

# Fellowship With Christ and His Body

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of fellowship with Christ and His body, highlighting the need to understand the vertical and horizontal arms of the cross and to take sin seriously in our lives.*

**Duration:** 28:54

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 10:16

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Church Fellowship"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the significance of the breaking of bread in symbolizing Jesus' death on the cross, highlighting the importance of both vertical (relationship with God) and horizontal (relationship with fellow believers) aspects of the cross. It stresses the need for genuine commitment and involvement in the body of Christ, not treating it like a restaurant but as a family. The message also underscores the importance of battling sin, examining oneself before partaking in the bread and cup, and being sincere in seeking Jesus with a pure heart.

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## Transcript

We know that the breaking of bread symbolizes the death of Jesus on the cross. And as you've often heard me say, the cross has got two arms, vertical and horizontal. One arm alone is not a cross, horizontal or vertical.

There must be the vertical and the horizontal. And the horizontal speaks about relationship with the members of his body on earth. And if you don't have both, you haven't understood the cross.

There are people who say, I like Jesus, but I don't like Christians. Well, I don't know whether you'll have a place in heaven then, because in heaven there's Jesus and Christians. There's no corner where Jesus is all by himself.

And more than that, Jesus is the head of the body. So you can't go to somebody and say, I like your head, but I don't like the rest of your body. But that's how a lot of people are towards Christ.

And that's why we emphasize the importance of the vertical and the horizontal in our fellowship. If both are there, then we understand the body of Christ. Otherwise, we treat the church like a restaurant.

We hear there's good food in this restaurant, spiritual food, so let's go there and eat. Now, when you go to a restaurant to eat food, maybe very good food, but you don't have any responsibilities there. You just pay

the money and you don't have to wash the dishes, you don't have to help in any way, cleaning up the floor or the table or anything.

So when a person comes to the church, to our fellowship here, and does not get involved in any activity of this church, but just come to listen to the message and say, oh, that's a good message, and go, that's treating the church like a restaurant. If you treat it like a home, think of the things you do at your home. You clean the toilets in your home.

Would you volunteer to clean the toilets in this building? I'm not preaching what I have not practiced, not in this building, but in the other building I've done it. My point is that when we are part of a family, we do dirty jobs, not just come to eat. That's a restaurant.

And even those who claim to be committed to the church, there are people whose names are in the commitment list, and you consider yourself committed, which is good. But ask yourself how much you do things for the home, for the family. Now, in a home, we don't expect a one-year-old baby to do anything.

One-year-old babies just eat, drink, go to sleep, and are taken care of by the others. They do nothing. But we expect those one-year-old babies to grow up.

So, when they don't grow up, we have to call them retarded children. They're 20 years old, and they're lying in bed doing nothing. They have to be fed, clothed, and everything.

It's very sad when there are people in the church like that. You know, everybody in the church does not have the same gift. We all have different gifts.

And if there's a willingness to serve, that's what God looks at. I want to show you a very lovely verse in 2 Corinthians 8 and verse 12. 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 12.

It says here, if the readiness is present, that means there's a willingness to do something, then God accepts you according to what you're able to do, and not according to what you're not able to do, what you don't have. So, isn't that a wonderful word? I remember as a young Christian, I did not have all the gifts I have today. But I said, Lord, you're not waiting for me to have some fantastic gift.

I'll do what I can. And in those churches when I was a young believer, all I did was serve the rice and sambar to that huge crowd of people, and help with cleaning up and things like that. That's all I could do.

And I did it. So, if God sees that you're willing to do something, he'll give you more. So, some of you may not be developing in your life, because what you're able to do, you're not doing.

There's something we're all able to do. You know how in homes, we get even the six-year-old children to do something, pick up the things on the floor, clean up. Even the six-year-olds can start working.

That's a good, good parents are those who teach the small children to do things in the home. So, this is a family. In 1 Corinthians, in chapter 10, it says here about the breaking of bread, verse 17, first of all verse 16, the cup of blessing which we bless is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

The Roman Catholics say that is the blood of Christ. That is not what the Bible says. The Bible says in verse 16, it is a fellowship in the blood of Christ.

So, when Jesus said this is the new covenant in my blood, and he passed the cup around at the Last Supper, he said this is the new covenant in my blood. It's the first time he used the word new covenant. You read that in Luke 22.

In the old covenant, they didn't have fellowship. There was no, you know, like fellowship of a body. The old covenant type of fellowship was we were all sort of together as belonging to one nation, Israel.

It's like saying we're all Indians. Yeah, there's one type of fellowship saying we're all Indians. It's like Jewish people said we're all Israel.

Fine. But in the New Testament, in the New Covenant, it's a fellowship of a body. I'm a hand.

I'm an ear. I'm an eye. I'm something internal organ.

That's not like just all of us being part of one country. So, Jesus said this is the new covenant in my blood. By the cleansing of the blood, you come into this new covenant where you're related to one another as a body.

And so, it says here it's a sharing in the blood of Jesus that cleanses us and the bread which we break, which the Roman Catholics would say is the body of Christ. No, no, no. It says it is a fellowship in the body of Christ.

It's very clear. We should not remove that word sharing or fellowship from there. It does not say is not the cup of blessing the blood of Christ, isn't the bread the body of Christ.

No, it says it's a fellowship in the blood of Christ. It's a fellowship, a sharing in the body of Christ. So, when we partake of one bread, it says here in verse 17, there's one bread.

We who are many are one body. Now, if we had a big enough loaf that we could pass around to all of you, then we would have just one loaf, but that's not practically feasible. That's why we have small little bits of bread, but basically it's one bread.

We look at it as one bread, and before it is broken, it's one bread. And he's saying that all of us are thereby testifying that we are many, but one body, just like the little powdered grains of wheat joined together and made one loaf. So, we are all little grains of wheat powdered by the Lord and made one, one body.

So, when you break bread, when the bread comes to you, and you break it, you are breaking it and saying, I'm part of this one bread. I don't have the gifts that some other brothers have, doesn't matter, but I'm a part of this one bread, and I'm willing to do my part for this family, for this body. And like I said earlier, if there's a willingness, God accepts you according to what you're able to do and not what you're not able to do.

That's a great comfort for those who are not gifted. Even a person with one talent does not have to bury that one talent, like Jesus said in that story, but he can use it. So, even if you're a one-talent person, you can use it.

1 Corinthians 11, go to the next chapter, verse 24. He said, This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me, for broken for you.

So, in the context of what we read in the previous chapter, it's referring to the fact that this is a fellowship in the body. And then he took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant, like I told you. It's the new covenant in my blood.

Do this as you drink it in remembrance of me. So, it's very important that when we come together to break bread, that we remember Jesus. If you don't remember Jesus as to what he did for us, you're missing out on the breaking of bread.

There's a song that says that when in that day, future day in glory, when I meet all the saints, I shall recognize Jesus. I shall know him. I shall know him by the print of the nails in his hand.

Everybody else's hands will be whole. Even those who had injuries in their body will all be healed. But there'll only be one person in heaven who has injuries that he got on earth with him for eternity.

When we see Jesus, you'll find that there are nails and prints in his hand. You'll find that his side is pierced. You'll find, you look at his feet, you'll find nail prints in the feet.

So, that song says, I shall know him. I shall recognize him. Because Jesus is, we're all going to be like him.

How will I recognize who Jesus is? I shall know him by the print of the nails in his hand. I remember him here now in that way that he died for me. So, as often as you eat this bread, verse 26, and drink the cup, you're proclaiming, it's been, Christians have proclaimed it for 2,000 years that Jesus died for our sins.

And proclaiming also until he comes. Also proclaiming he's coming again. The two things we are proclaiming.

When he died in the past, why are you still breaking a bread? Because he has not yet come. Once he comes, we will not be breaking bread anymore. So, there's a double testimony in the breaking of bread.

One that he came and died for our sins, and also that he's coming, but he's not yet come. We are waiting for that. Therefore, if you eat the bread or drink the cup in an unworthy manner, you got to distinguish between being unworthy and an unworthy manner.

Being unworthy means we all got to raise our hands and say, we're all unworthy. We don't deserve forgiveness. The only thing we deserve is hell.

I know that clearly. We're not worthy. Definitely not.

None of us are worthy. So, that's not what he's saying here. He's talking about taking part in an unworthy manner.

The way you take part is unworthy manner. That means you've got some sin in your life which you have not turned away from. I'm not talking about a sin that you're battling.

A sin that you're battling, maybe you're battling your lust or battling your anger, that's a good thing. That means you hate it. You hate the sin which crucified Jesus.

You're battling it, battling it, battling it. But if there is a sin in your life, you're not battling, just enjoying it. That is a different thing altogether.

You know, if a person is enjoying some sin and not battling it, personally, I would seriously question whether he's really born again. The question is, some have overcome. That's good.

But those who are on the way to overcoming are battling it. It's like you go into the land of Canaan, there are giants there, and you haven't killed them all. Never mind.

But are you killing them or are you letting them live peacefully in the land? The Lord said, no, you must kill the giants in Canaan. Occupy that land. So don't get discouraged if you have not overcome some sin in your life or overcome some giant.

Ask yourself, are you battling him? Every time you see him, you fight and say, I'm going to finish with you and occupy your territory. I'm talking about sins in which you keep falling. Are you battling it? If you're not battling it, I want to say to you in Jesus' name, verse 27, you are guilty of crucifying Christ.

Do you know you can take part in the breaking of bread in an unworthy manner and be guilty of crucifying Christ? Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. That means just like those Pharisees and Romans killed him. So you're also guilty because he died for our sins to free us from it.

And I'm playing the fool with that sin in my life. Then I'm guilty of crucifying him. That's what I mean.

I don't want to be guilty of crucifying. I want to battle every sin that crucified Christ on the cross. So whatever your bad habit is, thought habit, word habit, deed habits, wrong motives, wrong attitudes to people.

Do you have a wrong attitude to anybody sitting here? How can you break bread together with that person? I'll tell you what can happen. I remember I was in another church when I was a young Christian and there were two brothers. I think they were even elders and they had a dispute over some property, but they would break bread every Sunday.

It was a ritual. It was like taking prasadam in the temple. No different.

It was not the body and blood of Christ they were taking part in because they had a fight with each other and but they were both breaking the same bread. I'm not surprised that such churches after some time go to the dogs, like they say, becomes worldly and filled with sin and deception and everything. We don't want to go that way.

That's why we keep reminding people it was your sin that crucified Jesus Christ. I remember seeing a Christian movie about the crucifixion about a little boy, not a little boy, a young man in a dream or something. He saw the Roman soldier hammering the nail into Jesus' hands and when that soldier looked around this boy saw his own face there.

He said, hey that was me. That was quite a message. I never forgot that.

You are the one who is hammering that nail into his hand when you tolerate some sin in your life and you don't battle it. You are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Therefore, let a man examine himself then let him eat the bread and drink the cup.

We have gone through this passage for 40 years. Regularly we have spoken about it and if you say when will you stop saying these things, I say we'll stop saying it when you take your sin seriously. We'll stop saying it when you start taking part in the bread worthily.

We'll stop saying it when you recognize that you want to be committed to the others with whom you are breaking bread as part of this body. When that happens, then we can stop saying it. See we are not like teachers in a class who say we only care for the brilliant students.

Okay class of 200, out of 200 there are 20 brilliant students here. We are only going to teach them. The rest 180 we are not bothered.

You can fail. You can do what you like. We're not like that.

We are interested in the weakest student that he also must pass. So who is the weakest student in a church? The one who's taking sin carelessly. That's why we have to keep repeating and the bright students say, oh brother Zach, we've heard that so many times.

Yeah brother, be patient. You know it. You know that subject already.

You've learned it. But there are some students sitting here who are still failing. So don't we want them to pass? Sure.

We are not teachers. We're fathers in the church. There's a lot of difference.

One father is better than 10,000 teachers. A teacher will tell a failing student, get out of this class. Don't waste our time here.

Go and join some other school. But when that little boy goes home and weeps and the father asks, what happened son? He says, dad, I can't, I can't solve this math problem and the teacher told me to get out of the school. So I don't have anywhere to go to.

What did the father say? Father's son said, I will teach you this till you learn it. And if it takes one year for you to learn it, I will sit with you and teach you and teach you and teach you. That's the difference between a father and a teacher.

A father never gives up on his children. I hope you fathers will never give up on your children even if they are wayward and unconverted today. Never give up.

Fathers and mothers might join together and lay hold of the Lord and say, Lord, we claim our children for Jesus Christ. In the same way, we as elders, our fathers in the church, you know, I work with about more than a hundred elders in the different churches. And all the time I tell them, you are fathers.

Everybody in the church is your son and daughter. If you can't treat them like your son and daughter, you are not fit to be an elder. Go and do some other job.

So we are fathers. We want the weakest person in the church also to be gripped by the truth. And that's why we repeat even the messages we repeat.

I told the Lord once, Lord, if you tell me to preach on one Sunday exactly word for word about what I preached the previous Sunday, I'll do it. Let everybody think, oh, Brother Zak did not prepare. He does not have time to preach another message.

Lazy guy. He came here. I don't care what they say because I want the weak student to understand it and he hasn't understood it.

That's a father. That's how we preach the word in this church. That's why we keep repeating.

And those who think they are very brilliant and think they know it all, let them think like that. But we are concerned about the weakest and we don't want to. Tell you honestly, I don't want any of you to be missing in heaven one day when Christ comes back, and that'll be pretty soon.

I don't want any of you to be missing there. I don't want any of your children to be missing there. And more than that, I don't want you to miss the full reward that Jesus wants you to have.

So when we come to the Lord's table, let me turn to Luke chapter 24, and we read about two disciples going to Emmaus. And Jesus walked with them all those three hours. It's a long journey, Jerusalem to Emmaus, three hours.

It says it was seven miles, Luke 24, 13. It must have taken about three hours, a leisurely walk. And he had a three-hour Bible study on the Old Testament.

And he said, everything in the Old Testament, verse 27, spoke about Jesus, beginning with Moses, which is Genesis, or to all the prophets, which is Malachi. From Genesis to Malachi, he explained to them in all the scriptures, things concerning himself. That's why I believe that I can see Jesus in every book of the Old Testament.

And I can see Jesus in every book of the New Testament. If you want to see it, Jesus did it. And he explained it to them.

And he'll explain to us today also. But they did not recognize him. It says there, verse 16, their eyes were prevented from recognizing him because they had to be tested.

Until you're tested, your eyes won't be opened. And they came to Emmaus. And when they came near to the village, here was the test now.

Now they're being tested to see whether their eyes will be opened or not. The Jesus, verse 28, acted as though he would go further. Is it good to act? Jesus acted after his resurrection.

Supposing you go to house late at night and you haven't had your dinner. Isn't it good to act as if I'm not hungry? I do that. It's a good acting.

And or you sense that you don't know whether you're very welcome in a home and you say, hey, I've got to go somewhere else. You're acting. It's a good acting.

That's what Jesus did. He acted as if he wanted to be with them in the house. But he acted, I think I'll go.

And it says they urged him. Look at that. What acting this was.

No, Lord, you've got to sit. No, no, no, no. I've got to go.

Please stay. No, no, no. I have to go.

Boy, he really acted to find out. He was testing them. How eager are you guys to have me in your house? So no, no, no, I don't want dinner.

I don't want it. I'm not hungry. I'm not hungry.

And then they somehow go to the market and get something and say, you got to eat with us. That's how it was, you know. And he says, stay with us.

The day is nearly over. And he went in to stay with them. That's what he wanted to do all the time.

Verse 29. And then they got blessed. As they sat at the table and he took the bread and he broke it, prayed and broke it.

They said, wow. Their eyes were opened. Verse 31.

And they recognized him. And he suddenly disappeared. So as we break bread today, many times I say, Lord Jesus, please break the bread like you did that first day at the Last Supper.

Please break it and give it to me. I will not take part like Judas Iscariot, betraying you. I will take part not as a perfect person, maybe one who will let you down in a few hours like Peter.

You know, a few hours after he broke bread, he went and denied the Lord. But that was his weakness. He was not evil like Judas Iscariot.

No. There's a difference between being weak and being evil. So we are not promising to the Lord that we'll never fail.

But we are saying, Lord, you know my heart. We're sincere. Like Peter said, Lord, you know all things.

You know that to the best of my knowledge, I love you and I want to please you. And our eyes will be open. And I prayed, Lord, I want to see you in a new way.

And I break bread to be more devoted to you. And as soon as they saw that, you know what happened? They forgot all about that dinner. They got up, which says that very moment was 33.

They didn't even eat that dinner. They immediately rushed back three hours journey back to Jerusalem to tell others, the Lord is risen. So something will happen when we break bread with sincerity and say, Lord, we really want you to come in and be part of us.

He will test you, test you, test you. You say, no, no, no, I don't want, don't want. But you say, no, I'm not going to let you go until you're going to be with me.

And he sees that you're earnest. He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.

And I tell you, there's going to be a difference among the people sitting here. Some will have their eyes opened and some will remain in the same condition. That depends on you.

The Lord is here in our midst. Jesus is here. I believe that.

I know he's here. That's why I say, Lord, please break the bread and give it to me from your hand. Show me if there's any wrong attitude in me towards anyone, not only anyone sitting here, but to anybody in the whole wide world.

I want to have a clean, pure heart and I want to break bread in sincerity. I'm not perfect. I'm pressing on to perfection.

But I'm sincere to the best of my knowledge. So Lord, open my eyes that I may see you and love you more and be a bolder witness that like these people got up. That there'll be a zeal in me to say, Lord, I must tell somebody else about Jesus.

I must tell somebody else that you can save them from their sins. That passion has never died in my heart. No matter how old I get, I say, Lord, there's somebody else who still hasn't heard that Jesus can save them from their captivity to sin, that Jesus can deliver them from the power of Satan.

And as long as I have breath in me, I want to do it. If one day I'm lying in a hospital, I'll witness to those who come to see me that Jesus can save us from sin. Dear brothers, when you see Jesus like that, you will walk any distance to go and tell people he's risen.

So let's break bread in that spirit today. Let's bow our heads.

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