

Intro

Welcome back to another week of small groups. We only have a few more weeks of this series, and so I hope it has been a help and an encouragement to you this summer.

If you have your Bibles, turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. 1 Corinthians chapter 11 is where we'll be at this evening. As you know, in this series called *Maintenance Required*, we are basically walking directly through 1 Corinthians and pointing out the different issues that they, as a church, were dealing with. And we're not pointing them out to trash the Corinthian church or to make us, as a local church, feel like we're failing in all the same areas and make us feel terrible. That's not the goal of this series. But we're pointing out these issues to help serve as warning lights for us as Christians to heed and ultimately avoid these same issues in our own lives.

And so I hope that, so far, this *Maintenance Required* series has helped you maybe point out or identify some issues of your life that need some attention or some "maintenance."

Today we're gonna focus on more of a negative issue, and one that's more specific, and it's the issue of thoughtlessness towards the Lord's Supper.

Identifying the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a very well-known practice within churches and religious groups today. Christians practice it, and even Catholics within Catholicism practice it, although they view it incorrectly for what it truly is for.

But the Lord's Supper is a fairly well-known topic today. But even though it's well known, it's still important to identify what it is. In essence, We know the Lord's Supper to be a practice to remember Christ and His sacrifice on the cross for us. And we'll cover that in a little more detail in this lesson.

But now, knowing the purpose of the Lord's Supper, it's important to note that the way we approach it and practice it matters greatly.

And we're gonna see in this passage how the way the Corinthian church approached this matter was completely incorrect. They were being thoughtless towards the way they approached the Lord's Table, and in doing that they ended up being thoughtless towards one another in the church and towards God Himself when it came to how they approached it.

Defining Thoughtlessness

And so the question, firstly, is, what is thoughtlessness? Is it just forgetting something? Is it approaching something without being prepared?

I like the way this explanation says it: Thoughtlessness isn't just forgetting to bring something; it is an oblivious, careless approach that acts without thinking about God or others.

A definition of it is being careless, rash, acting without proper planning and attention.

An example of someone being thoughtless or careless: I don't know if you've ever seen any of the *Scrooge* movies or shows. There have been many remakes of it, but one of the main points of the story is Scrooge who is extremely thoughtless, careless, about how his words and actions affect those around him. It's all about money and greed for him. And then he goes through a whole experience of learning and dreams and ends up being changed from his old self. He goes from being thoughtless to thoughtful towards people. He's generous and has care for people.

This is a silly illustration to help us visualize this idea of what thoughtlessness is—an oblivious approach to something. And this is exactly what the Corinthian church was doing when it came to approaching the Lord's Supper.

Read with me in 1 Corinthians 11. We're gonna start by reading verses 17-22, where we're gonna see The Wrong Way the Corinthians partook in the Lord's Supper.

The Wrong Way to Partake in the Lord's Supper - V. 17-22

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.

18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

The first issue Paul points out, in regards to their approach to the Lord's supper, is they were creating divisions between each other.

They Created Division

Verse 18, Paul says, "For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it."

And so the question is, what were these divisions being created? The first thing is they had divided groups based on socioeconomic status.

They Divided Church Members Based on Socioeconomic Status

Paul is pointing out to them, saying, "Hey, when you guys come together for the Lord's Supper, you're creating socioeconomic divisions instead of having unity as a local church."

As I did some research on what these divisions looked like, commentaries explained that these divisions looked like wealthier members turning this time into an occasion for a private banquet for themselves rather than a unified, Christ-honoring meal. In the earlier church context, the Lord's Supper was often celebrated in the context of a shared fellowship meal. So, the wealthier members would arrive earlier and would gather in dining rooms to "share" in this communion, while poorer members, slaves, and laborers would have to come later after a workday, and they often would be left out and unable to join in the meal. There was a segregation between rich and poor.

They Viewed It as a Feast to Indulge Their Flesh Rather Than a Remembrance

Secondly, another thoughtless pattern the Corinthians had towards the Lord's Supper is they treated the Lord's Supper like a feast for themselves rather than a reflective time of remembrance. When they came together, not only were they divided by social status, but it was all about them and their pleasure. Paul indicates in verse 21 how some of them were getting drunk. This is how the Corinthians were viewing what the Lord's Supper is.

The author Mark Dever says in his book, "Their suppers had become an orgy of selfishness rather than a feast of sacrificial love. Paul is suggesting to them that if they were really observing the Lord's Supper, they would be caring for each other in the way they chose to celebrate."¹

And so, in recap, two problems are being revealed here; you have the problem of division and selfish indulgence. The wealthy are gathering together while the poorer members weren't even there. And while the rich people are doing this in the name of the Lord's Supper—eating a ton of food, drinking excessively, and getting drunk, all for their own

¹ ¹ Mark Dever, *Twelve Challenges Churches Face* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 129.

benefit—they're ignoring the members of the church with lower status and treating the Lord's Supper as a social hour for themselves again, all while the poorer members are left on the outskirts, shamed and excluded.

And here's the worst part: they're doing all of this in the name of the Lord's Supper. This divisive, self-indulgent activity is being labeled as the institution that God designed and called the Lord's Supper. And what does Paul rightfully say to them in verse 22? "I DO NOT PRAISE YOU FOR THIS!" In other words, "I do not commend you for this. I don't give you my approval on this." This was not the design or purpose for the Lord's Supper.

Now I want to pause for a moment before moving on. Because it's easy to say, "How dare those Corinthians misuse and mistreat the Lord's Supper like that! How dare they use it for a social hour for themselves! Paul was right for saying, 'I do not praise you for this!'"

And it's easy to think that that is something we would never do. And although, yes, that's true, hopefully to a level for us, hopefully we're not getting drunk with wine and segregating our congregation while labeling it all as the Lord's Supper. I want us to understand that approaching the Lord's Table thoughtlessly can happen in many different ways. And we, if not careful, can fall into this trap of being thoughtless towards the Lord's Supper as well.

Now you might say, "How do you mean?"

If you remember thoughtlessness is simply an oblivious, careless approach that acts without thinking about God or others.

And so for us, it may not look exactly like it did in Corinth. It may not look like us getting drunk; But there are many other ways in which you and I can participate in a thoughtless and unworthy manner. Some examples to help us understand how we might be guilty of partaking thoughtlessly is partaking with unconfessed sin in our life.

Partaking with Unconfessed Sin in Your Life

Maybe there is bitterness or hate that you knowingly harbor towards a brother or sister in Christ, and you still choose to partake. Maybe there is idolatry or adultery that you have been indulging in that you haven't gotten right with the Lord and others. Maybe you have been unsubmissive to God's Word in an area you know you need to change it by the help of the Holy Spirit. Maybe the Holy Spirit has been revealing to you through God's Word an area of your life you need to change, and you've been rejecting it intentionally.

And you know you have these sins in your life, and yet you still, unrepentant of those sins, choose to partake in the Lord's Supper in and through your local church.

And, friends, I want to submit to us that that is being just as thoughtless and careless towards Christ's church and His institutions, like the Lord's Supper, as the Corinthians were. Another area we can be guilty of partaking thoughtlessly is when we partake with idolatry in our lives.

Partake While Living in the Sin of Idolatry

I know this kind of falls under the previous category of living with unconfessed sin, but I bring this one up specifically because this sin is such a problem in our American culture, and it seems to be so easily dismissed in Christians' minds today.

When we, as a missions team, went to Thailand, one thing we saw much of was all of the temples and golden statues of idols that people prayed to and worshipped. And when we think of idolatry, that's often what our minds go to. Idolatry is when someone worships a golden statue or pray to Buddha or some sort of offshoot of that. But we recognize that idolatry is so much more than that. Its placing anything in our lives above God and His kingdom. And it's something so rampant in our American culture today.

The sin of idolatry can so easily creep into the hearts and minds of those who claim to be believers in Christ. And, at the risk of sounding unkind, I think a lot of us can be guilty of living in this sin whether we want to admit it or not. to When we approach something like

the Lord's Supper and evaluate and we claim to be right with God, but yet we turn around and skip church a bunch so we can enjoy hobbies on the weekend or so the kids can be in the sports program on the weekends, we're in idolatry. When we choose to spend the majority of our money on everything we can gain in this life and give to the gospel sparingly, we're guilty of idolatry. And when we have this type of sin residing in our life, and we come to approach and partaking in the Lord's Supper as if we're all good with God, how are we acting any differently from the Corinthian church? How are we being any less thoughtless towards it? The answer is we're not. We're just as guilty of being thoughtless and careless towards the Lord's Supper.

And so my hope is that we wouldn't just look at how bad that Corinthian church was, but that we would evaluate our OWN hearts. That we would be willing to recognize ways we are being thoughtless towards partaking in and being a part of the Lord's Supper.

No matter what it may look like, whether it looks like the Corinthians looked like, getting drunk and being focused on themselves, or it looks like being in unrepentant sin, living in idolatry, whatever it may be; when we participate in the Lord's Supper with open obvious sin in our lives, we are being careless towards taking the Lord's Supper. Therefore, we are in just as much sin as the Corinthians are here. It might look different contextually, but it's still partaking in an unworthy manner. And that will put us in a very dangerous position spiritually. We're gonna see later on that there are consequences to approaching the Lord's Supper in a thoughtless manner.

And so now that we have addressed the wrongful ways the Corinthians and we ourselves can approach the Lord's Supper, Paul goes on to show us what the true purpose for the Lord's Supper is and how we are to approach it.

The Right Way to Practice the Lord's Supper - V. 23-26

See what verses 23-26 say. Paul explains what the Lord Jesus intended for this time of partaking. The Bible says,

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

This is the focus and purpose of the Lord's Supper.

The first thing, in verse 23, Paul says is that he received this from the Lord Himself. Basically, he's saying what the Lord's Table was made for, the purpose and meaning of it, originated from the Lord, not man's idea. In that statement alone, this shows us the seriousness of what the Lord's Table is because it wasn't created by man's ideas but by God's.

The Lord Himself instituted the Lord's Supper, and therefore it should be treated as such. If you remember in the Gospels, in Luke 22, Jesus broke the bread and passed the wine and said the famous line, "This do in remembrance of me." On that night Jesus established the purpose and value of the Lord's Supper for His disciples and for all believers. And this wasn't a lighthearted establishment that Jesus made. This wasn't some random, one-time-only event that Jesus did. No, it was something that Jesus established for His church then and in the future to continually practice with a purpose. I want to make a short note, When we approach what communion is lightly and thoughtlessly, we are disrespecting not man's institution, but the very institution that God put in place for us to partake in.

And so, knowing that, what is the purpose of why Christ established it? Paul answered it in what we just read.

It wasn't created for men to indulge their flesh like the Corinthians did, and it wasn't meant for us to take it lightly and flippantly. But, instead, the Lord's Table was established with a purpose of unifying the church together through remembering the sacrifice that initially brought them together—the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

It's there for us to remember that one night Jesus was betrayed by humanity and unjustly sentenced to a death we deserved. It's there for us to remember that Jesus had to be tried, beaten, and sentenced to death on a brutal cross in order to save us from our sins. The Lord's Table is for us to grieve our sinfulness that put Jesus on a cross and to rejoice that Jesus willingly did that for you and me.

This is the beautiful purpose of what the Lord's Supper is all about. And, to be direct here, how dare us come to such a time of remembrance with a lack of gravity or seriousness. How dare us partake with unconfessed sin in our lives or view it as something that's not that big of a deal. The Lord's Supper holds value in Christ, and we must take it seriously.

A quote from Mark Dever says this: "When we participate in the supper as a congregation, we build unity by renewing our covenant with Christ. The new covenant established by Christ's death is recalled by observing his supper and by repeated observance of it. Our churches are called to reflect Christ's character corporately, so when we partake, we pledge to God, to each other, and to the world that we are participating in this covenant. We renew our covenant with Christ together by his supper."²

The purpose of the Lord's Supper is not a social hour. For the Corinthians, it wasn't supposed to be a time to get drunk and treat it in a thoughtless manner. For us, it's not just another event we do as a local church here at Faith. It's not just another time-filler activity

² Dever, M. (2008). *Twelve challenges churches face*. Crossway.

that we have here, and it doesn't matter how we approach it as believers. No, it's a serious time created by God to remember what He has done for us and to remind ourselves of the new covenant that we have with God through Jesus and His sacrifice. So let's treat it as such.

The Consequence of Not Partaking Properly - V. 27-32

Because when we don't treat it as such, Paul shows us that there is righteous judgment that takes place when we choose to be thoughtless about this topic.

Paul continues in the passage. He lays out the reality that partaking in the Lord's Supper in a thoughtless manner, both for the Corinthians and us as believers today, has serious repercussions to it. Because the Lord's Supper is a serious matter, there are serious consequences upon those who mistreat it. Look what Paul points out in verses 27-32.

He says,

27 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.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Paul is very consistent and clear here that we should examine ourselves before we partake in this Supper. Because a thoughtless approach that takes the focus off of the broken body of our Lord brings guilt upon the person that does that.

He even says in verse 30, "For this cause (of being so thoughtless), for this cause many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep." The term *sleep* in that time often referred to people passing away or dying.

There are literally people physically dying as a direct result of God's judgment on them for mistreating the Lord's Table, and others are sick due to God's just judgment upon those who choose to be thoughtless towards the Lord's Supper.

One author expressed it this way: "The sense clearly is that God had sent among them bodily distempers as an expression of the divine displeasure and judgment for their improper mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper."³

This might seem somewhat odd in our day and time to see people face bodily disease as a direct result of God's judgment, but in the New Testament there are many accounts of this very thing happening. 1 Corinthians 5:5 says, "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Acts 13:11 records Elymas the Sorcerer being blinded by the Lord as a means of judgment. It says, "And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand."

And so it's very clear that the physical ailments the people in the Corinthian church were facing were not coincidental. They were very much due to God's judgment on their thoughtlessness towards the Lord's Supper.

But Paul doesn't just leave it there, he says if they would evaluate their hearts and change the thoughtless approach towards the Lord's Supper and begin to practice it the intended way, God's rightful judgment could cease. Because we recognize God's judgment is not a

³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible: 1 Corinthians 11*, Bible Hub, accessed July 23, 2026, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/1_corinthians/11.htm.

pointless type of judgment. God doesn't allow or bring upon sickness and suffering just because He wants to see us suffer for fun. Absolutely not.

It's not meant to be a forever condemnation upon us, but His judgment is Him chastening us so that we might not be consumed by this world. God loved the Corinthian church enough, and He loves us as His followers today enough, to not let us continue in our sinfulness.

And so, although there may be just judgment for choosing to be thoughtless towards the Lord's Supper, it is with the purpose to restore a believer back to a proper approach to it.

And so what do we draw from this, Friends, it's very clear from Scripture that God takes the institutions He has put in place very seriously. And He wants you and I, as His followers, to take them seriously as well.

I fear that it's easy to assume in our culture of churches today that this type of consequential judgment is something that happened to the church at Corinth, but it's not something that applies to us—almost like we're the exception to this. When, in reality, not placing the correct amount of seriousness upon what the Lord's Supper is and abusing it invites just as much corrective judgment upon any New Testament church as much as the Corinthians had.

So I don't say that to scare us, but to help us realize that we shouldn't just brush this off as no big deal.

There is great consequence to those who are thoughtless towards the Lord's Supper.

Another quote said this: "A church that practices thoughtless communion—retaining bitterness, ignoring the poor, and rushing through the elements—is inviting God's active, corrective discipline."

The Corinthians failed to properly practice this communion by viewing it as a social time for them to enjoy their own pleasures. And this reality should serve as a warning for us as a local church today.

Practicing it unworthily, as Paul would call it in verse 29, will lead to righteous judgment. When we partake either flippantly or with unconfessed sin in our hearts and lives, we are inviting God's discipline in our lives, and we are ultimately disrespecting the true purpose of what the Lord's Table is for.

Conclusion

And so, in conclusion, the application for us to pull from this text is, the Lord's Table is serious, and so it should be handled not with thoughtlessness but with thoughtfulness. So, how are you doing in that? When we partake as a local church, is it just done out of habit for you? Is it just another event or thing to get through at church? To be even more serious, do you have unconfessed sin in your life? Are you holding on to bitterness and anger when you partake?

Or, do we take time to reflect and correct areas of our lives that are sinful and approach it with thoughtfulness for what Christ had done for us?

You see, the whole point of this lesson is not to scare us into thinking that if we're not absolutely perfect when we take the Lord's Table, that we're gonna face terrible judgment. That's not it at all. We're never gonna be perfect. But the point that needs to be understood is that when we are thoughtless about it, when we participate in it with sin in our lives, bitterness, carelessness etc; , when it's just another non-important event that takes place at Faith Baptist for you, that's when damage and disobedience begins. That's what Paul was correcting the Corinthians about. It wasn't that they just had some struggles, but their heart was in the right place. No, they were completely reckless and careless about what it meant to practice the Lord's Table, and it was destroying them.

And so the call for you and me is to heed that warning and not do the same thing—to avoid such a careless, thoughtless approach. And, like I pointed out earlier, it doesn't take getting drunk and discriminating against the poor like the Corinthians to be thoughtless about it. You can be thoughtless about the Lord's Table well before you ever get to a point like that.

And so let's evaluate our hearts today and let's correct areas where we are being thoughtless in our approach towards the Lord's Supper.

At this time, we're gonna have some discussion questions, and I want us to be honest and reflect on these questions. And if you have struggled in this area, maybe you'd say, "Luke, I've participated in the Lord's Supper with unrepentant sin in my life. I've been thoughtless and careless about it." I want to encourage you that that is something you can change today. You can make it right with the help of the Holy Spirit.

I'll finish with this. Paul says in verse 33,

"Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another."

In other words, Paul is saying, when you come together as a church for the Lord's Supper, be united, or unified, together and, with thoughtfulness, remember and reflect on what Christ has done for us on the cross.

Let's be a church who, in unity, approaches the Lord's Supper, remembering what He has done for us with thoughtfulness and intentionality.