The NT Church Is Not About Me, But About Us!

Why We Got It Completely Wrong About Singing, Prayer, and the Lord's Supper

Yves Perriard – June 2025

The Problem: We have lost the collective dimension of the Early Church

One of the biggest challenges in restoring New Testament Christianity is shaking off the modern tendency to approach Church as a private, individual experience.

Our churches today often emphasize personal faith, private devotions, and individual relationships with God — all important things. But somewhere along the way, we've lost sight of something just as essential: the **communal dimension of the Christian life**.

The New Testament model is not about isolated believers seeking God alone. It's about a people — a body — gathering to worship, pray, eat, encourage, and grow together.

In fact, when we look at **singing**, **prayer**, and the **Lord's Supper**, we find that each has been reinterpreted through an individualistic lens. And in doing so, we've **completely lost the original intent**.

Let's look at these three essential areas where we need to recover the **shared**, **relational**, **and communal** heart of Christian worship.

Singing

Take singing, for example. When most Christians think of worship through song, they imagine a deeply personal act — singing to God from the heart in gratitude. And while that is certainly part of it, the two key New Testament passages that speak directly about singing in worship — Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 — actually emphasize something much broader and more communal.

These are, in fact, the **only two** verses in the entire New Testament that give direct instruction on congregational singing. And remarkably, both focus not primarily on singing to God alone,

but on **singing to one another** — teaching, encouraging, and admonishing fellow believers through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish <u>one</u> <u>another</u> with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."

Ephesians 5:19: "Speak to <u>one another</u> with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."

In both verses, singing is portrayed not merely as vertical (toward God), but **horizontal** — directed **to one another**, with the goal of building up the body of Christ.

This reveals something profound: in the New Testament, worship in song is not described as an isolated, private experience. It is a **collective**, **relational act** — a means of teaching and strengthening one another in faith.

Singing, then, is not just a matter of expression; it is a form of **mutual ministry**. To reduce it to an individual moment of devotion is to miss the very purpose for which it was given.

Practical Challenge:

- Before you sing in worship, ask: "Am I using my voice to bless, teach, or uplift someone else?"
- Look around you not just upward. Sing with awareness of those gathered beside you.
- Encourage your church to introduce or revive moments where the body sings **to one another**, not just to God.

Prayer

Prayer is another powerful example of how the early church's spiritual life was deeply communal, not individualistic. While modern Christians often associate prayer with private devotion, the New Testament paints a very different picture — especially in the book of Acts, which serves as the historical blueprint for church life.

At least 15 chapters in Acts — specifically **chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 27, and 28** — feature **believers praying together**. Whether gathered in homes, worshipping in temples, appointing leaders, or facing persecution, the church consistently turned to **corporate prayer** as their default response. These scenes are not exceptional — they are **normative**.

While individual prayer is mentioned occasionally (such as Acts 9:11, where Paul prays alone after his conversion), the overwhelming emphasis throughout Acts is on the **church praying as a unified body**. From the very beginning — in the upper room after Jesus' ascension — prayer was not a solitary activity but a **shared act of dependence**, **intercession**, **and spiritual warfare**.

This pattern begs the question: **How often does your church gather to truly pray together** — **not just one person praying while others listen, but all lifting their voices in unity?** If prayer was the heartbeat of the early church's community life, we should not be surprised that so many modern churches feel spiritually weak while treating it as a personal side habit rather than a corporate lifeline.

The early church knew something we've often forgotten: when the body of Christ prays together, it is strengthened together.

Practical Challenge:

- Don't just pray *for* your church pray *with* your church.
- Join or start small gatherings for **collective prayer**, where everyone participates.
- Make strong and united prayer a visible and frequent part of your church's worship service instead of the usual individualistic prayers between songs and the sermon.

The Lord's Supper

In the earliest days of the church, the Lord's Supper was not a silent ritual, but a **shared meal** — a real table of fellowship. We see this in passages like Acts 2:46, Acts 20:11, Jude 12, and most strikingly in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34. It was a moment of gathered life, where believers ate together in joy, unity, and love.

But over time, this meal evolved into a symbolic and often solemn ritual — a quiet moment between the individual and God. In that shift, we've lost something essential: the **communal** heart of the Supper. While personal reflection certainly has its place, when the focus becomes exclusively private, we risk missing the very thing the Supper was meant to embody — our unity in Christ.

Have We Misread "Unworthy Manner"? (1 Corinthians 11:27–32)

This famous passage is often used to urge believers to examine their hearts and confess their personal sins to God before partaking in communion. But is that what Paul was actually addressing in Corinth?

Not exactly.

The problem Paul confronts was not quiet failure to reflect, but the **breakdown of fellowship**. The wealthy were eating early and abundantly, leaving others hungry. Some were even drunk. The Lord's Table had become a place of division, humiliation, and self-indulgence.

Paul's rebuke is crystal clear: to eat "in an unworthy manner" is to eat with **disregard for the body** — not only the body of Christ crucified, but also the **body of Christ gathered**. The community. The church.

This theme is reinforced in 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, where Paul reminds us that "we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." If we ignore that unity — if we come to the table without love or reconciliation — we are not just being careless; we are **dishonoring the very meaning of the meal**.

A Call to Reconciliation and Honesty

Paul's warning isn't a call to obsession over every personal shortcoming. It's a call to look around — and to take responsibility for our relationships. Jesus taught the same in Matthew 5:23–24:

"If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift... first go and be reconciled."

Note what Jesus says — not "if you have something against someone," but "if they have something against you." In other words, **even if the offense isn't your fault**, it's still your move. God takes our relationships seriously — because broken fellowship with others **breaks our fellowship with Him**.

The Supper Is a Celebration of Unity, Not Just a Symbol

To take the Lord's Supper "worthily" means to come with hearts that are honest, humble, and reconciled. It means recognizing that this moment is not just about our communion with Christ, but also about **our communion with His people**.

If we come with bitterness, resentment, or unresolved conflict, we are not discerning the body rightly. But when we come with humility and a willingness to seek peace, we are aligning with the heart of the Supper — a **celebration of oneness** in Jesus.

The Lord's Table is meant to be a **place of healing, not hiding** — a step toward restored relationships and renewed fellowship.

Practical Challenge (According to Matthew 5:23–24):

- Before you take the bread and the cup, ask yoursef:
 - Is there anyone in my church right now who has something against me?
 - Am I in an unresolved conflict with a believer outside my church?
- If not, go. Reconcile first. Then come and celebrate.

The Lord's Supper isn't only a symbol of unity. It is a **means of restoring it**. We cannot be right with God while remaining wrong with one another.

The BODY of Christ is both His broken body on the cross and His living body in the church!

Conclusion: From "Me" to "Us"

The New Testament church was never about private faith or personal moments with God. It was about **community** — believers worshiping, praying, and breaking bread **together**.

Today, we do all these things **as individuals** — we sing, pray, and take the Lord's Supper **without seeing or feeling others** around us. Church has become personal and private — but it was meant to be **shared and united**.

If we want to be faithful to Jesus and the early church, we must leave behind the mindset of "just me and God", and return to the heart of "us in Christ."

It's time to stop going to church like individuals — and start being the Church **as one body**.