

Introduction to “Common Words Teaching Uncommon Truth”

God Speaks Using Common Words

Throughout human history, God has spoken to man (Gen. 1:28; Heb. 1:1). In His wisdom, God had some of those words written down (Scripture, 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Better than any other author, He would know how to speak so that all could understand. Thus, God did not create a new language through which He would speak to man. He would speak through words that His hearers already knew. Further, the Holy Spirit did not create new “spiritual words” but used common words, already in existence and common use allowing all to understand. Even when there were spiritual ideas which had to be taught, God often compared the spiritual idea to a physical object or idea that everyone already understood—most commonly seen in parables.

God can take what is common and make something uncommon. He took the common dust of the earth and created an uncommon creature: man. He took a common rib and made another uncommon creature: woman. Likewise, God can also take common words and add a meaning that enriches our understanding of previously unknowable ideas, such as who God is (Father), who man is (Children), and how man ought to live (Disciple). He did the same in Israel. For example, the word “tabernacle” simply means “tent,” but when God told Israel to keep certain items in the tabernacle, He did not mean in any tent but in “the tent.” God could have created a special word or name for that series of connected curtains and rods, but He often just called it “the tabernacle.” This common word was given a special “uncommon” meaning and was a holy, uncommon place.

- Can you think of another occasion when God took a common word and gave it a specific, unique meaning or application?

Jesus Spoke to the Common Man

And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Matthew 7:28-29)

And the common people heard Him gladly. (Mark 12:37)

One of the reasons Jesus is our model for teaching is because His audience understood Him. Jesus created all things, so He could have spoken about complex subjects. He could have been recognized as the chief scholar by the most highly educated of the land. He could have gone to Greece and put their greatest philosophers to shame. But Jesus spent His few years on earth primarily among “the common people.” When He spoke, they could understand His message. In Mark 12, Jesus had been addressing the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, and scribes and their attempts to confuse and entrap Jesus. He answered their twisted “complicated” questions with plainness and truth that the common people appreciated. Jesus’ plain speech included warning that the scribes and other religious leaders were blind guides (Mk. 12:38; Matt. 15:14).

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-21 and discuss why some accept Jesus’ message and others do not.

God Wants Man to Understand

As the common man understood Jesus, God wants all men to understand the Bible. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek. The word “Koine” means “common.” It was written in the language of the common man. The New King James Version is written at a seventh-grade reading level, and even people who cannot read are able to hear others read it and understand it (For comparison, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* is written at an eleventh-twelfth grade reading level).

On a few occasions in the New Testament we find words that are not very commonly used—in fact, they may only be used when people talk about spiritual things. Men have called some of these words “ecclesiastical words,” or “words related to the church or clergy” (but is the Bible written only to the church? The Bible is certainly not written to the clergy because among Christians, there was no clergy!). At other times, they are words that have a similar meaning to a more common words (Americans typically “slice” bread instead of “breaking” it), often been used to mean something different than they used to mean (such as “bishop”), or fallen completely out of the vocabulary of many people (Christ). This problem exists in a very small number of words,

but the problem exists. The solution is for us to be diligent workmen so we can understand these words and help others to understand them as we teach them (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:16).

In these eleven lessons, we're going to identify a few words that you typically only use or hear when you are reading or talking about the Bible. The goal of these lessons is to help us see the common, average meaning of these words. When we grasp that common meaning, then we will have a better understanding of the *uncommon* meaning that God wanted you to think about when you heard that word in His Word. Here are the words we will be studying--

1. Scripture
2. Gospel
3. Christ
4. Church
5. Baptize
6. Fellowship (1)
7. Fellowship (2)
8. Fellowship (3)
9. Break bread (1)
10. Break bread (2)
11. Pastor/Elder/Bishop

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Scripture: A Common Word Teaching Uncommon Truth [1]

The word “Scripture” is used by almost all religions worldwide to describe the book they consider to be “holy.” So, a Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian might all claim “What the Scripture says is true.” So, what is Scripture?

The English word Scripture, generally means “written.” You can see that reflected in other English words such as script and scribe. The Greek word that is translated “Scripture” is *graphe*. The English word *autograph* shows the occasional connection between English and Greek words.

So the word “Scripture” basically means something written—that’s common. You probably see and make writings every day. But when the Bible uses the word “Scripture,” it does not refer to just any writing, but THE writings. It appears 51 times in the New Testament. Let’s notice three passages--

2 Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

A. Obviously, God has not inspired everything that has ever been written, but God has inspired all of “the writings.”

B. One reason why these writings are called “the writings” (Scripture) is because of the unique benefits they offer. Name everything you can find that this verse says Scripture is profitable for. Then choose one of those items and find a specific Scripture that does that. (For example, Scripture is profitable for making the man of God complete. He is made complete in part by fully arming him with the armor of God (Eph. 6:14-17). No other book can prepare the man of God for spiritual battle with Satan)

2 Peter 1:20-21 ... knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The “private interpretation” of verse 20 is equal to the “will of man” in verse 21. The prophecies of Scripture did not originate with any human.

If you have a Bible dictionary define the word “moved.”

Why is it important to know that Scripture came by the will of God, not the will of man?

2 Pet. 3:15-16 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

What did Peter say about the wisdom Paul had?

What did Peter say people would do with Paul’s writings?

Explain how this verse proves that Peter viewed Paul’s writings as Scripture.

The skepticism and misinformation that is common in our society today makes it worth the time to firm up our faith in the Bible as true Scripture.

1. It has been charged that the collection of books in the Bible were selected from among many available books and called Scripture by man. According to this theory, the books that were chosen were those books which fit the preferred teachings and practices of the day. Thus man, not God, hand-selected "Scripture." Some people even say that the writers themselves were simply writing private letters and had no idea that their letters would be publicized, preserved, and preferred in the future (I was told this by a seminary-trained "Methodist Reverend"!!).

While the books of the New Testament are typically personal letters, the content proves them to be much more than just an average letter. Answer these questions to strengthen your confidence in God's writings.

The book of Acts gives a record of private conversations between civil leaders Acts 5:33-40; 25:13-22; 26:31-32. How could Luke have known the content of these conversations?

In Romans 16:25, Paul wants them to be established according to what things?

In 1 Corinthians 4:6, what did Paul say should guide their thinking?

In 1 Corinthians 14:37, what did Paul say he was writing that is different than an average personal letter?

2. How do we know that all the essential books are in the Scripture and none are missing?

A. There is benefit from digging into the past two thousand years of document evidence and discussions of this subject. For time sake, we'll take a different approach.

B. The prophecy and modern presence of the Old Testament proves that when God reveals something, He is wise enough to have it recorded and powerful enough to ensure its preservation (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

C. Since the New Testament books fulfill the Old Testament prophecies, the connection between the two is certain. God is equally involved in the OT as He is in the NT.

D. Knowing His promise that His word will not pass away (Isa. 40:8; 1 Pet. 1:23), we can have all confidence that God has preserved the words we need to prepare for judgment and eternity. He would not let them be lost, leaving us hopeless and helpless!

E. Without doubt, God's providence has successfully ensured the preservation of His word. The fact that He could do this *without* miraculous intervention is just as amazing as if He had miraculously preserved it.

F. All accusations and insinuations against the Bible's preservation and accuracy ultimately cast doubt upon God and His ability to accomplish His plan to reveal His will for mankind's salvation. You have no reason to doubt that, unless you are simply determined to ignore the facts.

Closing questions

1. What is the common meaning of the word "Scripture"?

2. What is the uncommon, God-given meaning of the word "Scripture"?

3. Why can't all religious books, from all religions be considered Scripture?

Gospel: A Common Word Teaching Uncommon Truth [2]

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

The gospel has an undeniable presence in the history of the United States of America and world, far surpassing the influence of man-made religious books (Koran, Book of Mormon, etc). And though the word “gospel” is generally used in a spiritual way, the word gospel is so engrained in America, Americans have used the expression “That’s the gospel truth!”. Sadly, fewer people know the true gospel from which that saying came and even fewer believe “gospel” to be synonymous with “truth.”

Why is “gospel” a fitting word to use when identifying the message of Jesus Christ? Let’s study!

I. Meaning

A. In the first century, when the Holy Spirit chose the word translated “gospel” (*euaggelion*) to represent the entire message of salvation through Jesus Christ, He did not invent a new word. He simply added a new meaning to a common word. The Romans used this word when speaking of good news, especially news of victory (battle, election, birth of a child, approaching wedding¹).

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things! (Rom. 10:15). When we hear “gospel,” we rightly think of the Bible, and we ought to include in that thought that it is a book of the good news of victory!

B. “Gospel” meant “good news,” and the one who spoke it was, so to speak, a “gospelist” (*euaggelistes* 2 Tim. 4:5). We say “evangelist,” but it is unfortunate that in English “gospel” and “evangelist” are not more obviously connected. They ought to be connected in our mind.

- In our last lesson, we learned that when the Holy Spirit used the word “Scripture” to identify His message, He was emphasizing “writing.” What was the Holy Spirit emphasizing by choosing the word “gospel”?

- Before the word came to have a spiritual connection, in what situation might Roman people have used the word that is translated “gospel”?

II. The Message

A. Facts

1. Physical reality Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John record most of the facts (people, places, events) that are the foundation of the message of victory (Lk. 1:2-4; Jn. 21:24). These facts establish the credibility upon which the rest of the gospel is built. If the Bible’s record is accurate when it tells us “who” did “what,” and “where, when, why, and how” they did it, then we are forced to believe the rest of the message, which includes--

2. Spiritual reality (ideas/concepts, beings, places, events) Romans 1:20 tells us that some things that cannot be seen are understood by what can be seen. That is true with the gospel—the truth of the physical facts assure us that the spiritual facts are true. Spiritual facts like truth, good, justice, mercy, faith, humility, love, heaven, God, angels, Satan, hell, unclean, evil, wicked, selfish, lust, etc. cannot be seen like matters of physical reality. So who can define or identify them? Following the trail of the facts of physical reality is the only way to find those answers. Without the facts of physical reality, all the facts of spiritual reality become unclear, vague, and indefinable or merely personal—and that’s how most people like it. So beware, when you hear men question some part of the physical reality of the Bible (literal six-day creation, worldwide flood, Old Testament miracles, claim “Jesus had a wife!” etc.). They are not just attacking the physical events—they are attacking the spiritual reality built upon those physical events.

- What would you say to someone who said “It doesn’t matter whether or not Jesus ever lived. The way of life the Bible describes is the same either way.”?

¹ Kittel, Gerhard. Theological Dictionary of The New Testament, Vol. II, tenth edition, p710-711.

B. Instructions The gospel is not merely a story of events and ideas, nor is it only a message of the victory of Jesus--it is also a plan of victory for all mankind if they obey the gospel (Rom. 10:16). Obedience to the gospel is more than outward actions. What do these verses tell us we must do with the gospel?

1. _____ Acts 15:7; Rom. 10:17
2. _____ Acts 15:7
3. _____ Rom. 10:16 (Heb. 5:8-9)

- Why would "instructions" be considered "good news, glad tidings"?
- How do men commonly respond to the idea of "instructions"? Why?
- To what victories will the gospel lead us?

C. Promises The "good news" involves the past, present, *and future*. Peter spoke of *great and precious promises* (2 Pet. 1:4). When Paul preached the gospel, it included the hope of the gospel (Col. 1:23). As Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." (1 Cor. 15:19) What good is a temporary victory if it ends in defeat?

Immediate salvation When we learn and believe God's promise that "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" then by faith we can gain the victory of overcoming the world (Mk. 16:16; 1 Jn. 5:4). When we do, we are saved while we await--

Eternal salvation ...*receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.* (1 Pet. 1:9)

Name any three promises God makes within the gospel.

III. Mangled by Man

A. Man says the gospel is only a story. Some say it is just a myth. Others say the gospel records real events, but the gospel is only the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The rest of the Bible is not the gospel, according to this idea.

* Choose one of these claims and use the points above to answer it.

B. Man says the gospel is not a law. A common, and typically useful, Bible encyclopedia (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia), tries to limit the gospel by saying "We must note the clear antithesis between the law and the gospel," then quoting Martin Luther who claimed the gospel does not command "us to do anything".² This distinction is false and is the result of men failing to recognize that the gospel is contrasted with the law of Moses, not all law. To say that the gospel is not the law of God for us is wrong.

* What does Romans 10:16 teach us that we must do with the gospel?

C. "Gospel versus Doctrine" While some deny the gospel is God's law, others say that it is not the doctrine of God--distinguishing "gospel" from "doctrine." In 1 Timothy 1:10-11 Paul spoke of many things that are *contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust*. The doctrine is according to the gospel. They cannot be separated.

This false teaching is then the foundation for almost unlimited fellowship. Those who say this will often then say "We may disagree on matters of doctrine as long as we agree on matters of the gospel," putting matters such as worship, marriage-divorce-remarriage, and duties of the local church into the category of "doctrine."

What did John say about those who do not teach the *doctrine* of Christ in 2 John 9-11?

Conclusion Learning the meaning and message of the gospel not only prepares us to walk in the light but also prepares us for the defense of the gospel.

² International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, "Gospel" by David H. Bauslin

Christ: Common Words Teaching Uncommon Truth [3]

Among the various words in these series of studies, maybe this one is best understood but its importance makes it worth including it in these lessons. Since we must believe in and confess Jesus in order to be saved, we must understand who He is. Understanding the word “Christ” and how it applies to Jesus is an important part of faith in Him.

I. Meaning

The English word “Christ” is almost identical to the Greek word (Christos [Χριστός]). The basic meaning is “anointed,” which takes us back to the Old Testament practice of anointing someone with oil when they were chosen by God for some purpose. For example, when Samuel visited Jesse, he was looking for the son that God had selected as the next king. He looked at Eliab and thought that he was “the LORD’s anointed” (1 Sam. 16:6). The word “anointed” is the same as the word “messiah” and has exactly the same meaning as “christ.” Later, God identified David as His choice to be the next king, so *Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers* (1 Sam. 16:13). This made David an anointed, chosen king and by being anointed in front of others, all could know God’s decision. Saul and Solomon were also anointed when they were chosen as king by God (1 Sam. 10:1; 1 Kg. 1:39). So the New Testament word “Christ” gets its meaning from this Old Testament practice. For the Hebrews, this was a fairly common word, but even they recognized that there was a special “Messiah” coming that was unlike all the other people God had anointed.

- Besides potential kings, can you think of anyone else that was anointed with oil in the Old Testament?

II. New Testament Message: Jesus is the Christ

A. In the Old Testament, there were many “messiahs” or “christs”—anyone whom God selected and anointed. Let this impress you as a piece of evidence for the Bible being true as it records how God laid the groundwork of His plan to save us through customs like this in Israel. As we saw, kings and priests were the main ones anointed which was a shadow of the good things to come---that the coming Savior would be both a king and priest. No other “religion” has evidence like this for their book or leader.

- What other customs in Israel were a “shadow of the good things to come” through Jesus?

B. Jesus is anointed at His baptism Acts 10:38; Luke 3:21-22

1. Peter says that when the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, this was His anointing.

2. The voice of the Father from heaven ensured that all understood the purpose of this anointing—Jesus is the One God chose. This would become more clear as Jesus taught and performed signs and wonders, but this was made public at Jesus’ baptism when God provided a visible display of who He had chosen by anointing Him.

- What did the presence of the Father and Holy Spirit, at Jesus’ baptism, teach?

C. Jesus the Christ = Jesus the King One of the first messages that Jesus taught was that *the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matt. 4:17, 23). He did not immediately identify Himself as the king of that kingdom, but anyone watching closely would know. Read these verses and tell how the people of Jesus’ day could have known He was the king before He announced it---

Micah 5:2

Matthew 2:1-12

Luke 2:36-38

D. Jesus the Christ = Jesus the Priest Jesus' work as a priest, though alluded to in the Old Testament prophecies, is not emphasized much until after His ascension. The book of Hebrews gives it the most attention. Choose any two verses below and tell what is significant about Jesus as priest?

Hebrews 2:17 [9:11-12, 24-26]

Hebrews 4:15 [5:1-10]

Hebrews 7:12-14

Hebrews 7:24-25

Hebrews 10:19-22

III. If Today, Jesus Is Christ (King & Priest) Then---

A. Jesus is God for Micah said that the coming ruler was *from everlasting*. (Micah 5:2)

1. Many religious individuals and groups today claim to believe that Jesus is "Christ" but deny that He is God. The Bible shows that the two go "hand in hand."

B. We need His permission for what we do as members of His kingdom, priesthood (Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9).

1. Jesus has all authority, so He is in control (Mt. 28:18).

2. We must learn His teachings so we will know what boundaries He has placed on who we may marry, how we may worship, what we may do as a church, what our roles in life are, etc. All of this matters because Jesus is Christ.

C. Today, we can enter "the Holiest" (the Most Holy Place, God's presence) by worship (Heb. 10:19-22)

1. Under the law of Moses, only the high priest could enter the most holy place, where the ark of the covenant was which represented God's presence.

2. The Hebrew writer says that Jesus is the high priest over the house (dwelling place) of God and He permits us to boldly enter "the Holiest" and draw near to God. On earth, we are never more near to God than when we enter His presence by both public and private worship. Do you view the assembling of ourselves together as a time to enter God's presence?

Conclusion "Christ" was not as uncommon a word to the Jews as it is to Americans, but when Jesus came, God began teaching and showing men that His choice is always best. And through His choice, showing Jesus to be Christ, many uncommon blessings are available to all the world.

Church: A Common Word Teaching Uncommon Truth [4]

If someone asked you what “church” means, what would you say? What would they learn about what “church” means if they heard you say, “I’m going to the church...,” “I’m assembling with the church,” “The church sure was cold this morning,” or “I left my Bible at church last night.” Which of these helps others to understand “church” and which of these will easily cause confusion about the meaning of “church”?

I believe that sometimes we use the word church in a way that we have heard all of our lives, but never really stopped to think about. Oh, “we know what we mean,” but do we know what we are saying? Are our words spiritually helpful as they not only train our own mind, but also inform others of what we believe? Let’s give serious thought to the word “church.”

I. Meaning

A. Like the other words we’ve studied, when the Holy Spirit used the word *ekklesia* (usually translated “church”), it was not a new word. Everyone in the Roman world knew that this word meant “an assembly, a congregation.” It did not imply whether it was a political, religious, public, private, early, or late assembly or whether they were outside, inside, on top of, or underneath any particular structure. It simply communicated the idea of people who were together for a common purpose. This common meaning is evident in Acts 7:38 where the word “congregation” or in Acts 19:32, 39, 41 where the word translated “assembly” is *ekklesia*, the same word that is often translated “church.”

The word *ekklesia* is a word with two parts, one part meaning “out” or “from” and the other part meaning “call.” In 1 Peter 2:9, these two parts are found separately when Peter says “... who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” That is what the church, the assembly, is—people who are called out of one place to another place, where others are together for some purpose.

- What has to happen for there to be an assembly of any type?
- Read Acts 7:38 in the King James and New King James (or NASB). What do you notice that relates to our study?

B. The Holy Spirit gave the common word an additional and new meaning by often using it to identify the group of people saved by the blood of Christ (Eph. 5:25). Whether speaking of all saved people (Matthew 16:18), saved people mutually committed to working together in a specific place (1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2; Rom. 16:16), or saved people on an occasion when they are physically together in one place for spiritual purposes (1 Cor. 11:18; 14:34, used this way least often), this narrow use of this word gave an uncommon meaning to a common word. It was many years before this word became strictly a “spiritual” word, as it is today. When you hear or use the word “church” think “assembly,” “congregation,” or “people who have been called together.”

- Which of the above meanings fits the phrase “I left my Bible at church” or “The church sure was cold”?
- When the saved are identified as “the church”—what are they “called out” of and what are they called into?

C. Flawed uses

1. “Church” was never used to identify the structure where people assembled, as the word is most commonly used today. This modern idea of the church developed because some people view the church’s building the way the Hebrews viewed the tabernacle or temple (thus, many religious groups have a “sanctuary” Ex. 25:8). In the New Testament, Christians never built a sanctuary. This use may also have developed as people often associate a place with the people who use it. Whatever the reason is, let us keep the distinction clear, especially for our children who hear what we say but are still learning what those words mean.

2. “Church” never identified a group of people who belonged to Jesus but had never accepted His blood by His baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13 says that we are *baptized into one body*). Thus, any religious group today that is composed of people who have never learned how God saves man or who teach another way of salvation can only be a “church” in the ordinary meaning of the word (assembly, as Acts 7:38; 19:32) and not as the Holy Spirit typically used the word. When the same word has multiple meanings, it requires us to use our words with thought and care and to recognize when men abuse the words God has spoken.

3. “Churches” never identified different groups distinct from each other in areas of belief, teaching, and practice which God considers important. When the beliefs, teachings, and practices which unite a group of people are the product of man, they can only be a “church” in the ordinary meaning of the word (assembly, as Acts 7:38; 19:32) and not as the Holy Spirit typically used the word. When the same word has multiple meanings, it requires us to use our words with thought and care and to recognize when men abuse the words God has spoken.

4. We should remember that Christ will even remove His approval from churches which once belonged to Him (Rev. 2-3). That group then goes from being “His assembly” to merely “an assembly”—that change is subtle but significant and known only by careful observation, rarely by a mere glimpse of a sign.

II. The Message: Why “Church”?

A. It is easy to see why God identified saved people as a body, family, and nation, but why does He call His people a church, assembly, congregation? Most people today view “church” as simply a religious club and have no idea of the practical value of that word. Do you? What does this word teach us about His people?

1. It teaches us that we are not alone. An assembly of one is not an assembly at all! Get a concordance and notice how many times the words “one another” or “together” appear from Acts – Revelation. By choosing the word translated “church” God is teaching us that we are a group of people who work with and rely on each other. And knowing that there are churches of Christ who send greetings would also remind any single congregation that there are others doing the same work (Rom. 16:16).

- Name someone in Scripture who knew, or learned, the value of not being alone while serving God.

2. It reminds us that we were “called out” of sin and into His light. God has not called us out of sin and then set us free to roam wherever we want to go. Since “church” means people who are called *out of...*, they must also have been called *in to*. What does it mean to be in--

Christ (Rom. 8:1)?

the light (1 Jn. 1:7)?

the grace of God (Acts 13:43)?

the faith (Acts 14:22)?

3. It teaches us that the assembling of ourselves is important. By calling us “the church,” God shows that Christians are people who assemble with each other. The word “church” does not make this as clear as “assembly, congregation” does, but they all have the same meaning. So it is no surprise that when some Christians were forsaking “the assembling of ourselves together,” it was a cause of concern to God (Heb. 10:25). How can you belong to the assembly but have a habit of forsaking the assembling of ourselves? Hebrews 10:24 reveals that this forsaking is, in part, a failure to *consider one another* (selfishness). And, since we typically assemble to worship God, forsaking this occasion sends a message to God also. Why would God call us “an assembly if “the assembling of ourselves together” was optional?!

- Who is the “one another” that we ought to consider and who is the “ourselves” with whom we assemble?
- What is the difference between “missing” and “forsaking” your job?
- What is the difference between “missing” and “forsaking” the assembling of ourselves?
- The fact that some were forsaking the assembling of themselves is mentioned in Hebrews 10:25. Thus, who noticed their absence and the reason for it?

4. It teaches us to work together for a common purpose. Meaningful assemblies rarely happen by accident. They require planning, leadership, submission, and participation. The Father, Son, and Spirit accomplished each of these to establish the church (assembly). Planning, leadership, submission, and participation is also necessary for the church to do its work, both in and outside of our assemblies.

- As the Father, Son, and Spirit worked together, who are we told:
 - * Planned? (Eph. 3:11; 1 Cor. 2:9)
 - * Submitted? (Heb. 5:8; Jn. 15:26)
 - * Led? (Jn. 6:38; 15:26)
 - * Participated?
- As the church works together, who are we told:
 - * Plans? (Acts 6:3,5; Heb. 10:24)
 - * Submits? (1 Pet. 5:5; 1 Tim. 2:12)
 - * Leads? (1 Pet. 5:2, 4-5)
 - * Participates? (Acts 2:42)

Conclusion We have a difficult challenge in teaching people about the church, but we can only teach what we know. When people view or hear us speak of “church” as a building, they see no spiritually important difference between one “church” and another. When people begin viewing “church” as the people who are called out of sin, to work together following the teachings of Jesus, they will be one step closer to belonging the assembly of Jesus Christ.

Outside of reading or discussing the Bible, when do you hear someone use the word “baptize”? For most of us, hardly ever. No one today uses the word “baptize” when talking about dyeing garments, sunken ships, or drawing water from a vessel, but during the first century, they did. The word “baptize” was a common word used on a regular basis in a variety of contexts, and the action represented by the word “baptize” was chosen by the Holy Spirit for an uncommon, amazing purpose.

I. Meaning

A. John the Baptist *came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.* (Mark 1:4) When John did this preaching, no one looked at each other wondering what “baptism” was because they “baptized” every day. Vine’s Dictionary says this word “was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another.”³ Two other dictionaries refer to this word being used of ships that were “sunk.”⁴ For obvious reasons, this word was also associated with bathing and thus with cleaning but it did not always have that connection (dyeing, sunken ship). The point is, the Holy Spirit did not choose a “religious” word only understood by people who read Scripture but chose a common action represented by a common word because this teaching was for the common man!

B. Today, in the English language, the word “baptize” requires us to give a little more thought and study to what action is represented by this word because our society rarely uses this word on any other occasion. And when our society does use this word, they mean almost any use of water for spiritual purposes. Almost all English dictionaries include immersion, pouring, or sprinkling in their definition of “baptize.”

Since we don’t speak the Greek language, how can we know what action God expected when he told men to be “baptized”? Several different sources all lead to the same conclusion—

A. Bible verses related to baptism; Read each verse and be ready to discuss what these verses teach us about what baptism is.

1. Romans 6:4; Colossian 2:12
2. Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38-39
3. John 3:23

4. You do not have to be a Greek scholar to be sure that baptism is immersion and that sprinkling water or pouring water is not baptism. You simply have to be able to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15)!

B. Definitions given by individuals with a personal knowledge of the Greek language.

A personal knowledge of the Greek language is not essential to understand God’s will. While we cannot rely primarily upon the knowledge of others to establish our beliefs, finding qualified individuals with that knowledge can provide another way to define important words such as baptism. It is important to understand that these definitions are of the Greek word, not the English word.

1. Strong’s Greek Dictionary ““to immerse, submerge; to makewhelmed (i.e. fully wet)”

2. An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words by W.E. Vine, M.A. “to baptize, primarily a frequentative form of *bapto*, to dip, was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc. Plutarchus uses it of the drawing of wine by dipping the cup into the bowl (*Alexis*, 67) and Plato, metaphorically, of being overwhelmed with questions (*Euthydemus*, 277 D).”

3. Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament “I. 1. prop. *to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge*, (of vessels sunk, Polyb. 1, 51, 6.; 8,8,4; of animals Diod. 1, 36). 2. *to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water*; in the mid. and the 1aor. pass *to wash one’s self, bathe*. . . 3. metaph. *to overwhelm*. . . II. In the N.T. it is used particularly of the rite of sacred ablution. . . viz. an immersion in water. . . a. The word is used absolutely, *to administer the rite of ablution, to baptize*. . .”

4. We don’t have to understand every detail that these men give in order to see the main point—whether “baptized” is being used in a common or spiritual way, it has the same meaning.

³ An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words by W.E. Vine, M.A.

⁴ Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament & Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. I, pages 529-530

- How can Hebrews 10:22 assure us that baptism is not sprinkling?

- What will happen if we dismiss this controversy, saying “This is too technical. We should accept someone as a Christian no matter what use they made of water, if they did it with the purpose of obeying Jesus.”?

II. The Message

A. Being dipped or immersed in water is probably something that we have done all our lives for various reasons (bathing, recreational swimming), so in reality most people have been baptized in their life at one point or another. Have all of them been saved? Of course not. By this we come to learn the difference between baptism and baptism in the name of the Lord

- From what we learn of the common meaning of baptism, what is something you have “baptized” this week?

- What does it mean to be baptized in the name of the Lord?

- How does the Lord’s baptism differ from ordinary occasions of baptism?

- Is it beneficial or confusing to have one word for someone(thing) going under water for ordinary reasons (immerse, dip) and another word for someone going under water in submission to God (baptize)?

B. Ordinary occasions of immersion serve a purpose altogether different from the immersion preached by Jesus and His apostles. What do these verses tell us about the purpose of baptism?

- Mark 16:16

- Acts 2:38

- Acts 22:16

- Romans 6:3

- Galatians 3:27

- Colossians 2:12

- Hebrews 10:22

Fellowship: A Common Word Teaching Uncommon Truth [6- Part I]

“Food, Fun, and Fellowship,” “Singing and Fellowship,” and “Coffee Fellowship” are found on flyers and websites of almost any religious group that identifies themselves as a church, including some who claim to be of Christ. But, apart from its many uses by various religious groups, this English word is rarely used in the daily speech of Americans.

When Bible words are limited to “only spiritual use,” many times they are not well-understood. It is worth repeating that the Holy Spirit did not invent a “spiritual language” when revealing Scripture. Rather, He chose words already in common use to help men understand the will of the Lord. So, what does God want us to know about “fellowship”? Let’s study and rightly divide the word of truth.

I. Passages [with Greek word and definition from Strong’s Dictionary found in *PowerBible CD* version 5.2]

1 Cor. 10:16 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?

- *communion* (*koinonia*- partnership, i.e. (literally) participation, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction:--(to) communicate(-ation), communion, (contri-)distribution, fellowship.)

1 Cor. 10:20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

- *fellowship* (*koinonos*- a sharer, i.e. associate:--companion, X fellowship, partaker, partner)

1 Cor. 10:21 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.

- *partake* (*metecho*- to share or participate)

2 Cor. 6:14 For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

- *fellowship* (*metoche*- participation, i.e. intercourse:--fellowship)

- *communion* (*koinonia*- same as in 1 Cor. 10:16)

Eph. 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

- *fellowship* (*sugkoinoneo*- to share in company with, i.e. co-participate in:--communicate (have fellowship) with, be partaker of.)

Phil. 4:14 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.

- *shared in* (*sugkoinoneo*)

Phil. 4:15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.

- *shared* (*koinoneo*- to share with others (objectively or subjectively):--communicate, distribute, be partaker)

* None of us read, write, or speak Greek so why have I included all these foreign words? To help you to see that Christians who read the Scriptures two thousand years ago faced the same challenges in their reading and studying as we do—they had different words used in different passages which sometimes had similar or identical meanings. They had to be *workmen* if they were going to *rightly divide the word of truth* and *understand what the will of the Lord is* (2 Tim. 2:15; Eph. 5:16). Are you also willing to work?

II. Further Definition and Synonyms

A. The basic meaning of fellowship, whether in English or Greek, is “partnership” (the similarity between “fellow” and “partner” makes the connection clear). The context will reveal what type of partnership is meant (financial, spiritual, social, etc.). As seen above, other meanings of this word include “participation, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction:--(to) communicate(-ation), communion, (contri-)distribution.” It is used to identify a relationship or the actions which occur as a result of that relationship and which contribute to the purpose of that relationship.

B. 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 increases our understanding of fellowship as well as any dictionary can. There are five words in this context that are used synonymously with “fellowship.” What are they?

These six words help us understand what it means to be “partners” or “fellows” with others. We’ll refer back to these verses and words later in the lesson.

III. Fellowship, partnership with God

A. Constant Fellowship (the relationship) The Bible is God's effort to bring men back into fellowship (partnership) with Him which we lose when we sin. We cannot have both God and sin. *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie* (1 Jn. 1:6). He is calling the lost world *into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord* (1 Cor. 1:9). This fellowship exists when He claims us AND we claim Him—both parts are essential (2 Cor. 6:16). This relationship is fellowship.

- What is the only barrier that hinders fellowship between God and man?
- When does God claim man?
- When may man rightly claim (belong to) God?
- Name two blessings that come with being in partnership, fellowship with God.

B. Fellowship In Action (the action produced by the relationship contributing to the purpose of the relationship) Anytime I “work together” with God by doing His will, I am accepting what He offers, and He will accept what I do. These actions are the result of the relationship and are also called fellowship (sharing, participating). For example, in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, eating the bread is called “communion,” making us “communers” with Christ, and in 1 Peter 4:13, suffering for doing right makes us “partakers,” as we partake of (share in) His suffering. These actions, being the direct result of our relationship with God, are fellowship.

- Is prayer a way to partake of the blessings God offers in Christ?
- Read Philippians 4:6 and identify the blessings God offers and we receive when we pray in faith.
- Read 2 Corinthians 1:5-7. When we partake of suffering, what else does God offer us?
- If God offers a spiritual blessing in Christ and you accept it, is this fellowship?

Conclusion

I hope our study helps us to better understand the fellow(partner)ship that God provides for us in Christ. May we grow in an understanding of our fellowship with God which will also help us to understand fellowship with His people.

Fellowship: A Common Word Teaching Uncommon Truth [7- Part II]

With an understanding of the word “fellowship” and how it applies between God and man, let’s consider the will of the Lord concerning fellowship between mankind.

IV. Fellowship, partnership with man

A. Constant Fellowship (the relationship) When we enter fellowship with God then we also have fellowship with His people (1 Jn. 1:7). Though we are many, we have all been baptized into one body (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:13), kingdom (Col. 1:13), church (Col. 1:18), and family (Eph. 2:19). This fellowship (partnership) exists with the rest of the body, even if we never see them or physically work together with them. *For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread* (1 Cor. 10:17). As long as our partnership with God continues, our fellowship with His people continues (1 Jn. 1:3). If our fellowship with God is broken by sin, naturally our partnership among His people is also automatically lost.

B. Fellowship In Action (the action produced by the relationship contributing to the purpose of the relationship) Fellowship is not only a word that identifies a relationship. It is also a word of action! While fellowship may exist between people we do not know or see, fellowship can also be offered or withheld and accepted or rejected. When fellowship is an action, it expresses our acceptance and encouragement of others based on their spiritual condition and life. This meaning of fellowship is seen in these verses. Discuss what action might be involved in these occasions of fellowship:

Acts 2:42

1 Corinthians 10:20

Galatians 2:9

Ephesians 5:11

Philippians 1:5

C. God’s View of Fellowship Between Men God approves of some occasions of fellowship and condemns others. To whom may we offer fellowship and from whom may we accept it?

1. Offering Fellowship In Galatians 2:9, Peter, James, and John gave “the right hand of fellowship” to Paul and Barnabas. Did they do this as an expression of friendliness? Would they have extended this to anyone? Paul says they did this when they “perceived the grace that had been given to me.” Notice two important factors which led Peter to offer fellowship to Paul: 1. Peter’s knowledge of God’s word. 2. Peter’s knowledge of Paul’s life. God approves of fellowship between all men who have received His grace of salvation in Christ.

- In what specific ways can we offer and express our fellowship to others today?
- When we offer fellowship to someone, in any way, what are we expressing to them?
- What are two important factors we must consider when deciding to whom to offer fellowship?

2. Withholding Fellowship

Review 2 Corinthians 6:14-16. When, or from whom, does Paul teach us to withhold fellowship?

Does this mean that we can have no friendship or relationship with anyone who is not a Christian? Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 and consider how it works together with 2 Corinthians 6 by answering these questions.

1. Does “keeping company” with someone mean we are having fellowship with them?

2. When would “keeping company” with an idolater or sexually immoral person turn into fellowship?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 10:27-29a. Paul shows that Christians have to understand when their actions among the lost will be perceived as fellowship or not. In Paul’s example, a Christian is in the home of an idol worshiper for a meal (no sin in this). Describe the difference between when the Christian should eat or not eat?

4. Beside refusing to fellowship sin, what does Ephesians 5:11 also tell us to do?

5. Find an example in Scripture where someone both avoided fellowship with sin and also reprovved it.

6. Name an occasion today where we must have no fellowship with sin and must reprove sin.

Conclusion

The more we understand and value fellowship between ourselves and God and ourselves and other men, the more we value God’s view of how we make our choices regarding fellowship. God has always intended that we have other spiritual partners with whom we could work under Christ. When we do not include God in how we think of and use fellowship, the benefit God intended is lost. Our next lesson will continue our meditation on how God wants us to view and use fellowship.

Fellowship: A Common Word Teaching Uncommon Truth [8- Part III]

Fellowship is typically a word that evokes good feelings because it brings to mind thoughts of acceptance and peace between God and man. But that acceptance and peace is based upon truth, and Satan is always working to disrupt that fellowship and peace by inserting sin. Regrettably, there are times when God no longer accepts the people He once accepted, and there are times when He expects us to do the same.

IV. Fellowship, partnership with man [continued from previous lesson]

C. God's View of Fellowship Between Men God approves of some occasions of fellowship and condemns others.

3. When must we end (retract) the fellow(partner)ship we once offered? The phrase "withdraw fellowship" is not in the Bible, but we may hear it often. Do we know what we mean when we say, hear, or do that?

In Corinth

1 Corinthians 5:2, 13 Paul says to "put away" from among you (or from yourselves) that person. Does this mean to physically force them out of the assembly when we worship? Keep reading the text--

1 Corinthians 5:4-5 *When you are gathered together... deliver such a one to Satan* This was a public announcement that acknowledged the individual's choice to follow Satan. They were not "delivering him to Satan" against his will but simply acknowledging his decision. By letting it be known that this one was following Satan, he is no longer recognized as being among them. Though the word "fellowship" is not used in this text, clearly they no longer view themselves as "partners" or "fellows" with this individual anymore.

-- What does 1 Timothy 1:18-20 tell us that Paul did individually?

In Thessalonica 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14a

What does Paul say to withdraw?

From whom does he say to do this?

Read verses 10-12 and comment on what we learn to do before withdrawing ourselves.

What does it mean to "note that person"?

Christ Does This Too In Revelation 2-3, Jesus promises to remove the lampstand of several congregations unless they repent. Jesus is willing to "withdraw His fellowship" from the churches who, in reality have left Him, though they may think or claim otherwise. Is He unkind, unloving, or impatient with them? No, but is simply doing what is best for them and those who could be influenced by their sin. No doubt we can learn from God's example what it means to "not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (2 Thess. 3:15)

What does Christ do, anywhere in Revelation 2-3, that helps us understand our duty to the unfaithful?

What we say While we may use many expressions not found in the Bible and "know what we mean by them," using the words and phrases of Scripture to identify what we do simplifies the learning and teaching process. "Excommunicate," "kick them out of the church," "run them off," "shooting our wounded" etc. neither identifies the action nor the goal of obeying God in this duty. Have you heard other words or phrases used of this responsibility that are or are not helpful?

4. And do not keep company with them (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:14b)

In addition to putting *away from yourselves that wicked person*, Paul also said "not to keep company with anyone named a brother" who persists in sin (1 Cor. 5:11). "Keeping company" is a phrase used only three times in the Bible, all within words of instruction of how to treat unfaithful Christians (1 Cor. 5:9, 11; 2 Thess. 3:14). What does "keeping company" mean? 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 makes it perfectly clear.

- With whom does Paul say we may keep company?

- If we did not keep company with them, what does Paul say we would have to do?

- Does keeping company with the people of this world imply that we approve of their life or are in fellowship with them?

- Since we can keep company with the world without showing approval of their spiritual condition and lives, may we also keep company with a Christian whose spiritual condition and life we [and God] cannot approve?

“Keeping company” simply means social association. Jesus was known and criticized for eating with sinners (Mk. 2:16, though obviously not when they were practicing their sin). Even God knows and provides for the just and the unjust but has no fellowship with the unjust (Mt. 5:45; 1 Jn. 1:5). Social association does not imply spiritual approval or disapproval because it is an association based on physical commonalities, not spiritual commonalities. God has decided that we can keep company with the world but have no fellowship with them. And God has decided that we cannot keep company with any brother who persists in sin, nor can we maintain fellowship with them.

V. Fellowship is not...

A. Anything a Christian does with another Christian

While the fellowship provided by Christ is not limited only to occasions and actions involving worship, neither does it apply to everything that Christians do together. Commonly today, people call almost anything that Christians do together “fellowship.” If they share in a game of basketball, a bucket of popcorn at a movie, or a common meal they call their enjoyable time together “fellowship.” It is also from this thinking that the phrase “Fellowship Hall” has come, making many people think that eating our daily bread together is something the church should offer (and often fund in various ways).

- From what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11, how do we know that occasions of “keeping company” are not occasions of fellowship?

B. Something offered to the lost world to attract them to come hear the message of salvation.

Sometimes a church of Christ, in connection with a gospel meeting, will invite the community to a “Fellowship Cook-Out” or to join them for “food, fun, and fellowship.” This shows that even Christians and churches of Christ today are using Bible words without thinking about the meaning of what they are saying. If they are doing that with the word “fellowship,” we are left to wonder what other Bible words they use but do not understand or simply misuse.

Keeping in mind the principles we have studied, may a church offer fellowship to the lost community?

Conclusion

This concludes our study of fellowship. “Fellowship,” like the other words in this series of lessons, is often viewed and used only as a “spiritual word,” but I hope we are learning that it is a common word representing a common idea—partnership. Then it is used in an uncommon, holy way—partnership with God and His faithful children. Once we understand what it is, we must understand the will of the Lord about fellowship and determine to follow His will at any price (Mt. 16:26).

Breaking Bread: A Common Word Teaching Uncommon Truth [9- Part I]

Breaking bread was a daily event in the life of everyone in days of Jesus' life on earth. Breaking the bread was the common way of dividing this essential part of most, if not all, meals (and sometimes simply meant "to eat"). Today, some Americans are more "refined" than that—breaking bread causes crumbs to scatter, so we slice the bread with a knife made for that specific purpose (sometimes its even an electric knife!), or we bake small loaves so everyone has their own.

Yet even in our country of wealth, where we have access to more variety of foods than possibly any other people in history, bread is still a constant part of our diet. Sure, some fad diets may tell you to "cut out the carbs," but the fact that we can choose not to eat bread and still live, shows how luxurious our lives really are (even if we think we live a pretty simple life). For mankind, bread is essential—always has been and always will be. Since it is so common, what can be uncommon about breaking bread? Let's study and see.

I. Occasions when bread was broken

Read all these verses, identify the setting/occasion when bread was broken, and add any related comments.

Mt. 14:19

Mt. 15:36

Mt. 26:26

Mk. 8:6, 19

Mk. 14:22

Lk. 22:19

Lk. 24:30

Acts 2:42

Acts 2:46

Acts 20:7

Acts 20:11

Acts 27:35

1 Cor. 10:16

1 Cor. 11:24

--Are there any other verses?

II. Distinguishing common from uncommon occasions of breaking bread in these passages

A. Some people read these verses and say that they are all talking about the same occasion—a common meal. Is that true? If not, how do we know when “breaking bread” is a common meal and when it is an “uncommon” meal? We can know by using both immediate context and comparing related passages.

B. The occasion in the context—is it a common, casual occasion or an occasion dedicated to God in worship?

1. Most of the occasions listed above involved eating due to hunger (the people Jesus was teaching, with the two men Jesus met on the road to Emmaus, Paul on the ship). These would obviously be common, casual occasions.

2. In the gospel accounts of Jesus introducing the Lord’s Supper, after they began eating the Passover and had various conversations, Jesus stops the disciples and gives thanks for the bread. Wouldn’t it seem strange to give thanks for the bread *after* they had been eating for a while? Jesus showed that they were about to eat for a different purpose than the Passover. His comments show that this eating and drinking was not a casual occasion simply intended to satisfy their hunger.

3. Paul reviews this occasion in his letter to the Corinthians (10:16-17, 21; 11:18-34). What does Paul say in 1 Corinthians that shows that the eating of which he writes was or was not a common meal? What was the purpose of the “uncommon” eating?

4. In Acts 2 the words “breaking bread” appear twice (v42, 46). We might think that since they are mentioned just a few verses apart that they must mean the same thing. Let’s study and see.

verse 42 Luke includes breaking bread alongside teaching, prayers, and fellowship---all being words of a strictly spiritual focus. There is nothing casual about these activities. This context alone defines the purpose for this occasion of breaking bread to be in memory of Jesus’ death. [1 Corinthians 11 shows that this eating was done *when you come together as a church...in one place* (v18, 20).]

- Did the disciples drink the cup also or only break bread? How do we know?

verse 46 Luke specifies that they were breaking bread *from house to house* and *eating their food*. Can you see the difference between this and verse 42? Obviously all three thousand saints were not gathering in one house to break bread. This is an example of godly homes showing hospitality (1 Pet. 4:9). [This sounds just like Paul’s admonition of 1 Corinthians 11:22, 34 to *eat at home*, whether their own home or in each others’ homes. Therefore, it was not the same eating as *when you come together as a church...in one place* (1 Cor. 11: 18, 20).]

Summarize the difference between “breaking bread” in verse 42 and verse 46.

5. Acts 20:7, 11 As in Acts 2, “breaking bread” is mentioned twice. We learned from studying Acts 2 that we cannot assume that these words always refer to the same thing, so let’s study, *rightly dividing the word of truth*.

verse 7 *The first day of the week* is given unique attention in the New Testament by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul. That, along with the statement that the disciples *came together* (remember 1 Cor. 11:18, 20), identifies this as *the assembling of ourselves together* for more than a mere casual occasion. This breaking bread is the Lord’s Supper.

verse 11 After restoring the life of Eutychus, Paul returned to the third floor and *broke bread*. Did Paul eat the Lord’s Supper or eat a common meal before beginning his journey? The entire verse is focused on what Paul did, saying nothing of the disciples. Luke says Paul came up, broke bread, talked, and left. Though clearly the brethren also came up, Luke says nothing about them. Luke himself was present on this occasion but does not say that “we broke bread” (notice “we” in verses 6, 13). If this were the Lord’s Supper, why would Luke only tell about Paul breaking bread? I believe the focus on Paul indicates that this time, he broke bread in preparation for his journey, not in memory of Jesus’ death (similar to Acts 2:46).

Conclusion Jesus chose the simple item, bread, to maintain the memory of His death. One of the world’s most common foods reminds us of the most uncommon Man and death the world has known.

Breaking Bread: A Common Word Teaching Uncommon Truth [10- Part II]

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4). This is happening today as men suggest various changes to the Lord's Supper—not merely changes to matters of judgment but changes to God's revelation concerning the Lord's Supper.

III. Modern efforts to make common what God has called uncommon

A. No pattern, limits on what to eat

1. "It was a church-sponsored outing. We were sitting on a windswept, chilly beach. We had sung a few songs around sunset All we had to serve were chips and cola. Yet it was marvelous! I had never before or since served chips and cola at the Lord's Supper, but the elements were insignificant... And we worshiped our God as we met at that open place, sand between our toes, swimming suits on, towels wrapped around us as we shivered around the fire and passed the chips and cola among us. We did it all 'in remembrance of Me.'"⁵

2. "...whether we choose to use wine or grape juice, hunks of bread or thin wafers, or even – as I have sometimes experienced it – Coca-cola and potato chips."⁶

3. "The Emblems. Each table should have a single loaf of bread (leavened or unleavened, though unleavened is traditional and would cause less disruption) and a pitcher of grape juice (with some medium size cups [not tiny communion cups] into which to pour the juice; some might want to use wine, but again the traditional juice would cause less disruption)... serve dessert"⁷ {A teacher at David Libscomb University}

- What is a possible reason that some would believe God would accept chips and coke in the Lord's Supper?

- How do we know that God does not accept this?

B. No pattern, limits on why to break bread

1. "Once seated. . . do you know everyone at your table? Ask them to tell something about themselves. . . for example, ask them to tell everyone one of their hobbies or main interests."⁸

2. "The task for the contemporary church is to revision the supper as table in a way that refocuses the supper on the resurrection of Jesus rather than his death."⁹

- What do we proclaim in the Lord's Supper? (1 Cor. 11:26)

- Is there a memorial of Jesus' resurrection? If so, what is it?

C. No pattern, limits on when to break bread

1. "with the Saturday-evening assembly, our intent and heart's desire is to extend the concept of the Lord's Day from 24 hours to 36 hours. . ." ¹⁰

⁵ Swindoll, Charles. *Growing Deep in the Christian Life: Essential Truths for Becoming Strong in the Lord*; p 361

⁶ www.unionuniversitychurch.org/2008/09-07-08.htm

⁷ Hicks, John Mark. *Come To The Table* p162, 165

⁸ Hicks, John Mark. *Come To The Table* p162

⁹ Hicks, John Mark. *Come To The Table* p155

¹⁰ Rubel Shelly, *LoveLines*, Vol 29, No 45

IV. Breaking Bread in Spirit

A. Preparing our minds

1. Matthew 26:26-29 Comment on what Jesus said before breaking bread and giving the fruit of the vine.
2. 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 Comment on what Paul said that would help us prepare to eat and drink.
3. What helps us to prepare our mind to break bread?
4. For what purpose are we to “examine ourselves” before we eat?

B. As we eat

1. By telling us to remember Jesus’ death, God left it to us to decide exactly what events connected with Jesus’ death we recall. Name a few things we may reflect on that cause us to remember Jesus’ death as we eat.
2. What is accomplished each time we eat?
3. Is the Lord’s Supper a happy occasion, sad occasion, both, neither---how would we describe it?

Concl We must recognize the difference between the common practice of breaking bread and the uncommon memorial of Jesus’ death for therein are essential, humbling, and uncommon lessons.

It is worth repeating that few, if any, of the words that God has spoken to man are words which man did not already understand. However, many times God used a word or idea that man already understand and then used that to teach man something new and important. Thus, Jesus made the common practice of “breaking bread” and provided an uncommon practice as a memorial of His death.

When the gospel of the kingdom was being taught in its fullness, God revealed His decisions concerning the leadership of His people. In His revelation, He used common, familiar words to help His people understand the type of person whom He chose to lead and what He expected the leaders to do. Let’s study these common words and the uncommon truths they teach us—

I. Meaning

There are three basic words used in the New Testament to identify God’s leaders among the churches of Christ. These three words do not identify different leaders, but all refer to the same work. Each word teaches us something different about this work. Before we focus on the spiritual/biblical pastor/bishop/elder, think about a literal (secular, common) pastor, bishop, and elder. Beside each word, tell something you know about the “ordinary” work, duty, and/or ability that these words identify. The more we reflect on and the better we understand these common words, the better we can understand the “uncommon” purpose for which they appear in Scripture.

pastor (the more common word is shepherd)

bishop (the more common word is overseer or superintendent)

elder (the less common word is presbyter)

II. The Message

Various passages emphasize each word and what God is teaching us from them. What does each verse teach us about the work, duties, and/or abilities of someone who is an elder/bishop/pastor in spiritual things. (Passages which are basically identical have been grouped to avoid unnecessary repetition)

Acts 20:28 (1 Pet. 5:2)

Eph. 4:11

1 Timothy 3:5 (5:17)

Titus 1:9

1 Thess. 5:12-13 (Heb. 13:17)

From these passages, answer these questions--

Where does a man learn to rule, oversee, and admonish?

Name a few similarities between a physical family and a local congregation. (This will help us to understand why the home is a good “training ground” for future leaders in the church)

What role does hospitality play in preparing a man to lead in this way?

III. Do not be conformed to or confused by this world

A. “A pastor is a preacher.” This is probably the most common idea of “pastor” in the religious world today. Many religious groups are led by one individual who is called “Pastor” or “Senior Pastor.” When a religious group has a “senior pastor” there will sometimes be “associate/assistant pastors” who are under the “senior pastor”.

- Was Paul a preacher? (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11)
- Was Paul a pastor? (explain your answer)

B. “Elders are not pastors” It is common for Baptist churches to have a board of elders who either work beside the pastor or who are led by the pastor/senior pastor.

- What verse that we have studied in this lesson shows elders are pastors?

C. In Catholicism:

1. the presbytery is the house of the priest. In the distant past, but later than biblical times, it was a section of the “sanctuary” that was “reserved for the higher clergy.” www.newadvent.org/cathen/12395a.htm

- Does this fit the use of “presbytery” in 1 Timothy 4:17?

2. A pastor is a priest (but is not a bishop)
3. A bishop is the chief pastor of a diocese

- History recorded by man shows that one of the changes made to what the apostles revealed was to elevate one elder above the other elders. In time, this “head elder” was called a bishop to distinguish him from the other elders.

D. Does it matter?

1. Does God care who leads a local church? Does He pay attention to organization?

2. In Crete, Paul knew of *things that are lacking* (Titus 1:5). What were they?

3. Who made the elders in the church at Ephesus overseers (Acts 20:28)?

4. What can we, as a congregation, do to aid the development of men who desire this work?

Conclusion Every congregation needs to pray that these things can be in order and remain in order. The better we understand what this work is, the more motivated faithful Christians will be to do this work, contribute to the development of men who can do this work, and to submit to the men doing this work.