

Ministry 3

Worship God and Celebrate the Lord's Supper

Learner is teaching in his home when Mr. Foolish and others in the congregation fall asleep. He sees two young people eating something during the Lord's Supper. The children look around restlessly. His wife Sara tells him afterwards, "I heard some of them talking when they did not know I was there. They argued about whom they should follow, Mr. Wise, Helper or you. One said to follow Mr. Foolish. An adolescent told another, 'It is boring. Learner always does everything, and it is always the same. It is a ritual that we do without thinking. That is why I brought something to eat!'"

Learner writes to Mr. Wise to explain what is happening. Mr. Wise sends this message back for Learner to read to the congregation, "My dear brothers and sisters. I must say the same thing to you that the apostle Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. It sounds like some of you are doing more harm than good when you meet together. There are divisions among you. It is not the Lord's Supper you are concerned about when you come together. Some of you eat during the Communion service, in front of others who are hungry. Do you not have homes for eating and drinking? We sin when we celebrate The Lord's Supper without taking it seriously. Have you have forgotten that God is present when you worship as a congregation?"



Exercise

Find in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34:

- What were the words of Jesus when He broke bread on the night He was betrayed?
- Against whom do we sin when we fail to honor the Body of Christ during the Lord's Supper?
- What do we examine before taking Communion so that we do not bring God's judgment on us?

Mr. Wise' letter continues, "Before I left, I taught you how to worship. I taught that God is present when we meet together. We worship God with everything we do."

Learner says, "I recall Mr. Wise' teaching. We worship in our prayer and praise, in teaching God's Word, in the Lord's Supper with confession to God of our sins, in giving, and in our fellowship. We do not do these things for entertainment. God gives us freedom to do these things in different ways. Paul told the Ephesians to make music to the Lord in our hearts with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Songs can be psalms, our own words or songs written by others. They are for giving testimony of God's great works and thanking Him. They are also for praising God's greatness and adoring Him."

Helper adds, "Mr. Wise also taught us how in the Old Testament God's people worshiped Him in special ways during their festivals. The Passover Festival lasted seven days with a special offering on each day and special assemblies on the first and last day. When Solomon built God's Temple, crowds came to Jerusalem to celebrate. They ate together and lived in booths. They stood to listen to the musicians singing and playing trumpets and other musical instruments. King Solomon prayed a special prayer for them, standing and then kneeling. Our prayers are like sweet smelling incense in the presence of God."

Learner again reads from the letter, "Here are some things your leaders can do to make your worship of God beautiful, like incense in His presence:

We will all grow more and the congregation will have many more new leaders who can start new congregations.”

Learner turns toward Helper. “I need your help. Please help me in the future to prepare our people better for the Lord’s Supper. And I need the help of all the rest of you, to improve different parts of our worship and of our other ministries. We will honor Christ by developing these ministries. Helper, I want you to help us with the music.” Learner assigns jobs to other people also, so that from then on he would not be the only one who leads worship.

After the service Learner tells Helper, “I am going to follow these instructions for our congregation. I realize now that I became careless. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, God severely punished the Corinthians who failed to respect the Body of Christ as they celebrated the Lord’s Supper. They failed to remember the terrible sacrifice that Jesus made. They failed to see that when we meet together we are the Body of Christ. God takes this mystery very seriously. So must everyone in your congregation. That is why Paul warned us not to make a full meal out of the celebration, because people become more interested in the food than in participating in the body and blood of Christ, as 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 says.”

Practical Work

- Ask those with musical ability and spiritual gifts for teaching or giving words of wisdom to participate by leading different parts of the worship.
- Encourage people to express their love for God in new and creative ways. Encourage those with musical talent to write songs of praise to God, using the local music style.
- Use the stories in this section to teach that God is present when we gather to worship Him.
- Plan for everyone to participate in worship in some way, besides singing, including the children.

Help people who lead the different parts of worship to prepare beforehand.

- Pray in preparation.
- Ask people ahead of time to help you with different parts of the worship.
- Help everyone plan their part carefully beforehand.
- Arrange for everyone, including children, to participate in different ways.
- Hold festivals to celebrate special events, such as the Birth of Christ, His Death and Resurrection.”

They discuss these things for a few minutes, then Learner continues to read the letter: “As the writer of Hebrews says, ‘Long ago God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, He has spoken through His Son, Jesus, reflects God’s own glory, and everything about Him represents God exactly. After He died to clean us from sin, He sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand in heaven. When we worship God, we honor Jesus by praying in His name, teaching His words and proclaiming His death in the Lord’s Supper. We take care of the needs of His body, the congregation, through giving and fellowship.’”

Several say, “Amen!” and Learner finishes the letter:

“When you gather to worship God together and take the Lord’s Supper, you partake of the body and blood of Christ. You proclaim His death. You enter into the very presence of God. If you do not realize this, you dishonor the body and blood of Christ. The Old Testament shows us how important the shed blood of Christ is.”

Learner says, “Helper, please tell the story of The Passover that we studied together, about how to enter the presence of God.”

Exercise

Find in Exodus 12:21-42 how God freed His people from slavery in Egypt:

- Who died in the middle of the night?
- What saved the Israelites from losing their firstborn sons?

- What happened after the firstborn Egyptians died, to enable the Israelite slaves to go free?
- How were the Israelites to remember for all generations this liberation from slavery?

After the meeting, Learner and his brother Helper study Bible passages that Mr. Wise listed for them, about the Old Testament sanctuary and worship. Learner asks Helper, "Please teach about it next week."

When Helper begins teaching everyone pays close attention. He sings a song that he wrote for the occasion about the blood of the Passover lamb painted on each side of the doors. He explains, "In the Old Testament, the Jews who loved celebrated Passover every year. They remembered how God used blood and the death of firstborn sons to free them. It was an example to show us how God's Son would liberate us from slavery to sin with His blood. This is explained in The Earthly Copy of the Heavenly Tabernacle in the book of Hebrews."



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Exercise

Read Hebrews 9:1-26 to find what Helper teaches:

- What things were in the first, outer room of the sanctuary?
- What things were in the inner, most holy place?
- What did the High Priest do once a year to cover his own sins and the sins of the people?
- How did God's Son secure our salvation forever?

Helper asks the people, "Do you have questions?"

One asks, "What was it like to worship in the Old Testament?"

"Mr. Wise explained this. In ancient times, people took a lamb or a bull when they went to worship. They laid hands on it to confess their sins; the priests slit its throat. It was messy. The blood sacrifice foretold the death of Jesus, whose blood atoned once forever, for all the sins of the world. Learner, can you help me explain this?"

Learner adds, "The Holy Place of the Temple had a lamp stand, a table and holy bread. Behind a curtain in the Most Holy Place there was incense and the Ark of the Covenant. The High Priest entered there once a year with blood to cover his sins. When Jesus died, the curtain was ripped open, and Jesus entered God's presence as our High Priest. His blood takes away our sin and saves us once for all time. Now we enter freely into God's presence, into the Most Holy Place, and we offer our prayers like incense to Him. We are in the presence of Christ when we break the holy bread at the Lord's Table. He is present when we drink the cup of the new covenant in His blood. He promised that when two or three are gathered in His name, He is present."



Caregiver says, "I understand now that I have not recognized Christ's body when we served the Lord's Supper. I had forgotten that we enter right into God's presence when we worship together. I think we all need to improve our attitude in worship."

- Learner comments, "Paul also makes it clear in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 – 14 that one leader is not to do everything. As many as want to do so are to take an active part in the worship in some way. From now on, I will share my leadership responsibilities with others. I will help all of you who want to participate more to do so."