

WHO MAY EAT THE COMMUNION?

(by George Battey)

Some congregations have been accused of practicing "closed communion" to the point that they are:

- *"Wrestling the communion out of the hands of visitors."*
- *Slapping people's hands.*
- *Physically assaulting people.*

Contrary to these reports, no one, to my knowledge, is being slapped, assaulted or "wrestled with." These are unfair accusations.

William Terjesen, a Lutheran minister in NY, wrote an article posted on the internet entitled, *"The Biblical Practice of Closed Communion in the Light of 1 Cor 11:17-34."* Evidently the Lutheran Church has a controversy brewing over this subject. Terjesen made the following pertinent point:

This division will not be overcome by ignoring the issue and hoping it will go away. It can only be overcome by talking about closed communion in the light of the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions, and by a willingness to submit to God's truth regardless of the consequences. (p. 1)

I find myself agreeing with Mr. Terjesen on this particular point (except for the remark about the Lutheran Confessions – we don't need to consult them).

- *We do have to talk about closed communion in the light of God's word.*
- *And we must be willing to submit to God's truth regardless of the consequences.*

"OPEN COMMUNION"

What is "*open communion*"?

Open communion refers to Christian churches that allow individuals other than members of that church to receive communion ... (Wikipedia, "Open communion")

According to the Wikipedia article on "*open communion*," the following churches practice open communion:

- *United Methodist Church*
- *Episcopal Church*
- *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*
- *Disciples of Christ*
- *Christian Church.*

"CLOSED COMMUNION"

What is "*closed communion*"?

Closed communion is the practice of restricting the serving of the elements of communion (also called Eucharist, The Lord's Supper) to those who are members of a particular church, denomination, sect, or congregation.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Closed_communion)

According to the Wikipedia article on "*closed communion*," the following churches practice closed communion:

- *Roman Catholic Church*
- *Greek Orthodox*
- *Russian Orthodox*
- *Lutheran Church*
- *Apostolic Christian Church*
- *Church of God in Christ*
- *Mennonite*

- *Primitive Baptists*
- *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*
- *Jehovah's Witnesses.*

The Wikipedia article on "*open communion*" adds "*conservative Churches of Christ*" to the list of those practicing closed communion.

The Wikipedia article makes the following observation about Baptist churches:

Among Baptist churches, **closed communion** is the practice of restricting communion (or The Lord's Supper) to only those who hold membership in the local church that is observing the ordinance. *Thus, members from other churches, even other Baptist churches, will be excluded from participating in the communion service.* (Wikipedia, "Closed communion")

"CLOSE" AND "CLOSED"

This introduces a distinction between: "Close" communion and "Closed" communion.

T. T. Martin explains this difference:

There is now **Open** Communion, **Close** Communion, and **Closed** Communion. Open Communion means that anyone present, professing Christ may eat the Supper. Close Communion means that anyone who is from a Baptist Church of like faith and order, may partake of the Supper in any Baptist Church where they may be visiting. Closed Communion means that only the members of the local Baptist Church who are in good standing may partake of the Supper.
(<http://history.landmarkbiblebaptist.net/Church-T.T.Martin.html>)

The Roman Catholic Church in reality practices "*close*" communion because they will allow visiting members from a sister parish to partake of the communion.

The Baptist Church practices true "*closed*" communion because they will not allow even visiting Baptists to partake of the communion.

In this case, "*closed communion*" means *only faithful members of the local church are allowed to partake.*

DENOMINATIONS ARE ON BOTH SIDES

Before going further, keep in mind that manmade denominations are on both sides of the issues involved in this matter.

If someone believes closed communion to be scandalous because "*that is what the Catholics believe,*" others could logically reply that open communion is scandalous because "*that is what the Methodists believe.*"

However scandalous one may think the Catholic Church is, the Methodist Church is hardly better.

Ministers in the Methodist Church do not even have to believe in the existence of God to be licensed and ordained.

Truth is not determined by choosing the opposite of whatever the Catholic Church teaches. Even Catholics are right on some things (e.g. abortion).

Whether closed communion or open communion is right or wrong depends solely on the teachings of scripture.

AN ANCIENT PRACTICE

The policy of a "*closed communion*" is nothing new. The Didache, a book of church discipline dating back to the late first century, states that only members of the church may receive the Lord's supper:

"But let no one eat or drink of this eucharistic thanksgiving, but they that have been baptized into the name of the Lord". (Didache 9:10-12)

Later, in the same document:

And on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. And let no man, having his dispute with his fellow, join your assembly until they have been reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled; for this sacrifice it is that was spoken of by the Lord; "In every place and at every time offer Me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great king, saith the Lord and My name is wonderful among the nations". (Didache 14:1-5)

In other words, any Christian who had a dispute with a fellow Christian was not allowed to receive the communion with the rest of the church until the dispute was resolved. Their reasoning was based on what Jesus said:

Matthew 5:23-24 (NKJV)

23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

SUMMARY

The majority of churches claiming to be Christian practice some form of either close communion or closed communion.

RESTORATION LEADERS

Observe, now, the writings of some Restoration preachers.

Moses Lard wrote an article in his *Lard's Quarterly* entitled, "Do The Unimmersed Commune?" (Vol. 1, Sept 1863, pp. 41-53). By reading this article one learns that by Sept. 1863 much had been written on the subject of "closed communion" in the *Millennial Harbinger*. Those advocating "open communion" were: **Isaac Errett** and **Philip Pendleton** (Alexander Campbell's son-in-law).

(Pendleton eventually became identified with the *Christian Church* – advocating instrumental music and missionary societies.)

Lard's conclusion was as follows:

Hence when I claim the right to forbid the unimmersed to commune, my claim has this extent only; that as a teacher of the truth I must tell him he has not the right to commune. This done, I can proceed no farther. If he still insists that he has the right to commune, and communes, I am clear. But in this case I would hand him neither the loaf nor the cup. He should take them for himself. (p. 49)

In dealing with arguments against "*closed communion*," Lard kept hearing brethren base an argument on 1 Cor 11:28. Here's what he wrote:

Our churches in the West, I am sorry to say, without an exception known to me, permit the unimmersed to commune. They do not, I grant, invite them to commune; and yet their language is so understood by the unimmersed. "Let man examine himself," they say, "and so let him eat and drink." This the unimmersed construe thus; Let a man determine for himself whether he is or is not a Christian; and if he determines that he is, then let him eat. This is unjust to the truth, and not just to the unimmersed. The language was never designed to start the question—Is the man a Christian or is he not? No such thought was in the Apostle's mind. The following is the question the language raises: Is a Christian worthy to eat and drink? And surely, that a Christian is or is not worthy, is a very different thing from the question, is a man a Christian or is he not? (pp. 51-52)

MODERN TIMES

As a child, growing up, my parents took me to a digressive church in Hobbs, NM. When we invited our friends to come to church with us, my mother or father would always check to see if we explained to our friends two things:

- *That the church has communion every Sunday.*
- *And non-members are not suppose to take the communion.*

This was standard procedure in the 1960s and 1970s.

Consider the writings of faithful brethren:

1) [John Stidham](#).

In the June, 1961 issue of the OPA, brother John Stidham wrote an article entitled, "*Communion – For Whom?*" In this article brother Stidham made two arguments against "*open communion*."

First, he pointed out **the table of the Lord was placed in the church for Christians.**

Second, he pointed out **there is simply no authorization to offer communion to non-members.**

In other words, brother Stidham was saying we have to have scripture which either explicitly or implicitly authorizes "open communion." Since we do not have any authority, it cannot be done.

His article is here presented in full:

COMMUNION – FOR WHOM?

By John Stidham

Jesus says, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father has appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk 22:29, 30). It is evident from this and from 1 Cor 10:16-17 and from 1 Cor 11:23-34, that the Lord having put the table in the kingdom gave the Lord's Supper to His church, the disciples. When Paul said, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (1 Cor 11:28), he was talking to the church at Corinth and not to alien sinners. To apply this scripture to the world of aliens or the denominations is a misapplication of the scriptures.

I would say in view of the above scriptures, that the practice of some brethren to encourage the non-Christian to partake of the bread and the cup, by unnecessarily putting the emblems into their hands or deliberately passing them to them, and when they do partake nothing is said about it, is an unscriptural practice. When the leaders of the church condone such by actually supporting it with such as "It won't do them any good and it won't hurt us," or "It is the Lord's Supper and it is not for us to say who does or does not partake, but if they do their blood is not on us; we cannot afford to practice closed communion against them"; or as some say, "When Paul said let a man examine himself, he meant the alien as well as the members"; or "We do not know their hearts and by so doing it might cause them to study"; such sayings are only the sayings of men and they do not come from the word of God. We cannot practice this by the authority of Christ and therefore it cannot be a good work because it is not in the scriptures. Hence, I am speaking out against this unscriptural practice. (OPA, June, 1961, p. 7)

2) [James Orten.](#)

In the December, 1983 issue of the OPA, brother James Orten wrote an article entitled, "*Treatment Of A Disfellowshipped Brother.*" Here is an excerpt of what he wrote:

Third, the phrase "with such a one no not to eat" refers to having no ordinary social interaction with the individual. Eating together then, as now, was a common and important means of socializing. It implied a friendship with, and acceptance of, the person. The command "not to eat" with the individual was a companion to "keep no company with" (1 Cor. 5:9 & 11). The guide for Christians behavior toward such individuals was the ways the Jews ordinarily treated "heathens" and "publicans" (Matt. 18:17). These Jewish Christians understood Paul's language. They had grown up avoiding all voluntary contact with such persons.

By necessary inference, the command not to eat with a disfellowshipped person in social situations includes eating the Lord's Supper. Eating with one at the Lord's Table implies a closer fellowship with, and acceptance of, those involved than eating in ordinary social settings. By naming the less intense, less important situation, he automatically excluded the more intense and more important one. Incidentally, early churches would have had no need to be told not to eat the Lord's Supper with an

excommunicated brother or sister. They were generally much more careful about who sat with them at the Lord's Supper than modern churches. Early Christian writers, for example Justin Martyr, speak of the communion as something in which those outside the body were "not allowed" to participate. The whole idea of excommunicating an individual was to exclude him from the body (See 1 Cor. 5:2, 7, & 13). Thus whether such a one should be allowed to continue to sit at the Lord's Table would never have been entertained by them.

Fourth, if a disfellowshipped brother comes to a congregation other than the one where he was excommunicated, the leadership of the second church must determine whether he was officially and scripturally disfellowshipped. If he was, they must honor it, and treat the brother as they would if he were excommunicated by themselves. In my judgment they are under equal obligation not to honor unofficial and unscriptural actions. As to how the brother should be treated at church dinners and so forth, he should be told he is not welcomed, that the church honors his discipline believing it scriptural, and that he must change his life in order to be in the good graces of the church. Should he insist on coming, which is unlikely, he should be ignored. The church should not in any way use violence to prevent him from coming. (p. 2.)

3) [Don McCord](#).

In March, 2002, brother Don McCord wrote an article in the OPA entitled, "*The Common Cup And The Cup Of The Lord.*" The article concentrated on the subject of sanitation in communion, but he made these important points:

... Not just anybody and everybody was there. Those present had to qualify. Who were those present? His disciples, you know as well as I, were the only ones present. Discipleship was the qualifying element. Only disciples drank of the Lord's cup, not just any common cup. There [it] is verified plainly in the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul.

... Yes, only disciples were present when Christ first used the cup of the Lord. ...

Yes, wherever you find the cup of the Lord, only disciples, Christians, members of the church, are qualified partakers. In Acts 20:7, the disciples "came together to break bread;" ... We cannot

separate the Lord's cup from the church, from Christians, from disciples. (p. 5)

4) [Barney Owens](#).

In January, 2009, brother Barney Owens wrote an article in the OPA entitled, "*Children & The Lord's Supper*." The entire article is here given:

CHILDREN & THE LORD'S SUPPER

By Barney Owens

I once worshipped with a congregation where a brother upon breaking bread would break a piece for his daughter (pre-schooler) and also give her a drink of the cup. I was told by a second party that he thought since Jesus said that the Kingdom is made up of such as were little children, that children were in a safe condition and could commune. It has weighed on my mind even though I no longer worship there. Please tell me what you think of this practice. If it is not right, how should I approach someone who does this if it comes up again?

The question is quite unusual, although I admit that while visiting a congregation some years ago this was done. Perhaps it is more wide spread than I imagine. At any rate, it (in my estimation) is worthy of some consideration.

Children And The Kingdom Of Christ

Jesus certainly taught that those dwelling in the Kingdom were like little children (Mt. 18:3-4; 19:14). He meant that those making up the Kingdom have been made pure from sin and therefore we like children. Children are safe; citizens of the Kingdom are saved.

The Kingdom and the church of Christ are one and the same people. People who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ because they were once lost. Upon obeying the Gospel of Christ, they are saved from the guilt and punishment of sin. No longer is sin practiced in their lie. This is seen by reading Acts 2:38, 41, 47; Rom 6:1-4, 17-18; Col. 2:11-13; 3:1-12, etc.

Children have not sinned, are not under the guilt or penalty of sin. They are safe, however, they are not members of the church nor are they citizens of the Kingdom.

Members Of The Church To Eat The Lord's Supper

Jesus assured the disciples that He would have a table in the Kingdom. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." (Lk. 22:29-30). It is apparent that the table to which He referred is the table where disciples share (by memory) in His death, since that would have been fresh in their mind. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Lk. 22:19-20).

Paul spoke to the church at Corinth regarding the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 10:21), having just discussed what is to be upon it. "The cup of blessing which we bless," says he, "is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16-17). In the eleventh chapter, he reminded them that the table is to be spread when the church comes together (1 Cor 11: 17-26).

Considering all that is said about the table one cannot escape the conclusion: the Lord's table is for those who have been added to the church or kingdom of Christ. The table is shared by family members.

One Must Be Obedient To The Gospel To Be In The Church Or Kingdom

To enter the Kingdom one must be born again. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Naming the specific elements of the new birth, He continued, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:3, 5). The only birth of water spoken of in scripture is baptism. One is baptized into the kingdom of God.

Furthermore, we are told, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. 12:13). Christ is "head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18). Those who have been baptized are saved or have the remission of sins (Mk. 16:16, Acts 2:38). Upon obedience to the truth, their souls are purified, having been born again. (1 Pet. 1:22, 23). The result is that these are added to the church (Acts 2:47). Members of the church are citizens in the Kingdom and are qualified to sit at the Lord's Table and share in the Lord's Supper.

All others are excluded from breaking bread, communing, or eating.

While it is admitted that children are in a safe condition, or as yet are not under the spiritual penalty of sin, they are yet ineligible to partake of the bread or drink of the cup. It is practicing in ignorance to feed a child from the table.

Approaching Someone Who Gives The Supper To A Child

It is difficult to say exactly what approach is best in a specific case. There are two things for sure. One, an approach there must be. To neglect speaking to the person allowing the practice to continue is not right. The longer it is allowed to continue the more difficult it will be to deal with and correct the problem. Two, it is to be done in the spirit of meekness, considering how we would like someone to approach us in a failing (Gal. 6:1-2).

Speaking in a general way, it is best to take the brother to the side somewhere away from the meetinghouse and at a time when there is no interruption or distraction. Calmly yet directly bring up the matter and express what the Bible says about it, assuring the brother that there is nothing personal, however, the scripture being violated must stop. In most cases, there can be a meeting of the minds and things will be fine from then on. If he will not listen to scripture and reason, then more drastic steps must be taken. The only thing that I know to do is to follow the recommendation of Jesus in Mt. 18:15-17. Let me say again, the matter must be dealt with! If allowed to continue, it will fester and worsen until the entire church is affected in one way or another.

Eating Unworthily

While we are on this subject, we may as well look at the matter of how we are to eat of it as adults. This would also have a direct bearing on children, as they are incapable of properly discerning the Lord's Supper in eating.

"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body. (1 Cor. 11:27-29)

When eating the Lord's Supper, a person must do so in a reverent manner. It is common for us to eat of our daily food while doing other things at the same time. We may listen to a news

broadcast, read a book, or engage in a conversation with a friend. There is no violation or disrespect shown to the one who prepared the food by such conduct. However, when we eat of the Lord's Supper, it is in its very essence a feast of remembrance. We are to reflect upon what our Savior has accomplished in our behalf. We lovingly hold in our heart the suffering He endured and the sacrifice He made, along with the love He exhibited. The Apostle reminds us that a failure to thus devote these moments of eating is to pronounce damnation on one's self. It is self evident that one should eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord in a manner demonstrating respect both to one's self and any others who might look on.

Examination is not the responsibility of another; it is left entirely to each communicant. Serving at the table has revealed the carelessness of some Christians in eating. I have observed people eat in the most casual way. Taking a moment to stop talking, looking at photographs, cease nail clipping, and generally looking around to eat, is spiritual vulgarity. This lack of respect and discernment is said to be the most grievous sort of sin.

While on the subject of children, may I add another observation that involves children in still another way? When children are encouraged by pushy parents to "get baptized" at such a young age that it is necessary to awaken them during worship to eat the Lord's Supper, they are eating improperly. In the first place their obedience was to their parent (and/or peer pressure) and not the Lord. Their worship is sacrilege. One must eat while discerning the elements of the Lord's Supper, else – LISTEN – he "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself not discerning the Lord's body."

Closed Communion

Closed communion is practiced by denominations as they forbid any from partaking except those who are in their communion. Members of churches of Christ oppose "closed communion" because we are against division of believers in Christ. Various sects (or denominations) promote division because they preach and give thanks in prayer that there are so many churches that men can have a choice as to which church they desire to be a member of. The error of this idea is that Jesus died to unite men in His church (Eph. 2:11- 22). That He established His church upon earth (Mt. 16:18), and the saved are added by the Lord to it upon obedience to the Gospel (Acts 2:47). Therefore, to contend for "closed communion" is to promote division. Disciples of Christ

have long contended that men are "to examine themselves" and accordingly eat the Lord's Supper.

Open Communion

While we oppose "closed communion," that is not to suggest "open communion." Anyone who has not obeyed Christ as taught in the New Testament for the remission of sins, has not entered the Kingdom and is not a member of the church. Therefore, such a person is not to eat. I cannot mention every doctrine, but enough will here be given to illustrate the truth. A person who has been baptized into a denomination is not a proper person to eat the Lord's Supper. A person who was baptized as an infant is not a proper communicant. A person who was sprinkled or had water poured upon him instead of immersion is not to be served the Lord's Supper. One who believes he was saved and then was immersed as a picture of his salvation cannot properly eat the Lord's Supper.

If there comes to an assembly one who is unknown, it is often the practice to offer the Lord's Supper. However, if it is known that such a person is not a member of the church, then as Christians we should speak to that person about obeying the truth to be added to the church. As stated earlier, we should make the opportunity available and take advantage of it in a quiet and meek spirit. To just go along as though nothing is amiss is wrong on our part.

Conclusion

While it is not the belief of this writer, as some state, that "the Lord's Supper is the most important part of our worship," I do believe it cannot be misused. To say the Lord's Supper is the most important part of worship reduces the other things we are to do to second place (at least). Admittedly the Lord's Supper cannot be neglected, nor can we abuse it (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34). May each of us be keenly aware of our responsibilities in regard to the Lord's Supper. (*OPA*, Jan, 2009, pp. 9-10)

As brother Barney Owens pointed out above, "closed communion" is wrong, but that is not to say that "open communion" is scriptural either. The only alternative is "close communion" – i.e. communion between members of the body of Christ who are considered by the local congregation as being "in fellowship."

DEFINITIONS

The Greek word translated "communion" in the English Bible is **κοινωνία**.

1 Corinthians 10:16 (NKJV)

*16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the **communion** (κοινωνία) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the **communion** (κοινωνία) of the body of Christ?*

No surprises here. But notice passages below:

Acts 2:42 (NKJV)

*42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and **fellowship** (κοινωνία), in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

2 Corinthians 6:14 (NKJV)

*14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what **fellowship** (κοινωνία) has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

1 John 1:7 (NKJV)

*7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have **fellowship** (κοινωνία) with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

The most common translation of **κοινωνία** is "fellowship."

Since "communion" and "fellowship" mean the same thing and are translated from the same Greek word, to have "open communion" means to have "open fellowship."

The idea of "open fellowship" was made popular by:

- Carl Ketcherside
- Leroy Garrett
- Don DeWalt

- *Ervin Waters*

These men proposed the idea that all brethren of every variety should be fellowshiped. The idea was for each congregation to open its pulpit to any brother regardless of whether he used instruments of music, Bible classes, or individual cups.

Open fellowship means to extend fellowship to any brother regardless of whether he advocates missionary societies or other religious institutions. Wise brethren saw the folly of such a proposal and rightly opposed the idea of "*open fellowship*."

"*Open fellowship*" is the same thing as "*open communion*." The words fellowship and communion are both translated from the same Greek word.

NOTE: When brethren advocate open communion, whether they realize it or not, they are advocating open fellowship – fellowship with denominations.

HOW IS FELLOWSHIP SHOWN?

Very often brethren speak of private meals as "*having fellowship*."

Sometimes at the end of a worship service, a brother will announce, "*Our sisters have prepared some refreshments. We would like to ask everyone who can to stay and have fellowship with us.*"

If this is a proper use of the word "*fellowship*," then brethren are having fellowship with every denominational person who decides to stay and eat the private meal.

Yet private meals are not how brethren in scripture had fellowship with each other. In scripture, brethren extended fellowship toward each other by:

1) By financial contributions.

Romans 15:26 (NKJV)

26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain **contribution** (κοινωνία) for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

2) By encouraging and helping.

2 John 9-11 (NKJV)

9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him;

11 for he who greets him **shares** (κοινωνέω) in his evil deeds.

3) By eating the Lord's supper.

1 Corinthians 10:16 (NKJV)

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the **communion** (κοινωνία) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the **communion** (κοινωνία) of the body of Christ?

WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP

Eating the Lord's supper is how Christians show fellowship with one another.

REMEMBER: "Fellowship" and "communion" come from the very same Greek word. To "withdraw fellowship" means, by its very definition, to withdraw communion.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (NKJV)

6 *Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?*

7 *Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.*

8 *Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

"a little leaven" (v6) – the fornicator.

"the whole lump" (v6) – the entire congregation.

There is a chance that the entire congregation can be ruined if this fornicator continues to come.

ILL: If my arm got an infection, I would do everything I could to save the arm. But if it did not improve, the infection would spread and affect my entire body. It would be better to lose the arm than the entire body – **so said Jesus (Mt 5:30)**.

"purge out the old leaven" (v7) – since the "leaven" in this chapter is the fornicator (v6) to "purge out the old leaven" means to put the fornicator out of the congregation.

"Purging out leaven" from the house should remind one of the OT passover. Israelites were not to have any leaven in their houses.

Exodus 12 (NKJV)

15 *... you shall remove leaven from your houses. ...*

19 *... no leaven shall be found in your houses, ...*

- *Israel was about to eat a spiritual meal – all the leaven had to go!*
- *The NT church is going to eat a spiritual meal – all the leaven has to go.*

"Christ, our passover, was sacrificed for us" (v7) – Jesus and the Lord's supper are being compared to the passover.

Luke 22:14-16 (NKJV)

14 When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.

*15 Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat **this Passover** with you before I suffer;*

*16 for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until **it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**"*

The OT passover meal was "fulfilled in the kingdom of God." In other words, the OT passover meal was a type of the Lord's supper. The Lord's supper "fulfills" the type.

- *Israel ate the passover with no leaven in their houses.*
- *The church is to eat the Lord's supper without leaven in the house of God.*

"let us keep the feast" (v8) – the Lord's supper.

"not with old leaven" (v8) – the fornicator.

"nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness" (v8) – more than the fornicator is included. Any member with malice (ill will toward others) or wickedness (immorality) in their lives should not be eating the Lord's supper.

Communion is not "*individual*." It's not just between a man and God.

- *Brethren using individual communion cups argue it doesn't matter if we eat from the same loaf or drink from the same cup, because communion is an "individual" matter.*

This is not right.

- *Neither is it right to argue, "We cannot tell someone they can't have the Lord's supper – because the Lord's supper is strictly between a man and God."*

"communion" – *"joint participation."* The entire congregation plays a part in communion.

- *When Christians commune, they are having fellowship.*
- *When someone has been "disfellowshipped" they are not to have fellowship (**communion – joint participation**) with the rest of the congregation.*

"but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (v8) – rather than *"keeping the feast"* with members who are filled with malice and wickedness, Christians are to eat the Lord's supper with brethren and sisters who are sincere and standing for the truth.

1 Corinthians 5:11 (NKJV)

11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person.

"anyone named a brother" – this rule applies only to those who are members of the church.

There are two instructions given:

- *"Do not keep company" – don't associate with them.*
- *"Do not eat with such a person"*

"with such a person" – this list is not exhaustive. Anyone guilty of such immoral sins as these.

Q: Is the command, "Do not keep company," limited?

- *Do not keep company **outside** of the services?*
- *Can anyone restrict this association only to association outside the services? If so, what gives anyone that right?*

Q: Is the command, "Do not even eat," limited?

- *Do not eat common meals **outside** of the services?*
- *Can anyone restrict this eating only to common meals? If so, what gives anyone that right?*

Perhaps brethren and sisters should just do what the Lord commanded and not associate or eat with such people (period).

Instructions were already given to "*not keep the feast with old leaven, for even Christ our passover has been sacrificed for us*" (v8) – it would seem the "*do not eat*" would certainly include the Lord's supper.

So there are two things Christians should not do:

- *They should not associate with withdrawn-from members.*
- *They should not even eat with them (the Lord's supper or anything else).*

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS

In summary: The scriptures relating to who may properly eat the Lord's supper:

1) Only those in the "body of Christ" may eat.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 (NKJV)

*16 The cup of blessing which **we bless**, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which **we break**, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*

*17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for **we all partake of that one bread.***

"We" refers to members of the church. Only members of the church: **ble***ss*, **br***ea***k** and **partake** of the communion. There is no authorization for non-members to eat the Lord's supper.

Colossians 3:17 (NKJV)

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Christians must have authorization for all they do. Silence does not authorize. The scriptures are silent about non-members partaking of the communion.

2) **Only baptized believers may eat.**

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV)

*19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

Christians make disciples by baptizing sinners into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. After men are baptized, they are to be taught to observe "all things" which Jesus commanded. One of the things He commanded was the communion.

This agrees with what happened on Pentecost:

Acts 2:41-42 (NKJV)

*41 Then **those who gladly received his word were baptized**; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.
42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, **in the breaking of bread**, and in prayers.*

The ones who broke bread were the ones baptized.

3) [The Lord's table was placed in the church.](#)

Luke 22:29-30 (NKJV)

29 And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me,

30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

In other words, if the table is inside the kingdom, the only way one may eat from the Lord's table is to first enter the kingdom.

John 3:5 (NKJV)

5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Since the only way to enter the kingdom is to be baptized for the remission of sins, one who has not been baptized is not entitled to partake of the Lord's table.

This agrees with what other passages reveal:

Acts 20:7 (NKJV)

7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

1 Corinthians 11:23 (NKJV)

23 For I received from the Lord **that which I also delivered to you**: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;

"that which I also delivered to you" – refers to the Lord's supper. To whom was the supper delivered? It was delivered to members of the church. It was not delivered to non-members.

1 Corinthians 11:26 (NKJV)

26 For as often as **you** eat this bread and drink this cup, **you** proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

"as often as you eat this bread" – who is the "you"? It's the members of the church.

"you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" – who is proclaiming His death? The members of the church.

1 Corinthians 11:27 (NKJV)

27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

"whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup" – who is the "whoever"? This refers to a member of the church – for that is who the communion was delivered to according to v23.

1 Corinthians 11:28 (NKJV)

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

"let a man examine himself" – who is this? It refers to a Christian. Christians are to be examining themselves.

1 Corinthians 11:29-32 (NKJV)

29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

v29 – states that eating in an unworthy manner brings judgment on a person.

Q: Who are these people who bring judgment upon themselves?

R: Verse 30 shows it refers to Christians – "*many are weak and sick among you.*"

Vv31-32 – distinguishes between "us" (Christians) on the one hand and "the world" on the other hand.

4) **The Lord's supper is for members who are traveling thru.**

In other words, the early church actually practiced **close** communion rather than closed communion.

When Paul traveled thru Troas, he stayed and observed the Lord's supper with the church:

Acts 20:6-7 (NKJV)

6 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

5) **The Lord's supper is NOT for unfaithful members.**

1 Corinthians 5:11 (NKJV)

11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person.

One who has been withdrawn from may not be fellowshiped. The communion is how Christians show fellowship to one another.

1 Corinthians 10:21 (NKJV)

21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

Here it is explicitly stated that if a Christian is participating in idolatry, they cannot partake of the Lord's supper.

6) [The Lord's supper is NOT for anyone who is not a faithful Christian.](#)

Ephesians 5:11 (NKJV)

11 And **have no fellowship** (συγκοινωνέω) with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

Christians have fellowship (communion), not with everyone in the world (i.e. not "open communion"), but only with faithful members of the church.

[CONCLUSION](#)

No one wants to unnecessarily hurt someone's feelings, but the church is limited by the Lord as to whom may be served the communion. This is not our table – it's the Lord's table.

Pendleton & Errett advocated "*open communion*," not because they found scripture for such, but because they didn't want to "*run anyone off*."

Lard was sensitive to the feelings of visitors in the assembly, but he wrote this:

But I have long since learned that you never correct men's errors by seeming to treat them as not errors; and that it is the spirit and air with which you tell a man he is wrong which give him offense, rather than the mere fact of telling him so. Let the unimmersed be told of their error with a spirit as sweet and kind as that in which you would address the wife of your bosom, but at the same time with a purpose as firm and uncompromising as that in which you would snatch the hand of your child from theft. (op. cit., pp. 47-48)

William Terjesen, the Lutheran minister previously cited, also recognized offending people as a problem. Yet he wrote this:

And whatever offense is given by a faithful and loving application of this practice is unavoidable and is ultimately God's concern, in much the same way as the preaching of the cross is "an offense to

the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks" (1 Cor. 1:23). (op. cit., p. 7)

There are some who cannot see closed communion as a loving practice, to whom the question must be asked whether we are operating with a definition and conception of love that flows from God's Word or one that flows from popular culture. Luther [said]: "Faith must be the master of love ... Love ceases when it spoils the Word of God." (op. cit., p. 7)

Think about this. Here is a Lutheran minister who can see that the world has a skewed sense of what "love" really is.

True Bible love is being loyal to the word of God first and as kindly as we possibly can, present the truth to those lost in sin – but we cannot lower standards of God's word.

Ephesians 4:15 (NKJV)

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ —

The church must speak in love – but still ... she must speak the truth.

WHO MAY EAT THE COMMUNION?

QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do the majority of denominations practice "*open*" or "*closed*" communion?
- 2) What is the difference between "*close communion*" and "*closed communion*"?
- 3) If someone believes "*closed communion*" is scandalous because "*that's what the Catholics believe,*" what could others logically reply about "*open communion*"?
- 4) What is the *Didache* and what did it say about Christians who had a dispute with a fellow Christian?
- 5) Is 1 Cor 11:28 asking (a) whether a man is a Christian or (b) whether he is worthy?
- 6) How is the Greek word **κοινωνία** translated in 1 Cor 10:16 and how is this same word translated in 2 Cor 6:14?
- 7) Who advocates "*open fellowship*" and what is the same thing as "*open fellowship*"?
- 8) What is the fulfillment of the OT passover?
- 9) Why did Pendleton and Errett oppose "*closed communion*" during the 1800s?