

1 Corinthians 11:23-32 – Study Leader's Questions

1. *What is the background to the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-32?*
2. *What authority does Paul claim for imposing the Lord's Supper as he does (1 Corinthians 11:23)?*
3. *In what way could this have been done?*
4. *What is the significance of Paul reminding the church of the night before Jesus died (1 Corinthians 11:23)?*
5. *Who should/should not take the bread and cup - why?*
6. *What does Paul say we should do before taking communion? What does this actually mean?*
7. *What are some of the consequences of abusing the Lord's Table?*
8. *Why should believers continue to take part in the Lord's Table?*
9. *In what ways does the sharing of the bread and the cup help believers today?*

1 Corinthians 11:23-32 – Answers to Questions

See Dr Ruckman's commentary *The Books of First and Second Corinthians* pp 105, 234-241, 261-262, 461-463, *The Corrupt Catholic Cult* and *The Mass* both by Dr Ruckman and the *Ruckman Reference Bible* pp 1234, 1289, 1522-1523, 1547 for detailed comments and additional information.

1. *What is the background to the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-32?*

The background is in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22. By inspection, 1 Corinthians 10:31 was being violated.

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Besides the wrong behaviour on the part of some church members, violation of 1 Corinthians 10:31 by failing to glorify God is also why Paul admonishes the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:17.

“Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.”

2. *What authority does Paul claim for imposing the Lord's Supper as he does (1 Corinthians 11:23)?*

The Lord Himself according to 1 Corinthians 11:23 ***“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.”***

“The Lord's supper” 1 Corinthians 11:20 is part of what Paul terms ***“my gospel”*** Romans 2:16, 16:25, 2 Timothy 2:8 that consists of the entire Pauline revelation that, in the letters to churches and Christian individuals, consists of the essential authoritative doctrines of Christian belief. ***“My gospel”*** is one of ten gospels to be found in ***“the new testament”*** 2 Corinthians 3:6.

Paul received ***“my gospel”*** directly from the Lord Jesus Christ and in no way did it conflict with or lack anything that the other apostles taught.

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ...But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days” Galatians 1:11-18.

“And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain...But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me” Galatians 2:2, 6.

3. *In what way could this have been done?*

See answer to *Question 2*, noting that Paul received ***“my gospel”*** independently of the other apostles but it was consistent with what they preached and taught Galatians 2:2, 6, with no lack of substance.

4. What is the significance of Paul reminding the church of the night before Jesus died (1 Corinthians 11:23)?

Matthew 26:26-28 that took place the night before the Lord died is the basis for the description of communion that Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

It should be noted in passing that the bread was unleavened bread and the cup’s contents were unfermented new wine. Those are the proper elements for communion.

“Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?” Matthew 26:17.

“But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” Matthew 26:29.

Note Paul’s exhortation with respect to unleavened bread.

“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” 1 Corinthians 5:8.

The Corinthians were also pleasing themselves at **“the Lord’s supper”** 1 Corinthians 11:20, 21 in direct contradiction to how the Lord Jesus Christ acted on the night before He died.

Paul therefore exhorts believers according to the Lord’s example.

“Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me” Romans 15:2-3*

*With Isaiah 50:6 **“I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting”** and Matthew 26:67 **“Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands”** and Matthew 27:31 **“And after that they had mocked him, they...led him away to crucify him.”**

The Lord could have pleased Himself by praying for deliverance but He sought to fulfil the scripture instead **“for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name”** Psalm 138:2.

“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” Matthew 26:53-54, the scriptures being passages such as Psalm 22, Isaiah 53.

5. *Who should/should not take the bread and cup - why?*

Note first that Judas was present when the first communion was taken.

“The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said” Matthew 26:24-25.

The only ones *now* who should take the bread and the cup are those that do so *worthily*, in contradistinction to Judas.

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” 1 Corinthians 11:27.

To take the bread and the cup *unworthily* brings down God’s judgement on the individual, to the point of making the individual sick and even killing him.

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” 1 Corinthians 11:29.

“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” 1 Corinthians 11:30.

“Discerning the Lord’s body” refers to the spiritual body of Christ i.e. the church, not the body of the Lord on the cross because Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:16 **“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”**

Note that Paul explains how **“the Lord’s body”** 1 Corinthians 11:29 that should be discerned in communion 1 Corinthians 11:27 is the body of believers and urges unity in that body.

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread” 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

“...there should be no schism in the body...the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” 1 Corinthians 12:25-27.

Note that 1 Corinthians 12:27 explains 1 Corinthians 3:16 where **“the temple of God”** is therefore a reference to each *individual* member of **“the body of Christ”** referred to in the plural in 1 Corinthians 3:16.

The term **“unworthily”** is mentioned twice in Paul’s explanation of communion, 1 Corinthians 11:27, 29. Paul has therefore attached great importance to taking the bread and the cup *worthily*, which is achieved by **“discerning the Lord’s body”** 1 Corinthians 11:29.

Not **“discerning the Lord’s body”** is to **“be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”** 1 Corinthians 11:27 such as Judas was with respect to the Lord’s body on the cross **“broken for you”** 1 Corinthians 11:24 in that Judas himself confessed **“Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood, And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself”** Matthew 27:4-5.

Judas reaped what he had sowed **“for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”** Galatians 6:7 because his body was broken and his blood was shed **“Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out”** Acts 1:18.

Judas had, it should be noted, confessed to a priest to no avail.

Not “discerning the Lord’s body” to “be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” is therefore a betrayal of “the body of Christ” by *not* earnestly desiring and focusing on in communion **“that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another”** 1 Corinthians 12:25 in addition to evincing gratitude for individual salvation with respect to the Lord Jesus Christ **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins”** Colossians 1:14.

Not earnestly desiring and focusing on in communion **“that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another”** 1 Corinthians 12:25 can therefore lead to a physical body and life that is broken and forfeit like that of Judas, Acts 1:18, 1 Corinthians 11:30.

To take the bread and the cup *worthily* is “discerning the Lord’s body” in earnestly desiring and prayerfully focusing on in communion **“that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another”** 1 Corinthians 12:25 in addition to evincing gratitude for individual salvation with respect to the Lord Jesus Christ **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins”** Colossians 1:14.

No saved individual would want schism in his own family. Consider:

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” Ephesians 5:25, 28-30.

God desires that a local body of believers should have that same kind of oneness *in heart and mind* and strive to achieve and sustain it.

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” Philippians 2:1-2.

To take the bread and the cup *worthily* in “discerning the Lord’s body” is to discern that **“being of one accord, of one mind”** should be the reality for a local body of believers *because it is already true spiritually*.

“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” Romans 12:5.

That is why Paul wrote his last words to the Corinthians as he did.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” 2 Corinthians 13:14. The oneness of “the body of Christ” 1 Corinthians 12:27 is there emphasised again as a *spiritual* oneness.

Note that 1978, 1984, 2011 NIVs cut out the words “the” from “the innocent blood” Matthew 27:3 as does the NKJV, “Take, eat” 1 Corinthians 11:24, “broken” 1 Corinthians 11:24, “unworthily” 1 Corinthians 11:29, “Amen” 2 Corinthians 13:14 thereby subverting “the communion of the Holy Ghost.”

6. What does Paul say we should do before taking communion? What does this actually mean?

Paul urges in 1 Corinthians 11:28 **“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”**

It means applying 1 John 1:9 **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”** individually and 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 Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”** collectively to ensure “no schism in the body” i.e. again emphasising oneness in heart and mind.

It means not harbouring un-confessed sin **“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”** Proverbs 28:13 and not harbouring unresolved resentments e.g. **“I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord”** Philippians 4:2. **“Presumptuous sins”** Psalm 19:13 of that nature can cause sickness and schisms 1 Corinthians 11:30, 12:25.

7. *What are some of the consequences of abusing the Lord’s Table?*

See *Question 5* and remarks on 1 Corinthians 11:29, 30.

8. *Why should believers continue to take part in the Lord’s Table?*

It strengthens **“discerning the Lord’s body”** for a local body of believers and therefore in turn strengthens **“being of one accord, of one mind”** as a present heart and mind reality for that body in that already **“we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another”** Romans 12:5.

See *Question 5* and remarks on Ephesians 5:25, 28-30, Philippians 2:1-2, Romans 12:5.

See *Question 9* for further details.

9. *In what ways does the sharing of the bread and the cup help believers today?*

“Being of one accord, of one mind” in a local body of believers should help:

- *The body’s prayer life*, as in the case of a husband and wife **“being of one accord, of one mind” “that your prayers be not hindered”** 1 Peter 3:7
- *The body’s doctrinal purity and unity for spiritual growth* **“nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine”** 1 Timothy 4:6. Lack of sound doctrinal unity resulting in and from spiritual immaturity was a problem in Corinth **“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you”** 1 Corinthians 11:18-19. This was of course the church that was abusing spiritual gifts, especially tongues, 1 Corinthians 14.
- *The body’s consistent care for one another*. See *Question 5* and remarks on 1 Corinthians 12:25, Ephesians 5:25, 28-30, Philippians 2:1-2, Romans 12:5 and *Question 6*.
- *The body’s good testimony to outsiders and its continued existence as an independent body of believers* **“That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing”** 1 Thessalonians 4:12
- *The body’s longsuffering endured with right-doing in “the will of God” according to “the communion of the Holy Ghost”* 2 Corinthians 13:14. **“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise”** Hebrews 10:36 and **“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator”** 1 Peter 4:19.
- *The body’s “hope” that “we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast”* Hebrews 6:19 for the Lord’s Return. **“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come”** 1 Corinthians 11:26.
- *The body’s consistent witness even in the face of opposition*. **“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake”** Philippians 1:27-29.

See also 2 Timothy 3:12, not a promise this writer would wish to claim but one way or another will come to pass in *“the present distress”* 1 Corinthians 7:26.

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

Postscript: The Lord prays for His own ***“being of one accord, of one mind”*** Philippians 2:2:

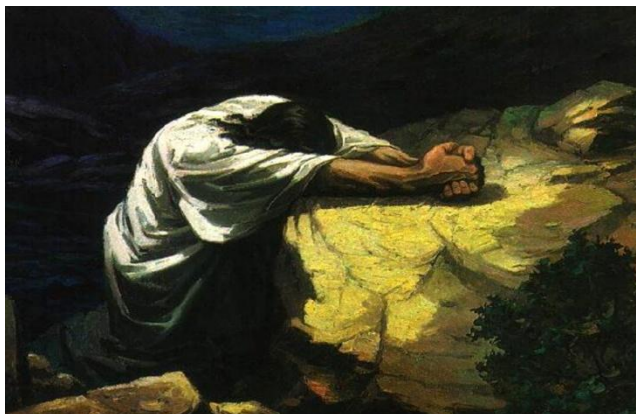
“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are” John 17:11.

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” John 17:21.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one” John 17:22.

“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” John 17:23.

For anyone seeking to be one with the Lord Jesus Christ:



“Father, the hour is come” John 17:1

www.knowing-jesus.com/jesus-prayer-of-intercession-john-171-26/



“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”

John 14:6

billsblogabout.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/the-ignorant-fishermen-blog-praying-for.html