TITLE: Communion

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Leadership Series

Book 16

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PREFACE

Welcome to the discipleship / leadership series. These little booklets were designed to give basic information concerning various topics about our Christian faith in Christ Jesus.

The purpose of this series is to stimulate thought and to foster a clearer understanding of discipleship and servant leadership. These booklets can be used as a discussion tool for personal study, family devotion, youth meetings or in cell groups. Our hope is that this information will stir the readers and encourage them to go deeper into personal research and study.

Our desire is that these booklets will be a blessing to the reader and a tool that can be shared with others as a gift of encouragement.

Please feel free to mail or e-mail us for more copies or to just write to us with any feedback concerning the content of these studies. We hope you enjoy this offering of knowledge and experience. We pray that Christ will draw you into an ever deeper personal relationship with Himself as you study.

Your servants in Christ,

Rev. Dr. James and Hkaw Win Humphries

And 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.

Acts 2:46

INTRODUCTION

Communion brings the disciple into a deeper fellowship with Jesus Christ. It personalizes what He did for us on the cross, causing us to remember and reflect on the covenants and promises that Christ has made to every disciple.

Communion also brings us together to examine ourselves, looking at how we are living our faith and commitment to Christ. It is a time for the Church body to minister to itself.

Before we go any further it would be helpful to define some key words that will give us greater insight into the subject of communion.

<u>Communion:</u> An act or situation involving sharing; possession in common; joint ownership; fellowship of members in a church. *Synonyms:* Fellowship, kinship, friendship, togetherness, harmony, understanding, connection, communication.

Remember: Have in or be able to bring to one's mind an awareness of (someone or something that one has seen, known, or experienced in the past) *Synonyms:* Recall, call to mind, recollect, think of think back to, look back on, cast one's mind back to, summon up, commemorate, pay tribute to, honour, celebrate, pay homage to, memorialize, keep alive the memory of.

These words are important for the disciple to understand and are foundational principles in the communion service. The more we grasp what communion means, the greater the blessing we will receive when we partake of it together with other believers.

Communion can also be known as a "Love Feast" or celebration. For the disciple it represents His deliverance from the curse of the Law, giving us freedom from sin and death. We are not to focus solely on Christ's death, but should rejoice in the victory that Christ achieved in the resurrection. Jesus now gives to us His grace and righteousness. We are full of hope and power through the shedding of His blood.

Let us look at a passage in Matthew to see what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples in the last few hours of His life.

"On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher say, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples." So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, He took His place with the twelve; ... While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it He broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then He took a cup, and after giving thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Matthew 26:17-20, 26-30

Matthew tells us that Jesus was coming to celebrate the Passover – something that He had done dozens of times. The hour had come and He sent the disciples ahead to make sure preparations were ready for what would turn out to be a life changing experience. This event would become one of the

emblems and foundation stones of the Church. It brought the head and body together for the very first time. The Jews followed a strict routine in celebrating the Passover and soon this symbol of the Old Testament would become a major event in the New Testament. Completing the Old Covenant, the disciples were building a foundation of walking in the New Covenant that Christ was birthing for them and the Church.

Just days or maybe even hours before, Jesus had taught the disciples principles of the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30) and the teaching concerning the Sheep and Goats (Matt 25:31-46). He knew that the people were plotting His death and told the disciples that one of His own would betray Him into the hands of man. In the upper room they reflected back to the days of Moses when God delivered them out of the hands of Egypt.

This time Jesus knew that the Passover was going to be different. He would become the Passover Lamb whose blood was to be shed for the remission of sins. He knew what lay ahead and what the Scripture had prophesied would take place. He also discerned that one of His own twelve disciples, whom He had walked and lived with for the last three years, would betray Him with a kiss. A kiss was a symbol that normally represented a deep friendship and love for one another.

As Jesus spoke, He shared with the disciples many word pictures. The Jewish people understood the meaning of these stories through the Hebrew Scripture and from their oral traditions. Each year as they celebrated the Passover they would reflect back on the stories and teachings that had been passed down. They would come together from all over to celebrate in Jerusalem what God had done for them hundreds of years before. It was a very special time of year for a Jew.

There were at least two key things to remember. The first would be ridding one's house of leaven bread. Leaven bread was bread made with yeast (causing bread to rise). Yeast represented sin and a little bit of yeast (like a little bit of sin) spoiled the whole loaf. They were to eat only unleavened bread. So symbolically they were to rid their homes and lives of sin (Exodus 12:14).

The second thing they had to do was kill a lamb without blemish or sickness, take its blood and put it on the mantel and doorpost of their houses (Exodus 12:1-13, 20). God was sending a death angel to kill all the first born sons of the land. This vow was told to Moses and Aaron, but the blood on the doorposts kept death from coming to them. It was also a sign that they had faith in God to look after them, take care of them and carry them through this very dark time.

During the time of Christ the Passover evening would be an occasion to gather together and eat as families, praying that God

would show His mercy and power over their enemies. The Passover was the door that allowed the people of Israel the ability to leave 400 years of bondage in Egypt and head on their exodus journey into the promise land (Exodus 13:21-22).

Jesus then explained to the disciples another thing that was to take place during this Passover weekend. He showed them that He would be the unleavened bread, the one without sin that would be broken for them. Jesus would be the one and only bread that they must partake from.

Secondly, He showed them that His blood would be shed like the Passover lamb and it would need to be spread over the mantel and doorpost of their lives. When the death angel would come he would not destroy them because their hearts would be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in the book of John, "I Am the bread of life." This symbol of bread would now become true for those who believed in Him. Reflecting back to the "Show Bread" in the tabernacle, it would also remind them of the manna that God sent from heaven, pointing to the bread that was eaten during the Passover. The Israelites knew that the bread was a symbol of God's presence with His people. There was a table in the

Tabernacle and Temple called "the Table of Show Bread" (Exodus 25:23-30).

In the same manner, blood was poured out or sprinkled on the mercy seat, a symbolic gesture from the life of Jesus. Blood was a covering that allowed them to come to God. He would see that they were clothed in Christ's righteousness and their sins had been forgiven.

Also, the blood represented a new covenant, a pledge and commitment between God and themselves. Today when we take and drink of the cup it causes us to remember the agreement made between ourselves and Christ. He becomes our Lord and Saviour and we become stewards of all that He gives to us. We also become His children, joint heirs of His Kingdom. He was poured out for many, so that all who come to Christ could have their sins forgiven. Our shepherd was laying down His life for His sheep (Psalm 23:1-5, John 10:11).

Then Jesus told His disciples that He would not eat or drink of the cup until He meets with us again in the Kingdom of Heaven. This picture points to the marriage supper of the Lamb, when the church is called up and we gather together with Christ for all eternity (Revelation 19:9). We will meet Him face to face and will be in His very presence. Incredibly, as Jesus was on His way to the

cross, He was thinking of and foretold of the day He would meet with us again.

Closing this time of communion with a hymn, they proceeded to the Mount of Olives. They went across the valley to the other side which overlooked the city of Jerusalem. This was Jesus' Prayer Mountain. It was where He had talked with His Father so many times before. He went there to wait for His accusers to come and take Him away as the Passover Lamb.

Now let us turn to how communion affects our lives today as disciples. Communion can be broken down into many pieces or areas. We are going to look at 12 key principles that will help the disciple to understand why we should come together and meet for communion. We also use the word "time" at the beginning of each principle. It takes time to enter into what God has for us during communion. It takes time to prepare one's heart to hear the voice of God. It takes time to prepare one's life for the giving and receiving that will follow.

Time of Communication:

This is a time of talking with God and having Him talk with us. It is also a place where we can share our hearts with other believers. As we do this, we will learn how to pray and help each other. Communication is something to be worked at.

Responsibility is not always on others to come to us in conversation; we can be the initiator.

Communion can also be used as an occasion to get things right with one another. Sometimes a person will not know that they have offended you unless you humble yourself in love and go to speak with them. James tells us that we are to be slow to speak and quick to listen. He wanted the disciples to make sure they understood what they heard before they replied back with an answer or a statement about something (James 1:19). The way we communicate will either tear people down or will build them up in the faith. Much of the church today is hurting because people are not being wise on how they speak. Many times our speech is of a gossip nature, which the Bible calls sin.

(2 Timothy 2:16)

Time of Companionship:

Friendship and companionship are being strengthened during communion. This fellowship builds stronger relationships with each other and with God.

Fellowship is defined as a friendly association, especially with people who share one's interests. It is a group of people meeting to pursue a shared interest or aim.

Synonyms: Companionship, friendship, mutual support, mutual respect, mutual liking, kindliness, cordiality, intimacy, association, closeness, togetherness, solidarity.

Coming together brings the family of Christ together. We can testify and share our hearts with one another.

Testimony means a written or spoken statement.

Synonyms: Declaration, assertion, affirmation, avowal, allegation, submission, claim,

It is a time of getting to know each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to build relationship with one another and with these relationships we grow stronger in the Lord. As well, we are told that if two or three work and pull together, the burden becomes lighter.

(John 15:13-15)

Time of Confession:

Confession is a time of communicating struggles and sin. Where possible you confess to others, but confession to God is mandatory. It brings us to a place of getting "our house" in order. Paul tells us that the way we deal with sin will have a direct bearing on our health and life with Christ. He also tells us that we

need to go to one another and correct things before we have communion with God or with other people. It is a time to clean the slate of sin, to be washed and start fresh.

(Psalm 32:5)

Time of Commitment:

This is a time to reflect on the commitment we have made to Christ. We invited Jesus in our hearts to be our Lord and Saviour – are we living that commitment as He has called us and shown us to do? When we surrendered to Christ, we were committing ourselves to His teaching and will for our lives. Paul states in Galatians, "It's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." We are saying "not my will, but God's be done." We are committing that Christ be Lord and Saviour in all areas of our lives, as well as becoming good examples and stewards of the Gospel message.

(Psalm 37:5, Proverbs 16:3)

Time of Remembering Our Covenant:

Communion is also a time of reflecting on the covenants that we have committed to. We have made agreements with God and they are signed and sealed with Jesus' blood. This covenant goes two ways – both binding us to God as well as God binding

Himself to us. The Bible is full of everlasting covenants that are made between God and His people. For example, the rainbow reminds us of God's promise to never again destroy the earth by a flood.

A key covenant was made with Christ's blood for those who believe – to have everlasting life and reign with Him in His Kingdom. This covenant moves us from death back to life. We were dead in trespasses and sin and now we can choose to have life eternal. Every time we take the cup and drink it we remember the covenant that was made between us and the Lord.

(*Hebrews 9:15*)

Time for Teaching and Training:

We are now under the law of Grace. Christ has boiled all the laws down to two – love God with all our hearts and love our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12:31). We are also bound to the full Gospel of Jesus Christ. He reminds the disciples that it is "an agreement now made between us." The Holy Spirit is also sent as a guarantor of this covenant between man and God, that He would teach us and comfort us (John 14:26).

Communion was a family event where children and young people could experience the occasion and ask questions about the

purpose. In Old Testament time they would pile rocks as a memorial of what God had done. With these reminders, they would teach others about God. Communion is our memorial and teaching time to share about God's love and mercy.

(Joshua 4:5-6)

Time of Obedience:

The Bible tells us we should have communion often until Jesus returns to receive His church. Communion services make all people equal no matter their culture, race or nationality. It is a time when the poor, the rich and the needy can come together under the headship of Christ. In Christ we are all part of the same family, brothers and sisters. We should not forsake the gathering as a body of believers. Christ has set the example of obedience and now we are to follow it.

(1 Peter 1:2)

Time of Ministry:

Communion allows the local church body to minister to each other through the gifts and talents God has given each one. We can encourage and speak into others' lives as well as plan ways of helping those in need. It is a good time to take up a love offering for the poor and minister to the needy. As well, we can corporately

worship and pray to God together. We can purpose to serve each other and put others ahead of ourselves.

(*II Corinthians 5:18-21*)

Time of Worship:

While meeting together we also need to spend time worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ. We are to give thanks through songs and hymns, lifting up our hearts in praise and thanksgiving for what He has done for us. Jesus did what we could never do. He brought back hope to the hopeless. He is to be the center of our focus and needs to be worshipped and praised for all His love and goodness to us. Foremost, we praise Him for coming and making a way of escape from bondage and death. When we see all that He has done for us, our hearts will want to praise Him.

(Psalms 95:6, Hebrews 10:1)

Time of Prayer:

Communion is also a time to come together in prayer, both corporately and individually. We are told if two or more come and agree together, God will hear us. We are to pray for God's direction not only for our own lives, but for the church that we are a part of. God wants to hear from us, direct us, give us wisdom and listen to the struggles we are facing. Jesus modeled prayer and

fasting as an example to us. Through Him we can see that prayer brings us into a deeper fellowship with God as well as others.

The more we pray the more wisdom and understanding we receive. This helps us as we journey though our lives. Also, as we humble ourselves in prayer He will lift us up. Prayer opens our spiritual eyes. Christ prayed with the disciples at least three times during the communion supper – once over the bread and another over the cup. Why? There are at least two reasons. First, for the emblems to be blessed by God. Second, that the disciples would see, hear and understand what Jesus was trying to show and teach them.

(I Corinthians 7:5, Philippians 4:6)

Time of Equality:

We are all brothers and sisters in the Lord. Communion reveals that we are equal in the eyes of God – healthy or sick, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, man or woman. We have all things in common as disciples of Christ. For example, those who have should give to those who do not have. Those who are strong are to help those who are weak. Those who are struggling or sick can be prayed for by members of the body.

(II Corinthians 8:13-15)

Time of Warning:

Paul warned the church in I Corinthians how they should act and behave during the communion service. It was to be a "Love Feast," a time of celebrating who Jesus Christ was and what He had done for us. If communion was not done with the proper focus, the results could affect our health and life. People need to set things straight in their lives before taking communion as we will be judged on how we take of it. Communion is like giving an offering – if we do not give with the right heart attitude, we will not receive a blessing from God.

What is your heart like? Judgment can be brought on by yourself if you don't examine your heart carefully. Before we come to the communion table, we need to learn respect and proper manners toward each other, serving one another. As we do these things, we are reminded that we are doing it unto Him (Acts 20:28-32).

(I Cor. 11:31-34)

CONCLUSION

All these points should help us see that Christ is the head of His body the Church (Col. 1:18) and we are His friends and servants ready to do His will. We fellowship and live our lives in

and around Christ. We live because of His resurrection power flowing through our hearts.

Communion, when performed, will give our children opportunities to ask questions, opening the door to sharing the Gospel of Christ with them. It becomes like the Old Testament memorial of piling stones at a place where God had moved for His people. Communion is a teaching time for generations to come.

We are called to come to a place of remembrance and reflection. Christ has done something for us that is so magnificent and freeing. He has broken His body and shed His blood, yet death had no victory. Christ rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us.

Many needs of the heart can be met through communion. It causes us to remember that this "Immanuel (God with us)," is dwelling in us (Matthew 1:23). He has sent the Holy Spirit to teach us how to walk and stand in Christ, as well as have the power to overcome the things of this world. Communion shows that Satan is a defeated enemy. He has no power over those who have Christ in their lives as Lord and Saviour.

Communion must be a part of every disciple's life. We are to remember His sacrifice and take a stand for Jesus Christ. It is fruit for others to see. Communion tells others that we believe in

the Gospel message that Christ rose from the dead and He is truly God Almighty, the Creator of all thing, both here on earth and in heaven. We can now celebrate our love for each other and for God. Let it bring to memory that we are children of God and a temple of the Holy Spirit. We remember we have committed to Christ to go out and fulfill the great commission of spreading the Good News to all that will hear. Communion is a time of responsibility and commitment to being wise in the things that we say and do. Body ministry becomes a result when the gifts of God are used to edify His people. It is a time for the church to rise up and shine for Jesus Christ in all its glory.

APPLICATION

What is my heart like when I am taking communion? What am I thinking on as we gather together? It is important that we come in a right attitude of heart and mind if we expect to receive a blessing from God or others. We should prepare ourselves in prayer before we go, making certain that all personal sin or sin against others has been dealt with.

Ask God to show you where you need to change and grow in your life. Confess and deal with what He says to you. He will give you the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this. We need to start walking and living as one who is a child of the King.

Remember you have been given a new life! You need to live it out in the fullest for Christ Jesus, your Lord and Saviour.

REFLECTION

What is my heart focusing on when I participate in the communion time? Is it truly the LORD'S supper? What does the breaking of bread and the cup symbolize for me as His disciple? Do I have any unconfessed sin that needs to be dealt with?

MEMORIZATION

And 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.

Acts 2:46

PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus,

Thank you so much for desiring to have fellowship with me. Lord, you gave to the church an ordinance where I could remember your death and resurrection. Thank you for giving to the church a way to have a deeper personal relationship with you. Also Lord I thank you that communion is to remind me of your commitment that you made through the shedding of your blood. Thank you too that through your broken body, I can have healing. Plus thank you that your death and resurrection helps me to know you and the power of the Holy Spirit in a deeper way. Jesus you truly are my Messiah and your ways have open up the door for me, so that I can enter into the Holy of Holies where I can find assurance, strength and peace.

Lord, communion shows to me over and over again how much you love me and are committed to me. Help me Lord to walk each day in communion with you, help me to keep my slate clear and clean before you. Thank you for all your help and love.

Your servant in Christ,	

Discipleship Reflections	

Discipleship Reflections	

Discipleship Reflections	
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Project L.A.M.B.S. International

Making disciples is the call and mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus urged the disciples to follow Him. He laid down before us the teaching and the walk that we need to follow with Jesus as our supreme example. It is imperative for every believer and the church to know that disciples are not born but they are made. For the church to be strong in the last days, we must be about the business of equipping the saints (disciples) for the work of service.

Dr. James Humphries has been ministering for over 40 years, and has experience in a variety of ministries including church planting, children's ministry, street ministry, youth ministry, camp ministry, pastoral work and directing and teaching in schools all over the world. In addition, he has taken part in traveling and ministering in the USA, Mexico, Ukraine, Myanmar, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Thailand and across most of Canada. He completed his B.R.E. and his M.A. from Briercrest, and his Doctorate of Ministry from Providence Theological Seminary in the spring of 1999.

In January 1996, Dr. James Humphries resigned as pastor of a local church with a vision to reach further abroad with the Word of God and to use it to train labourers for Christ (Matthew 9:36-38). He shared this with Dr. David Smith and Dr. Chuck Nichols of Providence Theological Seminary and they greatly encouraged Dr. James Humphries and his wife Irene to develop what God was laying on their hearts.

In March 1997, they traveled to Jamaica where they met several pastors who were very concerned about the need for training and disciplining their young people as leaders in their churches. Dr. James Humphries and Irene did not know this would be the starting point to an international ministry of discipleship training around the world known as Project L.A.M.B.S. International.

To date, Project L.A.M.B.S. has ministered in Canada, Myanmar, Ukraine, Africa, Jamaica, Mexico, Israel, Thailand, Japan, Dominican Republic, Naga Land and China. We offer over 30 different courses. Our graduates number over 1000, and are serving worldwide. Out of this group of graduates, we have equipped and trained directors, teachers and pastors who in turn are carrying out II Timothy 2:1-2 to an even larger group of people.

In 2002 it was discovered that Irene had cancer again. God gave Irene another three years and because of that she was still able to travel and teach in many different countries. Shortly after what was to be her last trip, Irene was hospitalized in February, 2005. A few weeks later she went home to be with her Lord and Saviour on March 9.

My second wife Hkaw Win was raised and trained mostly in the land of Myanmar. She has earned B.th, University Degree and a master of Divinity Degree in Myanmar. In April 2007 she finished a second Master's Degree at Providence Theological

Seminary in Christian Education. After July 1st, 2007 she headed back to Myanmar to head up the Christian Education Department for the Myitkyina Kachin Baptist Association and oversaw various ministries to 62 churches. After her four-year term was completed, she has been traveling and working as an interpreter and doing translations concerning various kinds of discipleship books and materials.

Over the last ten years we have lived in the countries of Myanmar and Thailand preparing a variety of resources in the Burmese (Myanmar) and Kachin Languages. To date we have published over 20 different kinds of books. Our goal is to equip and establish people as Disciples of Christ. Please pray for God's leading and wisdom. Our walk with Christ has taken us down many challenging pathways but we have seen the faithfulness of our Lord and Savior in every area. His grace has been sufficient.

Founder and Director,

Dr. James and Hkaw Win Humphries

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