

SWEET COMMUNION

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In the 11th chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses the *manner* in which we take communion. He urges thoughtfulness and patience toward others over self-satisfaction, and recognition and honor of God's presence.

We do well to consider our attitude, our frame of mind, when we approach God. But not as you might think.

It is common to approach God when we feel good about ourselves. We like to put our best foot forward. Speak in poetic language. Recount our good deeds and our good intentions. Generally, make a good show for Him. What we don't realize is that He sees right through that charade and has no interest in it. None.

Just the way you see through it when someone approaches you with abundant compliments and syrupy sweet talk. Alarms go off and shields go up. "I'm about to be conned," you warn yourself.

Communing with God is not merely a ritual, a ceremony, or an act. It is a heart connection. This is why Jesus insisted that it involve actively remembering Him.

What Communion Requires

Communion demands honesty, transparency, vulnerability.

Honesty means no airs. No exaggeration. Just frank speech.

Transparency means no pretense. No faking. Just the real you.

And vulnerability means no hiding. No coverup, no dodging. Openness. Simplicity.

Worship, the Same

Worship, one element of communion, also demands honesty, transparency, and vulnerability.

For instance, you cannot meaningfully worship God while you are at odds with another person.

Matthew 5:23 “So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴ leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

Right relationships precede (and prepare us for) real worship.

Prayer, the Same

Prayer, another aspect of communion, also demands honesty, transparency, and vulnerability.

Pretentious prayers are ineffective, as Jesus illustrated:

Luke 18:10 “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! ¹² I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’

¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Not flowery. But simple and effective.

Mark 11:25 But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.”

And then, there is Peter’s clear warning:

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands... If you don’t treat [your wife] as you should, your prayers will not be heard.

Service, the Same

Service is what we do in the name, or for the sake, of Christ, whether it is religious work, secular work, or leisure activity.

Do you see your work as worship? Here’s how you can:

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves (employees), obey your earthly masters (employers) with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. ⁶ Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. ⁷ Work

with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.⁸ Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

Colossians 3:22 Servants (employees), obey in everything those who are your earthly masters (employers), not only when their eyes are on you as pleasers of men, but in simplicity of purpose [with all your heart] because of your reverence for the Lord and as a sincere expression of your devotion to Him.

It All Comes Down To Trust

Honesty, transparency, and vulnerability **require trust in God**—that He is with you, that He has your back, that He governs your future (the ultimate outcome of your life).

God Is With You

His name is Immanuel, and He will never leave you.

Acts 7:9 “These patriarchs (the eleven brothers of Joseph) were jealous of their brother Joseph, and they sold him to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him¹⁰ and rescued him from all his troubles.

If you are familiar with Joseph’s story, it was anything but trouble-free, yet we are told, “*God was with Him.*” When his brothers taunted him, God was with him. When he was thrown into a pit, God was with him. When he was sold as a slave, God was with him. When he was assaulted by the king’s wife, God was with Him. While he languished in prison, God was with him. It may not have been clear at the time, but it became abundantly clear in time. The same God is with you. Now.

(The angel said to Joseph, husband of Mary:)

Matthew 1:23 “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’ ”

That is God’s name. You can always count on Him to be near. Usually, just a prayer away.

God Has Your Back

He will never abandon you. He is your Provider, your Protector. Jesus emphasized this:

John 14:15 “If you love me, obey my commandments.¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you.¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth.

Hebrews 13:5 **God has said, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.”** (Quoted from Deuteronomy 31:6,8)

This unfailing presence, this careful watchfulness, this constant availability, is typical of God’s faithful love. For you.

His name is Jehovah-Jireh, which means “seeing the need, He provides.” His provision is always appropriate, in keeping with His plan for your life.

Psalm 115:9 **O Israel, trust the Lord! He is your Helper and your Shield.**

¹⁰ **O priests, descendants of Aaron, trust the Lord! He is your Helper and your Shield.**

¹¹ **All you who fear the Lord, trust the Lord! He is your Helper and your Shield.**

We cannot know how much God has protected us FROM. He is your shield.

God Governs Your Future

Will not permit anything to overthrow you.

1 Corinthians 10:13 **The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure.**

Your troubles may feel unique, but they’re not. That’s not to minimize them, but to assure you that others have been where you are, and God is not caught off guard.

In fact, He is so in tune with your circumstances, that He will NOT ALLOW anything that is too much for you.

With every test, He will show you a way out—not necessarily an immediate escape hatch, but the assurance of an end to the test, because if you know it won’t last forever, you will be enabled to endure it. Enduring is how we grow spiritually—faith grows, compassion grows, patience grows, peace grows.

God is able to work all things together for your good, and He has promised to do so. This we know.

Romans 8:28 **And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.**

What Is “The Ultimate Outcome”?

It may not be tomorrow, or even next year, but the ultimate outcome of your faith is to be completed in Christ (conformed to His image), sharing God’s glory!

Romans 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Colossians 3:4 And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all His glory.

And that is ultimate communion.