in their worship and work. (**Acts 2:42-45**)
- B. The word "together" is used frequently in connection with the Lord's Supper. (**Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 11:18, 20, 33**)
- C. The Lord's Supper reminds us of the one item Christians have in common: A savior who prayed for unity of his followers (**John 17:6-23**) Examine these selected verses:
 - They believed that He had been sent by God. (vs 8)
 - "...that they may be one as We are." (vs 11 & 22) We can share in the same relationship that Christ has with God.
 - "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." (vs 16) Our mutual home is elsewhere, and it lasts for eternity.
 - "...but also for those who will believe in Me through their word." (vs 20) The words of the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, have been passed on to us in the WORD.
 - "...that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You." (vs 21)
 - "...that they may be made perfect in one..." (vs 23) (**Matt 5:48**)
- D. Jesus died that men might be united as one body. (**Eph 2:11-17**)
 - He united Jew and Gentile through His blood. (vs 13)
 - Created one new man from the two. (vs. 15)
 - He reconciled them both to God in one body through the cross. (vs. 16)

2. Jesus said: "...I drink it new with you..." -- Vertical Communion

- A. Jesus said he would not drink the cup "until that day I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom." (**Matt 26:29**) He would not do it alone but only when they were all united in the kingdom. Then we will each commune with Christ. We do so today.
- B. Communion is a means by which we express our attachment to Christ as Christians.
 - We commune with Him. (**Luke 22:19**)

3. One Body in the One Bread -- Horizontal Communion

- A. The fact that we all partake of one bread unites us in a common sharing. (**1 Cor 10:16-17**) Communion is a means by which we express our attachment to Christ as Christians.
- B. Christ is in us and we are in Him. Being united with Christ, we are thus united with all the others who are in Christ. We share the same blessing, proclaim the same message, and have the same benefits achieved through His blood. We are members of the same body. (**John 17:21, Rom 12:4-5, Eph 4:4-6**)
- C. In almost all nations, the act of eating together has long been thought of as a symbol of fellowship and unity. (e.g. see **Rev 3:20**)

- D. Since Christ is head of the body (the church – **Eph 1:22-23**) if one is not in that body, then Christ is not his head. Since Christ is the savior of the body (**Eph 5:23**) if one is not in that body, then he is lost and separated from those who are united with Christ and other Christians.

4. How God views division.

- A. Proverbs says (**Prov 6:16-19**) that those *“who sow discord among brethren”* are an abomination to God.
- B. Paul pleaded with the Corinthians *“that there be no divisions among you”* (**1 Cor 1:10**) and he classified “factions” and “divisions” as works of the flesh (**Gal 5:19-21**) and says those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- C. Paul says (**Rom 2:8**) that those who are factious (contentious) do not obey the truth and will receive wrath and indignation. Brethren are exhorted to mark and turn away from those who cause division. (**Rom 16:17**)
- D. Jesus says (**Luke 11:17**) that *“a house divided against itself will fall.”*

5. How God views unity.

- A. **Psa 133:1** says: *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”*
- B. Paul admonishes us in **Rom 12:16** to: *“Be of the same mind toward one another”* and in **Phil 3:15-16** he says: *“...let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.”* This doesn’t mean that we all have to think exactly alike, but that our attitude toward Christ and the Father should be the same and the rules we live by be the same. He explains further in **Rom 15:5-6** that this is so we can glorify God.
- C. In **1 Cor 1:10** Paul pleads with us *“by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you...”*
- D. Paul also begs us (**Eph 4:1-3**) to *“walk worthy of the calling... with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* To be worthy, we need to bear one another in love, as long as it takes to maintain unity, in spite of the fact that we may not always agree on all issues.

6. Weekly lesson provided by the Lord’s Supper

- A. Christ gives us a weekly lesson on unity when we, as one body, partake of the one bread. It is a communion, or sharing, together.
- B. Lord’s Supper is to be taken whenever the saints assemble on the first day of the week. (**Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 11:20**) It is a primary function of our assembling.
- C. We are admonished to wait for each other in order to commune together. *“Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.”* (**1 Cor 11:33**)

7. Review Questions

- A. Concerning unity, of what should the Lord’s Supper remind us?
- B. According to Paul (**Rom 16:17-18**) who is it that is guilty of causing division?
- C. What did Jesus do so that we might be united and how does the LS illustrate this?
- D. If we ignore the weekly reminder of unity, is this partaking in an unworthy manner?