

GOSPEL CHURCH IN CHRIST

**Remarks on
Meeting
In Remembrance of the Lord**

1. The Virtue of Punctuality

When we first moved to this meeting location, we had a series of sharing on the general knowledge about attending the Breaking of Bread Meeting. Several years have since passed, and we feel the need to share on this issue again. We will try to spend a few minutes after each Breaking of Bread Meeting to share on some topics.

This morning I would like to share about being punctual, and having a reverent attitude of worship at the meeting. We had shared on this topic several times before, and we had seen that brothers and sisters had shown noticeable improvement. Though our new meeting location was farther away, but our practice of punctuality had improved. However, it seems that we have somehow relapsed again in this past year. Therefore I would like to share exhort you once more.

We all know it is not good to be late, but we all need a will in order to change. We can only set it right when we realize that being late is really a bad habit and something we should not have. A few years ago, we had distributed a booklet called: 'What We Should Know About Attending Church

Meetings'. In Chapter Three of that booklet, Mr. Huang, the author, clearly talked about the causes for being late. We would like you to go home to read this booklet again.

Being punctual is not simply being dutiful to a meeting, but it also reflects our relationship with the Lord, since the purpose of this meeting is to worship Him. Therefore, do not allow lateness to become a habit. Sometimes we are late inevitably because we may need to give someone a ride and, when that person is late, that causes us to be late. Other times there may be a traffic accident or traffic congestion that causes delay, but these situations do not happen often and they will not develop into a habit. In fact, we urge brothers and sisters not just to come exactly right on-time. For if we arrive punctually on time as the meeting starts, we will still be disturbing the meeting. Therefore, to be punctual means to come to the meeting three to five minutes before time and to quietly prepare ourselves for the worship. Usually, we will close the meeting room door about ten minutes after the meeting has started. Those who arrive later than ten minutes will be requested to refrain from entering and therefore causing distraction. As a matter of fact, any late-comers who arrive during the first ten minutes will still disrupt the meeting anyway.

Besides being punctual, we should also practice to turn off our cell phones. Also, there is a new trend in the society when people would drink water during meetings. Some people have formed a habit of carrying water bottles along with them. This is basically acceptable. But since our Breaking of Bread Meeting lasts for only fifty minutes, we could always drink some water before the meeting or after that. Nevertheless, for anyone with special needs due to health reasons, he/she may drink at anytime as needed. But if we bring beverages along and take a sip from time to time during the meeting, like attending a social gathering, then we fail completely to respect the Lord. Please remember that Christians do not need to follow the trend of the world. Christians should imitate Christ and become exemplars to the society.

A worst case scenario is people eating snacks during meetings. To the younger generation in particular, we would exhort you not to chew gum or to have snacks during a meeting. This restraint should be applied to all meetings. During our Sunday sermon sessions, I have sometimes noticed that some people were chewing while listening to the sermon. Such attitude was not respectful at all.

Also, when we are to come to worship the Lord on Sunday, including the Breaking of Bread Meeting,

our attire and attitude should be appropriately respectful. This does not mean that we cannot dress nicely. A pleasant appearance is proper and good, but we are not to show off ourselves in the meetings. We could give ourselves this thought: Would my attire and attitude cause people to notice God or notice myself instead? May God teach and guide us. It is through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we will be able to change accordingly.

One last point: To those brothers and sisters who arrive early at the meeting place, please first take the inner seats of the pew, or take those in the back rows, so that people who come later could get to a seat more conveniently, without passing in front of and thus disturbing those who are already seated .

These are some general knowledge about attending meetings. We would like brothers and sisters attend the meetings with an obedient attitude towards the Lord. If there are brothers and sisters who do not come very often to the Breaking of Bread Meeting and miss our sharing, you may please relay this message to them as well.

2. Spiritual Preparation

This morning we will continue to share with brothers and sisters about some principles regarding attending the Breaking of Bread Meeting. The main theme for today is: Be well prepared when we attend the meeting. Originally, I would like to read together with you on 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. But since we do not have sufficient time, I will urge that all of you read it on your own at home.

It is the Lord's command and teaching that His disciples should come together to remember Him. Therefore, the Breaking of Bread Meeting is neither a religious ritual nor a habit. As a matter of fact, our entire faith is not a religious ritual. This is especially true when we come to the Breaking of Bread Meeting. We should not come as a habit or as an act of formality. Therefore we should appropriately prepare for the meeting in advance. Last week, we talked about being punctual, which is one aspect of our preparation. We thank God that we are all quite punctual today.

Before we come to the Breaking of Bread Meeting, we should have some reflection with regard to our daily life. Having gone through a whole week's social life, we should first examine ourselves before we come to remember the Lord on Sunday. Chapter 11 of 1

Corinthians teaches that if we have any wrong doing or anything that has offended the Lord; we need to rectify it before Him. Therefore, if we have offended anyone or done anything unrighteous, we need to correct these matters. Seriously speaking, it is contradictory that we harbor our sins and come to remember the Lord at the same time. So we encourage everyone to self-examine as taught in the Bible in order not to offend Him. Throughout the meeting, we should be attentive to our attitude to respect and honor the Lord and not to behave contemptuously. When we come to the Breaking of Bread Meeting, do we feel the Lord's presence among us? To emphasize the point: Does it feel like that the Lord Himself is among us in this meeting? Do we have a proper mind and attitude of reverence? That is why we should first rectify our spiritual shortcomings before Him. On the positive side, if we have a good spiritual relationship with the Lord in our daily life, we would long to come to this meeting and eager to offer our thanksgiving to Him. Let us examine ourselves: Is it merely out of habit that we come to this meeting? Do we routinely anticipate that, during its course, someone would share, someone would pray, and someone would bring up some hymns to sing, and then, after fifty minutes, the meeting would be over!? If it is so, we have truly fallen into a religious formality! But in fact, our faith and our worship and thanksgiving to the Lord are not religious formalities.

On the other hand: Even if we have not prepared beforehand any hymns or prayers or words of thanksgiving to offer to the Lord, we could still learn to be one-minded in worship with other brothers and sisters. Let us examine ourselves: When brothers and sisters bring up a hymn of praise, could we sing the lyrical praise with the same feeling? We are truly worshipping in one accord only when the lyrics really bring out our thanks to God. (Regarding the context of the hymns, we will share about that next time.) In the same way, when brothers and sisters pray in thanksgiving, we should examine ourselves: How often do we follow their prayers and say 'amen'? In our learning to be one-minded in worship, have we had the experience that we were just sitting there indifferently while someone else was praying, but our minds wandered and our thoughts could not focus at all? (Regarding the content of our prayers in thanksgiving, we will again share about that later.) For today, we learn to come to the meeting with a worshipping heart towards the Lord. This is the very least preparation for the meeting. We also need to sing, to pray and to give thanks from our heart along with brothers and sisters.

Here I want to bring up another point: When we pray or give thanks, our prayers do not need to be lengthy. In this meeting, we are using two languages. When one speaks in Chinese, there are English-speaking

brothers and sisters who do not understand what is being said to give thanks together. In the same way, prayers of thanksgiving said in English need not be too long either, for there are others who do not know the English language, and will therefore be unable to say 'amen' in one accord as well.

Thirdly, some brothers and sisters have expressed that the Breaking of Bread Meeting is sometimes dull and not fervent. As a matter of fact, we should bear in mind that this meeting is where we ALL partake to worship the Lord together. We would like to encourage everyone with this attitude: 'I do not mind how other people participate in giving thanks and worship. Rather, I should first examine myself to see if I have fulfilled my own obligation to offer worship to the Lord. In addition, I need to learn not to be overly concerned whether the hymns they choose are totally suitable, or whether the words of prayers are appropriately expressed. My first duty is to learn to worship the Lord in one mind with them. If the meeting has fallen into a boring condition, then EVERY brother and sister, including MYSELF, should be responsible for such outcome.' Therefore, we should pray for brothers and sisters. Even more so, we should pray for our own active participation. This is today's sharing on spiritual preparation for the meeting.

3. Praising With Hymns

Today we would like to share about praising with hymns in the Breaking of Bread Meeting. As we know, there are several ways to offer our worship in this meeting, which include hymn singing, praying in thanksgiving, and praises. Hymn singing is not for filling up the void. The main purpose of hymn singing is to express our worship and thanks to the Lord. So in the Breaking of Bread Meeting, the theme of our hymns should be praise and thanksgiving. The hymns are not for self-exhortation, nor are they for expressing our thoughts and feelings related to our daily lives. We sing hymns to the Lord alone, and we sing with a heart of praise and thanksgiving. Therefore, when we bring up a hymn to sing, we should pay attention to the theme of the hymn. Choosing a hymn to express our love and adoration towards the Lord derives from our understanding of the Lord's grace and mercy, as well as an understanding of His crucifixion, which includes His sacrifice and suffering. Do not forget the main purpose of the Breaking of Bread Meeting: It is the Lord's command for us – to remember His death. So we should pay attention to this important point when we bring up hymns to sing.

When we choose a hymn, we do not have to sing the whole hymn. We have already practiced this in the past. When words from a certain hymn inspire and convey our thoughts with praises, we will bring it up to sing with brothers and sisters. However, we do not need to sing the whole hymn. The best way is to select just two or three stanzas which could best represent our thoughts with praises. It would also be nice if we could share with everyone a little bit about the content of those lyrics. For when we bring up a hymn, others may not know the thoughts and feelings in our hearts. Then it would not be easy for them to be likewise inspired. We may just do a simple and concise sharing. For example, by sharing certain words in the lyrics that speak for our feeling or our adoration in response to the Lord's love. Then, brothers and sisters could focus on that theme as they sing along. Some hymns have five or six stanzas, but there may only be three or four stanzas that could best express our feelings. Others may have long and repetitive refrains. Singing the whole hymn may eventually drag down the mood of the meeting. Regarding our courage to share, often times, we are reluctant to express ourselves publicly. But if we bear in mind that we are here to offer our feeling and worship to the Lord, then we will have the courage to say our simply words of praise and thanks, and we do

not need to worry whether they are pleasant to the ears.

Also, our actual meeting time is barely about fifty minutes. So if we see that brothers and sisters have already sung quite some hymns, we should then refrain from picking any more hymns. We may learn to observe the time: if the meeting has already gone through thirty-five minutes, then we should bring up no more hymns but to prepare for the blessings of the bread and the cup. In that way, the time control for the meeting would be more ideal.

There are also some technical aspects in hymn singing. In our Breaking of Bread Meeting, we do not have piano accompaniment. Therefore, we have to take note of a few points when bringing up a hymn to sing. It is not suitable to choose a hymn that is difficult to sing or if we figure that most or none of us knows how to sing it. In our Breaking of Bread Meeting, we have arranged two brothers to start the first notes. But sometimes even they do not know how to sing certain hymns. So we request that all of us learn to cooperate. Actually, if we are prepared for the meeting, we may share such hymns with the deacons in advance in this aspect. Also, when we know the hymns we sing, it will be easier for our tone and rhythm to be in step with one another, and we will be able to sing more harmoniously. All in all, our

hymn-singing is to express our thanks and praises to God and to our Lord.

Please also take note of one more point: Some of the hymns in our hymnbook carry only the Chinese lyrics. We rarely bring those hymns up to sing because they would not accommodate those brothers and sisters who read in English. But if we really want to sing those hymns, we may prepare the English lyrics in advance, and have them photocopied for the English-speaking brothers and sisters to use. Lastly, when someone brings up a hymn to sing, our attitude should not be that we sing because other people are singing, or we just follow along as a habit. Even if that brother or sister did not share on that hymn, we should learn to pay attention to the content of the lyrics, so that we may be touched by the words and be able to praise the Lord through singing in one accord. Let us learn and put all these into practice together.

4. Worshipping Through Prayer

Today we are going to share on worshipping through prayer. When we worship the Lord in this Breaking of Bread Meeting, our primary mode of worship is through prayers. Our prayers in this meeting are different from the prayers of supplication during our regular prayer meetings. Praying in the Breaking of Bread Meeting is praying in worship, in praise and in thanksgiving. So, do not pray about the sicknesses or needs or other difficulties of brothers and sisters in this meeting. For those prayer items, we encourage everyone to attend the Church Prayer Meeting on Wednesday evenings to pray together then. In the Breaking of Bread Meeting, our prayers will generally focus on two main points: worship and thanksgiving. On one hand, it is about our praises towards the Lord Himself, such as praises of His work, of His attributes, and of His love and sacrifice for us. On the other hand, it is to express our gratitude in response to His salvation for us. If we only have the understanding of the former part, but without the feeling of gratitude, then we are merely possessing an objective knowledge about Him. However, when we have personally experienced the Lord's love for us, we will have genuine and sincere response. Since our prayers in thanksgiving and worship are based on our gratitude and love towards the Lord, we therefore

need to learn in these aspects. For a prayer of thanksgiving and worship, the most important point is for us to be genuine and sincere. Many brothers and sisters would not rise to pray because they are worried that they can't pray well: We like to say a 'good-sounding' prayer before everyone. We feel uncomfortable when we say a prayer poorly. This is very far from the basic purpose of our worship. In fact, a prayer of thanksgiving should first and foremost be sincere. It is not necessary to use very eloquent expressions or phrases. It is fine if we can praise the Lord sincerely but without 'good-sounding' expressions. Also, our prayers and words of worship need not be lengthy, bearing in mind again that we are using two languages in our meeting. When we pray in English, there are some people who do not understand us. The same is also true when we pray in Chinese. So, if our prayers are lengthy, some people will not be able to follow along. Furthermore, if our prayers are not too lengthy, it will allow time for more brothers and sisters to participate in prayer and worship.

Also, we need to note that we should pray with sufficient loudness of our voice. This is especially needed for brothers and sisters who sit near the corners. There are people who do not have good hearing. How could they worship through prayer with

us if they do not hear us? At the same time, all brothers and sisters in the meeting need to learn this: When a brother or sister rises up to pray, we do not sit there and let our minds wander, or worry about some other things. Otherwise, when we do not pay attention while others pray, this will create a dull and boring atmosphere in the meeting. Therefore, on the one hand, those who pray should do so with sufficient loudness so that everyone can hear. On the other hand, all participants need to be attentive to them, praying with 'amen' together in our hearts.

Our worshipping gathering may certainly include sharing with praises and Bible reading. Yet, since our meeting time is not long, when we do so, we must pay attention to the use of time. Words of sharing need to be very concise and focusing only on the Lord Himself. Here we are not to testify with our life experiences, but rather, to express our heart and thoughts to the Lord. At the same time, we should not quote a lengthy Bible passage, bearing in mind that this is not a time for a sermon or for scripture exposition. Just as our prayers of thanksgiving are to emphasize on God's love and our appreciation to Him, our scripture-reading should also bear the same purpose. It is enough to read a few Bible verses or a short passage in praise of God.

Finally, we may also learn to pause and have short intervals of silence during the meeting: We do not need to fill up the whole meeting with continual hymn-singing, prayers, and scripture reading. At suitable intervals, we may have moments of silence to meditate, to re-examine and adjust our relationship with God. Therefore, sometimes a short period of silence is appropriate. We ask that God will guide us to learn in this aspect.

5. Breaking the Bread and Drinking the Cup

Our sharing today is focused on the process of breaking the bread and drinking the cup. Most brothers and sisters know that we share one bread together and drink from one cup. This practice is in accordance with the Biblical teaching: to bless one bread and one cup to remember the Lord. Therefore, when we break the bread, we bless one whole piece of unleavened bread, break it, and then pass around for all of us to partake of it. Similarly, our principle in drinking the cup is to bless one cup of grape juice, and then we pass the cup around for all to share and drink from it. However, since the number of people attending our Breaking of Bread Meeting has increased, in order to minimize the time in the passing process, we divide the contents into several containers after the blessings. We then pass them around simultaneously. Also, for hygienic reasons, each one of us uses a separate spoon to scoop some grape juice from the cup to drink. In this way, we are still able to uphold the principle of 'drinking together from one cup'. (Those plastic spoons are disposed of after the meetings.)

Regarding the inspiration to lead the congregation to bless the bread and the cup, in principle, every brother can rise up to do the blessings. Yet whoever

leads the blessings should do so as he is inspired by the Holy Spirit. His attitude must be solemn and respectful. He must not do with a casual attitude. He must not treat this as a performance, but rather, he should do it with a worshipping heart, as this is the climax of the entire worship. In practice, those brothers who are elders or deacons, and preachers of the church, all have the responsibility to oversee this meeting and to lead the blessings. Our usual practice is to have one person to bless both the bread and the cup. But this is not a fixed approach. If the Lord so inspires, we may have two different brothers to give the thanks and the blessings. However, they will need to do so with mutual understanding.

The brother who leads the breaking of the bread and blessing of the cup needs to note the time. Our meeting time is not long. The whole meeting lasts for about fifty minutes. Therefore, when our worship time has gone past thirty-five minutes, he should prepare to break the bread and bless the cup. At this time, it would be best for brothers and sisters to refrain from singing more hymns or giving thanks in prayer.

There is one more point that we would like to encourage all of you to note: When a brother rises to lead the blessing and thanksgiving, we should not let him worship on his own while our minds wander; or

that we act like onlookers without any concern, while he is taking care of the blessing. In fact, that brother is leading all of us to offer thanks and worship to the Lord. Therefore, we should worship and pray along with him and let nothing distract us at all. This is our appropriate attitude. Let us learn together to worship the Lord.

6. Active Participation

This is the final session of sharing regarding the Breaking of Bread Meeting. Today we would like to encourage brothers and sisters to actively participate in this meeting.

We encourage everyone to actively participate in this meeting because this is the Lord's command. If we feel that our attendance in this meeting has gradually become a routine, a habit or a ritual, and we have lost our earnestness in worshipping together in the meeting, then we need to examine ourselves. It was recorded in the book of Acts that the early church got together and worshipped the Lord every day. They must have deeply felt the Lord's love and experienced the grace of His salvation. Therefore they worshipped the Lord every day. At the present, we meet once a week to worship the Lord and we think that is an appropriate arrangement. We do not want to remember the Lord only once a month or once a year, for we feel that such frequency would not be good enough for us to express our heart of worship and thanksgiving towards Him. Yet, while we have planned to meet weekly, it seems that some brothers and sisters are not interested in coming, or are not willing to attend while being occupied with some other businesses, then we need to reflect and to examine ourselves before the Lord. On the other

hand, we should bear in mind that participation to worship cannot be compelled, or likened to attending a ceremony. For by so doing, the meeting will lose its meaning and value as well.

We encourage all of you who come to this meeting and to actively partake in worship and thanksgiving. There is an abnormal scenario among us: There are brothers and sisters who have attended the Breaking of Bread Meeting for many years and yet have never prayed or brought up a hymn to praise the Lord. In fact, even if we feel we do not know how to express our thanks in words, we may do so through the lyrics of the hymns instead. Therefore, we need to examine this condition of ours. An earnest heart and attitude to actively participate in this meeting is directly related to our personal spiritual growth and practice. If we love the Lord, we will very naturally express to Him our affection. We would like to specifically appeal to the younger generation: Don't let language barrier deter you from the desire to worship. Though we adults are not so fluent in English, we are very willing to listen to your words in thanksgiving, in order to worship with you together. In fact, in every Breaking of Bread Meeting, when we share with one another about the Lord's love and give thanks for His salvation, we ourselves will also be greatly refreshed by His love. We would like the young people to understand that there is always a first time for

everything. Therefore, all of you should wait upon the Lord to lead you to start participating in the Breaking of Bread Meeting. All in all, just remember that we do it towards the Lord, not towards man. In this way, we will not feel nervous and we need not worry about how others feel. The only thing we want to do is to express our gratitude to the Lord for His salvation. The Bible commands us to remember the Lord in this way until He returns. Therefore, this is one thing that everyone who is saved and baptized should do.

Finally, I want to exhort all of us to pay attention to our attitude when passing the bread and the cup. Although the bread and the cup are only symbols, yet it is through these symbols that we remember the fact of the Lord's suffering and death. Therefore, when we pass the bread and the cup, our attitude should be very solemn. We should not do it in a casual manner, as if we were passing some meaningless things to the next person. Instead, we should do so in a very respectful and prudent manner. This attitude is not only a matter of courtesy, but it also indicates that we do this with a worshiping heart. Indeed we want to direct your attention to this very point: Even though the breaking of the bread and drinking of the cup are symbolic, we need to do so with prudence and respect to the Lord.

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These six sessions of sharing in writing on the Remarks on Meeting In Remembrance of the Lord are based on the previous sharing on the same topic. We have now edited and compiled them into a booklet, separately in Chinese and English versions, for you to read and to keep. We will also upload them to our Church website. In this way, we can review them at any time. As to the general knowledge about attending other meetings, you can read the booklet: 'What You Should Know About Attending Church Meetings' that we have given out to you before. We need to frequently review and refresh ourselves with this knowledge so as to examine ourselves and to rectify our thinking and attitude towards these meetings and in worship. And hereby we conclude our series of sharing.