

# I'M BETTER THAN YOU... AND I CAN PROVE IT!

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Question! What were the Status Symbols for you growing up?

For me in the late 80's it was:

1. Sony Walkman
2. LaserDisc Player
3. Nike Shoes

These types of symbols were used by many to prove that they were better than others.

Intro the passage - Paul is dealing with problems in the church of Corinth and we're in a section dealing with issues in public worship.

## Problem

Using communion to demonstrate social status!

1 Corinthians 11:17-22:

So first let's look at the problem! Turn in your new testament to first Corinthians chapter 11 and will start of verse 17 read with me:

*"But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not."*

Here's what's happening this passage:

### The Love Feast!

In the first century church there was a practice around the Lord's supper known as the love feast. For this feast every believer would bring their own food, rich or poor everybody brought something whatever they could, and the food was all combined into a common table. It created a great feast that everyone which share in, it's basically a church potluck. ***It was supposed to be this beautiful act of*** tearing down social divisions and bringing the community of faith together in fellowship.

### The Rich Feasted Privately!

However in the church of Corinth ***this love feast turned ugly,***

Here's what happened:

1. The rich brought a feast. To show off!
2. The poor (often slaves) brought little.
3. The rich instead of sharing, huddled together and quickly ate all of their food.
4. The poor would be humiliated and go hungry!

**What was intended to tear down the walls and bring people together became just another opportunity for people to say to others "I'm better than you and look I can prove it!"**

Paul says to them: ***What?! Am I supposed to congratulate you for what you're doing?*** I don't know what that is but that is not the Lord's supper!!!

### **Question**

In thinking about what was going on in Corinth I started to wonder about what this issue of superiority looks like in the church today?

This could be a little dangerous but I thought I'd pose the question to all of you this morning: **"How do Christians today attempt to prove that they're better than other believers?"**

Thanks for your thoughts... I think?! I had a couple of thoughts myself.

## **2. Bible Knowledge.**

I think one of the ways that Christians show superiority to others is through Bible knowledge.

You know, the guy who always has to be the first to answer the questions or correct someone else for minor mistakes.

It's the idea that I'm a better Christian because I know all the answers.

I know where ***this temptation is biggest for me***, it's ***when someone quotes a passage***, I always feel compelled to chime in either with the reference or finishing the verse, ***I do that with Mark all the time!*** :) I want him to know that I know the verse too!

## **2. Acts of Service.**

I wonder if at times our serving can provide fuel for feelings of superiority?

I think sometimes we can look at our good deeds and the perceived lack of good deeds of others and allow ourself to feel a bit superior.

### 3. Worship.

I think at times our **preferred style of worship** can be a cause of feeling of pride and superiority.

If we're **really expressive** in worship we could look at others who are more contemplative and think "***Why don't worship more passionately like I do?***"

and the reverse is also true.

Those more contemplative in worship could look at more expressive worshippers and think "***Man, people need to stop the show and just worship God from their heart, like me!***"

Notice that these are all good things!

- it's good to learn the scriptures,
- it's good to serve,
- it's good to worship deeply (*regardless of whether you're expressive or reserved.*)

The issue here is the attitude of pride twisting something good into something destructive.

This is what was happening in Corinth!

*Man, aren't you glad that's not happening here at Knollwood?! We're so much better than them, aren't we? ...wait, no! See? I fell into it that quickly!!*

Anyway, this is a serious problem that must be dealt with.

#### **Purpose**

Remember Jesus & eliminate boasting!

1 Corinthians 11:23-26:

So how does Paul deal with this problem?

He reminds the Corinthians about the purpose of communion. Let's read verses 23-26 in chapter 11:

*"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it,*

*in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”*

Paul reminds the Corinthians that the purpose in celebrating the Lord’s Table is *to remember what God has done for us in Christ!*

When we celebrate communion **we remember that** at one time we were:

- Lost in our sin
- Hopelessly far from God

**BUT** Jesus changed all that!

- He made it possible for us to know God
- He rescued us from the trouble we’d gotten ourselves into
- He gave us hope and a future and a second chance.

And as it turns out, remembering Jesus, is exactly what these corinthian believers needed!

You see, **remembering what Jesus did eliminates boasting and the search for status!**

When we remember what a mess our lives were and that only the broken body and spilled blood of the Son of God could free us from our prison.... well, what exactly do we have to feel proud about?

*The communion table proves beyond any doubt that I’m not better than anyone!*

It was important for the Corinthians to remember that, and it’s important that we remember that.

### **Penalty**

Examine yourselves to avoid judgement!

1 Corinthians 11:27-32:

What is going on in Corinth around the Lord’s Table is seriously destructive to the

Church itself  
**and**

It’s witness in that city.

As such Paul gives them a strict warning in verses 27-32, let’s read:

*“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.”*

What’s Paul’s message to these Christians who are using the Lord’s Supper as...

- an extravagant party
- designed to make them look superior
- while humiliating the poor?

### **Examine yourselves!**

Paul tells them to take a good hard look at what they’re doing and to stop it!

Paul tells them that **"What you're doing is so grotesque that some of you have died!"**

That’s crazy! God, rather than let them continue to:

Tear the church apart  
AND

Ruin it’s witness in the city

has taken some of them them home.

Notice, they haven't lost their salvation, just their lives on Earth.

### **Procedure**

Celebrate in a way that brings people together!

1 Corinthians 11:33-34:

Paul finishes by giving them **some practical steps** to begin repair this damaging situation. Let’s read verses 33-34:

*“So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.”*

Paul, basically tells them two things:

**First, wait for each other.** Rich people, stop getting there early and having your own little private show off parties.

**Second, if** you're so hungry that you can't share the food you brought to the pot-luck, **then** eat something at home before you come over, so you can share.

This is basic stuff, the communion meal is supposed to be about **remembering** Jesus and **celebrating** the unity we have in him, *so stop doing things that ruin that!*

### **Practically for Knollwood**

So that's what's going on in this passage and that's what it means to the church in Corinth, but what about us?

What can we learn from this situation and Paul's instructions on dealing with it?

Well, I think we can learn several things.

1. I think as believers it's obvious that **we're called to celebrate what God has done in Jesus!**

And that's what we're gonna do right now!

### ***Celebrate Communion***

2. Something else I think we can learn from this passage is the need to **ruthlessly battle pride and superiority in our lives!**

This issue was ruining the church in Corinth and we should learn from their example.

In a moment of self-reflection its worth asking ourselves:

*"In what ways am I susceptible to feelings of superiority?"*

***and***

*How do those feeling show up in my actions?"*

3. I think a final point of application from this passage is for us to **look for ways to help the church be a family.**

That was a big issue in the passage Something meant to bring people together was tearing them apart.

Here's the question I'd like you to think about:

*“What does it look like, for me to help **this church** be more of a family?”*

What kind of powerful, wonderful, beautiful things could happen around here if the 200+ people in the room this morning began thinking that way!

I'd love to know what you come up with! Please email me!

Pray with me...