

Tables of Fellowship 01
The Table Of Communion
By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. For the remaining Sundays in April, I want to talk about fellowship

1. I have titled the series, “Tables of Fellowship”
 - a. we’re going to focus on three different kinds of tables and the activities that happen around them
 - b. but the real topic is fellowship
2. I want us to talk about fellowship because it is such an important topic
 - a. the word is used a lot but we don’t always experience what the word implies
 - b. we might think we’re experiencing fellowship when we’re not, and that sometimes comes as a surprise to people
3. I’ll tell you something I have come to believe after preaching for many years
 - a. fellowship is one of the important keys to a healthy church
 - b. fellowship will testify to the doctrine of the church
 - c. fellowship will testify to the spiritual health and vitality of the church
 - d. fellowship testifies to the properly functioning body that the church is supposed to be
 - e. fellowship is the measure of whether a church is living or dying
 - f. fellowship determines the evangelistic zeal and success of the church
 - g. fellowship reflects whether the relationships of the members of a church are truly loving as Jesus wants them to be
4. Show me a church where the fellowship is real, vibrant, strong, healthy, and more, and I’ll show you a church that will do more than survive, it will flourish – the opposite is also true – where fellowship dies, so a church dies

B. The table is a powerful event, and is strongly associated with fellowship

1. In the Bible, the act of sharing food around a table is one of the most common, and most powerful, ways of sharing life and connecting people in a relationship with one another, and with God
 - a. there are literally all kinds of examples
 - 1) family meals were important to Jewish households
 - 2) feasts were ways to celebrate God’s blessings
 - 3) meals of hospitality provided both food and encouragement
 - 4) there is no doubt but that the sharing of food around a table was a significant event for God’s people

b. Sharing meals was one of the first practices of the early church
Acts 2:46 (NASB95) - 46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

2. Modern Christians have largely lost the importance and significance of the table event where people sit down together and share food
- a. we lose on two accounts
 - 1) we've lost the importance of the table event
 - 2) we miss the impact of the fellowship enjoyed around the table

C. In these lessons, I hope to challenge us all to see what the Bible says about fellowship and the table, and then challenge us to do something positive to restore the place of the table in establishing and encouraging fellowship among us

I. THE LORD'S TABLE IS A TABLE OF FELLOWSHIP

A. Let's read some passages that tell us about the Lord's Supper

1. Matthew 26:26–29 (NASB95)

26 While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;

28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

2. John 13:1-20 (read text)

- a. the Lord's Supper was begun in the context of the Passover meal, around a table
- b. it's all about fellowship – things held in common with one another, and shared with one another
- c. it's about relationship – 13:1 tells that Jesus loved his own who were in the world and loved them to the end
- d. it's about serving one another – so Jesus took the towel and basin of water and washed the feet of his disciples
- e. it's about teaching the disciples to love one another like Jesus loved
- f. it's even about broken fellowship, for it was during the meal that Satan put it in Judas' heart to betray Jesus

B. If you don't see that this is a table of fellowship, you will never really understand what we call the Lord's Supper

1. It is indeed a memorial feast in which we remember the sacrifice of Jesus
2. But it is far more than that, with serious implications about who we are, and how to be followers of Jesus

II. WHERE FELLOWSHIP IS MISSING, THE LORD'S SUPPER IS RUINED

A. 1 Corinthians 11:17–29 (NASB95)

17 But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. 19 For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. 20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, 21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you. 23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. 27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.

B. We need to pay attention to this problem at Corinth for it reveals something that will destroy the meaning of the Lord's Supper

1. 11:18 identifies the problem – division
 - a. here's a simple truth – where division exists, fellowship cannot
 - b. there can be no sharing together, no holding things in common, no mutual practice where the meaning equally affects every member
2. 11:20 reveals one of the practical results of the division in the church
 - a. it is not to eat the Lord's Supper
 - b. but that's what they were trying to do, but try as the might, if they were divided, they could eat bread and drink fruit of the vine and it's still not the Lord's supper
 - c. their division had turned the supper into something it was never meant to be
3. 11:27 is a warning meant to encourage a right manner of taking the Supper
 - a. the "unworthy manner" here is anything that works against what Jesus accomplished for every one of us
 - b. Ephesians 2:15–16 (NASB95) -- 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

C. The Lord's Supper is a table of fellowship

1. We all have the same Lord and Savior
2. We were all saved from our sins in the same way
3. We are all part of the one body of Christ
4. When we remember the sacrifice of Jesus, it's not one thing to one person and something else to another, it's the same thing
5. We hold in common, the body and the blood of Jesus Christ
6. To take the Lord's Supper is to proclaim the gospel – the one gospel
7. To take the Lord's Supper is to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters in Christ
8. To make the Lord's table anything other than a table of fellowship is to miss a great deal about what the supper teaches and celebrates

CONCLUSION

A. 1 John 1:1–4 (NASB95)

1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

B. I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that it concerns me that we might think just because we served bread and fruit of the vine, that we have necessarily taken the Lord's supper.

1. It wasn't true for Corinth, and it's not true for us if we allow anything to divide us from our brothers and sisters in Christ
2. Is there anything that's getting in the way of fellowship with your brothers and sisters?
3. You need to deal with that before the Lord's table can become the table of fellowship it was designed to be

C. Invitation