

It's Tradition Communion

1 Corinthians 11:23-25

July 03, 2021

It's funny how traditions get started. They are important, to be sure, because they remind us of home and family and culture, but sometimes we participate in them not knowing why we do them because we have never stopped to ask, *"Why do we do that?"*.

You've all heard the story of the young husband who asked his wife why she was cutting both ends off the roast before putting it in the oven. Somewhat offended by the question, she responded, *"That's how mom has always done it – it's tradition"*

The young man went to his mother-in-law and asked her why it was tradition to cut both ends off the roast before putting it in the oven. *"That's how my mom has always done it"* she said.

Luckily grandma was still alive, so off he went to ask that all important question..... *"Why do you cut both ends off the roast?"*

"Well," said granny, *"It's pretty simple. I only had one pan and it wasn't big enough to fit the whole roast."*

No one had ever stopped to ask, *"why?"* it was just always done and became, over time, a tradition.

God knows that humans don't have the greatest of memories and we get easily distracted by the worries and cares of life. So, He went to extraordinary lengths to help us remember:

- **Deuteronomy 6:1-12** - These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ² so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. ³ Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. ⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ **Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.** ⁸ **Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.** ⁹ **Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.** ¹⁰ When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you-- a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, ¹¹ houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant-- then when you eat and are satisfied, ¹² **be careful that you do not forget the LORD**, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Such is the case with Communion. For some, Communion is a weekly event. Some just pass the bread and wine – foot washing not included. For others, like Seventh-day Adventists, Communion is a once a quarter deal. We do bread and grape juice and we wash each other's feet while softly humming favorite hymns ---- It's tradition.

Today, we are going to ask that all important question, *"Why Communion?"*

I have, over the years, heard many complaints regarding Communion:

- Some don't like the idea of washing feet.
- Some are uncomfortable by all the pomp and circumstance that happens on the day.
- Some don't understand the big deal – *"What's so special about a tiny cracker, a shot of grape juice and sticking your feet in a basin of warm water?"*

In fact, I know quite a few people who conveniently skip church on Communion Sabbath in order to avoid it all together.

We know there is nothing magical about communion:

- We don't believe that we are consuming the actual body and blood of Jesus.
- We don't believe that a person is going to miss out on heaven if they don't partake in Communion.

So then, why do we do it?

Throughout the Bible there are memorials to significant events in the history of God's people. Altars were built or names given to places in order to help the people to remember:

- **Genesis 28:10-19** - Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. ¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." ¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." ¹⁸ **Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ He called that place Bethel,** though the city used to be called Luz.
- **Joshua 4:1-7** - When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, ² "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, ³ and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight." ⁴ So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, ⁵ and said to them, **"Go over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, ⁶ to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' ⁷ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."**

Sabbath is a memorial:

- **Genesis 2:1-3** - Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. ² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so, on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.
- **Exodus 20:8-11** ⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
- **Deuteronomy 5:12-15** ¹² "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Sabbath reminds us of creation and our Creator.

Sabbath reminds us of redemption and our Redeemer.

Passover is a memorial:

- It reminded the people of their deliverance from Egypt and was a significant yearly celebration for the Jews. Jews still celebrate Passover today.

It was during this Passover celebration that Jesus met with His disciples for the last time. It was important to Him to spend this time of remembrance with them. There were so many things that He wanted to tell His disciples – so much that He wanted them to know, but they were caught up in who would be greatest and couldn't understand what He was trying to tell them – primarily that He was about to die.

So, Jesus used the Passover meal as a time to, once again, share the truth about what was about to happen. He wanted them to see Passover, not as a reminder of **Israel's deliverance from Egypt**, but as a future reminder of **their deliverance from Sin**.

We spend a lot of time comparing ourselves to one another, but from Jesus' perspective, we are all on the same level. Social, economic and spiritual distinctions do not exist at the foot of the cross - **The ground is level.**

Jesus died because we are sinners. Hopelessly and helplessly lost except for the grace of God. We are saved because of what Jesus did on the cross, when He became the Passover Lamb.

So, communion is more than tiny glasses of grape juice and little squares of bread. It's a time to remember that the hands that formed the oceans and built the mountains – are the same hands that were stretched out on a tree. It's a time to **REMEMBER** that we **ALL NEED** Jesus.

That's **"why"** communion – After all, He told us, ***"Do this in remembrance of ME."***