

Breaking Bread Together

by Mark Hatfield

- Great things happen when God's people break bread together. In Bible times, however, obtaining bread was a matter of survival, especially for the vast majority of people who happened to be poor. Breaking bread together was a significant act of sharing (whether I had a loaf to share with someone else or someone invited me to partake of their bread).
- Throughout history bread was a regular food to be eaten. Jesus taught us to pray, "give us this day our daily bread", signifying that bread was to be expected on a daily basis. It was very uncommon for a meal to not involve some kind of bread. Because of this, the term "breaking bread" became the phrase used for any meal shared by a group of people, especially Christians.
- Any time that someone received bread they were thankful and appreciative of God's provisions to them (seed, grain, loaf etc.).
- At all times bread was respected and was never cut with a knife, but was handled with the hands to be broken with thankfulness in the hearts of those partaking.
- Since God was connected with the blessing of bread, the breaking of bread became a very intimate spiritual activity among believers. Christians were taught to be hospitable and were encouraged to share their blessings with others.
- Jesus forever changed the significance of bread when He taught that He was the "bread of heaven" which came down to fulfill the hunger of the souls of men (See John 6:35). When we are in Christ and show our faithfulness to Him God provides for our physical and spiritual needs (Matt. 6:25-26). We break bread in both the physical and spiritual realm.
- Whenever Jesus had the opportunity He would break bread with others. Jesus used these times of intimacy and fellowship to teach and exhort others onto greater spiritual lives (Matt. 14:19-21)
- When Jesus held up the bread at the last supper and proclaimed that the bread was symbolic of His body that would be nailed to the cross for the sins of the world, He asked us to continue to share in that supper in remembrance of Him over and over again so that we would not forget Him (See I Cor. 11:23-26).
- Even after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we find that He shared meals (broke bread) with His disciples on almost every occasion possible (See Luke 24:28-35; John 21:12-14).
- It should not surprise us that only days after His ascension into heaven that the disciples would make it a regular practice in the church, not only to keep the Lord's supper and feed on His word but to share common meals with one another (break bread; See Acts 2:42-47).
- **We knead** to break the bread of life
 - When we talk to one another about Jesus and we preach the gospel, we are sharing in the hopes and promises He has made to us (John 6:48-51).
 - Paul taught that he did not come with superiority of speech or wisdom, but that he determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (I Cor. 2:1-2)
 - Paul's main topic throughout most of his writings was to address the blessing that are found in Christ Jesus our Lord (See I Cor. 9:16; Phil. 3:7-11).
 - My challenge to you is to find some of Paul's preaching and teaching that did not fall under one of the following headings: the life of Christ, living in Christ, or living eternally with Christ.
 - Jesus taught that we must not only have physical bread, but we must listen to and heed every word of God (Read Matt. 4:4).
 - Think about all of the opportunities you have to share the gospel with others and ask yourself if you are breaking that bread of life as often as you should.
- **We knead** to break the bread of the Lord's Supper
 - We need to be together to break bread in remembering our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that the importance of this supper is for us to share in the body and blood of our Lord (See I Cor. 10:16-17).
 - Because of our need to remember Him and keep ourselves focused on what He did for us, we meet on a weekly basis to break bread in communion with one another like the early Christians did on the first day of the week.

- How often do you miss this memorial feast...this celebration of what our Lord has done for you and me? Do you fail to partake of this bread in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord? Don't let the bread of this supper go unbroken!
- We **knead** to break the bread of a common meal
 - One of the most beautiful activities that the early Christians shared in was a meal. We see this truth from the beginning of the church through the rest of the NT.
 - Granted, some abused the Lord's Supper by mixing a common meal with their remembrance of Christ. Others perhaps lacked the regularity of sharing with one another and therefore were condemned in the activity of eating a common meal.
 - In Acts 2, as we see the church in its infancy. Here we find the early disciples of Jesus being both physically and spiritually nourished. While they spent plenty of time eating the bread of life, they made sure to be caring and hospitable to one another, by opening their homes for a shared meal.
 - To describe the real intimacy that comes from eating with your brothers and sisters in Christ, let us take note of what happens when one is found to be unfaithful to the will of God. The Bible teaches that those who are true and loyal followers of the Lord are not to have fellowship with those who violate the commands of God and will not repent (I Cor. 5; II Thess. 3:6-15).
 - The common meal was a mark of fellowship. As Christians shared in the one faith and had the common hope of heaven, they would also, as the family of God, gather together for the purpose of sharing a meal (breaking bread).
- How much bread have we wasted over the years? How many loaves have gone unbroken? Perhaps a better question is, "are we going to let any more bread go to waste"?
- When Christians meet together, whether in the assembly on Sunday or a small private gathering in our homes or a local restaurant, do we meet to share and interact with one another through the breaking of bread or do we stay to ourselves in our own private meditative shell hoarding our portion and forgetting who it is that we are sharing this meal with? Is there real intimacy in all that we do as the family of God?
- When we take the Lord's Supper are we focused on what Jesus did? When we break the bread of life are we focused on the message of Jesus? When we eat a common meal are we focused on sharing with one another and opening our lives to growing closer to each other? IF NOT, WE ARE NOT BREAKING BREAD THE WAY THAT WE SHOULD AS CHRISTIANS!
- Let us not be guilty of giving each other bread crumbs...but let us share with one another in the breaking of bread.
- Keep these things in mind as we "break bread" together this hour.