

Day 44: Self-Examination

Today's Reading

1 Corinthians 11:27-34

Devotion

"Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup."

1 Corinthians 11:28

Many churches have different customs for celebrating the Lord's Supper. Some churches celebrate this sacrament weekly, and others do it less often. Some of these also urge members to engage in a process of preparation during the week before communion. A preparatory litany is read, and members are challenged to examine themselves so that they do not take communion "in an unworthy manner."

The examination is not meant to determine worthiness, because none of us are worthy. It is meant for careful self-reflection on the manner in which to take communion. The Lord's Supper is a holy meal, in which we remember the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In this sacrament God transfers the work of Calvary into our lives. This is also where the benefits of our victory over Satan and this world and the forgiveness of our sins are proclaimed.

If we take what is holy with an unrepentant heart, then we engage this meal in an "unworthy manner." The examination means that we treat the Lord's Supper for what it is, a connecting point between us and Calvary. The sacrament is meant to bring life. The next time you take communion, be sure to think about its deep meaning and the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for being "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". Forgive us if we have dishonoured you by downplaying your sacrifice on our behalf. We pray in your name. Amen.

Day 45: Gifted

Today's Reading

1 Corinthians 12:1-6

Devotion

"Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed."

1 Corinthians 12:1

These opening verses of chapter 12 are foundational to the rest of this chapter. In the introduction to this all-important section on spiritual gifts, Paul contrasts the Corinthians' religious past with their spiritual transformed present as Christians, thereby affirming that everyone who confesses Jesus as Lord is directed by the Holy Spirit. This initial affirmation heads off any claim that some are more "spiritual" than others on account of their showing evidence of possessing the more "electrifying" or "exciting" spiritual gifts. He goes on to make the following three points in the second half of this passage:

1. God is experienced in a variety of ways, and divine gifts should be expected to be multi-faceted
2. All spiritual gifts come from the same divine source
3. Our understanding of spiritual gifts should be broad enough to encompass humbler forms of expression. Everyday acts of service, which may seem less spectacular than some other manifestations of the Spirit, are no less a sign of the Spirit's working in them

Which of these three truths do you need to be reminded of today? How good is our God that he gives gifts to His children!

Prayer

God, before we delve into a part of this book that explores spiritual gifts, we want to first acknowledge and thank you – the gift giver. May we never be so preoccupied with the gifts that we forget to deflect all the glory back to you, the giver of the gifts. For if the gifts are good, how much better is the source of these gifts! Amen.

Day 46: Spiritual Gifts for Everyone

Today's Reading

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

Devotion

"To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

1 Corinthians 12:7

God has made us diverse in a variety of ways. The 7.3 billion humans alive today differ in age, intelligence, ability, ethnicity, culture, personality, gender, vocation, interests, and much more.

1 Corinthians 12 says that God gave his people a variety of spiritual gifts including wisdom, faith, healing, and speaking in tongues. Other Scripture passages mention other gifts. Remember each person receives gifts. The Spirit "distributes them to each one, just as he determines."

Though we can affirm this truth with our heads, we have trouble living it out. We must learn to see that all people have gifts from the Spirit, including people like these:

- The woman who constantly talks about her aches and pains whenever you see her.
- The homeless man who rarely showers and sits in the back at church
- The refugee family who always keep to themselves at church
- The child with autism who can't sit still

We hold the gifts of some people in high esteem, and we question whether some other people have gifts at all. However, God esteems each of us and the gifts he gives. To see each other as God sees us, we must know that God gives spiritual gifts to every believer.

Whose spiritual gifts are you not seeing? Will you make it a matter of prayer to accept others as God sees them?

Prayer

Infinitely gifted God, thank you for distributing your gifts among all believers. Open my eyes to see the gifts you give to each one. Amen.

Day 47: Not Alone

Today's Reading

1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Devotion

"You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

1 Corinthians 12:27

God said it is not good for man to be alone. Loneliness can be a terrible bane. So God made us male and female, to add balance and spice to life. God made marriage for mutual companionship and mutual help – especially since opposites attract.

Yet opposites can eventually irritate each other too. So love and respect for each other's strengths and forbearance of each other's weaknesses are necessary for it all to work.

But whether God has called us to be married or single, there is another community that soothes our loneliness: the church of Christ. Yet some of the same dynamics come into play there as in married life. In the church we are one body, but each person is different. Jesus commanded us to love one another. That's a tall order! Don't break the unity of the Spirit and leave the fellowship, or you will be alone, as Adam was before Eve came.

Use your talents together to glorify the God who calls us to be like a light in darkness to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. Patiently learn to work together in the church; listen carefully to each other. Don't leave in a huff when things don't go exactly the way you like. The church brings deep companionship and balance to our lives as few other things can.

Prayer

Lord, everything in our society conspires to tear us away from the church, the body of Christ. Help us to be faithful members of your body. Amen.

Day 48: God's Good Purpose for You

Today's Reading

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:3

Devotion

"I will show you the most excellent way."

1 Corinthians 12:31

The Bible tells us that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). God's good purpose for all Christians is that we be "conformed to the likeness of his Son" (Romans 8:29). Christians are destined to reflect Jesus' perfection both in their character and in their body. If you have already accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, then God's Spirit is already at work in you "to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13). This purpose will be completed at Jesus' return.

Christians make progress toward becoming like Jesus when they strive to love others as he did. God is both the source and the Christian's model of this kind of love, for "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Christians can love this way because "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5).

When you use your gifts to make yourself appear superior to others, you are not gaining anything in the Christian life. Yet when you use your gifts to build others up, you are becoming more like Jesus!

Prayer

Father, thanks for your good purpose for me; thanks, Lord Jesus, for modelling God's love to me; O Holy Spirit, continue to deepen God's love in me, until I reflect Christ's perfection. Amen.