

## *Power in a Paper Cup*

By

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*“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” 2 Corinthians 4:7*

We have a weekly men’s gathering in the warehouse behind my office, which has been converted into a worship space. There is a sound system, rows of folding chairs, an overhead projector and enough space to gather. When we decided God was leading us to begin meeting, we felt there needed to be three components to it: Worship, Word of Testimony and Prayer. So, we were faithful to the vision and have been meeting for a few years now. We have been surprised to find out how many men draw such encouragement and spiritual nutrition from this little gathering. For some, this is as significant in their lives, if not more, than their church experience.

One of our leaders suggested that we celebrate Communion at least once a month. We all agreed this would be good, and we decided we would exercise this ceremony by “Intinction”, whereby all the participants take a piece of bread and dip it into a communal cup of grape juice. Sometimes, we even form a large circle and serve one another as we pass the plate of bread and the cup of juice from one man to another. As we serve each other, we say, “This is the Lord’s body, broken for you. This is the Lord’s blood, shed for you.” We follow Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:23-31 as he taught the early believers how to properly celebrate this remembrance of the Lord. He says we should take time to examine ourselves in prayer before we partake of the elements to make sure we are receiving them in a worthy manner.

This “Communion” or “Eucharist” has been the cause of much division within the Christian church. Some groups ignore this practice, barely recognizing its importance, while other groups place it at the forefront of their worship, yet exclude some from participating. Some might argue that we do not have authority to celebrate this Communion in my warehouse. We do this, however, in a spirit of humility, reverence and remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I believe He is glorified in our worship.

When we decided to do this, we wanted to have a special plate and chalice for the occasion, and we even purchased a nice set which we felt was worthy of his honor. A few months ago, as we were making preparations for our Communion, we could not find our special plate and chalice. We scrambled and scurried, only to realize someone

had borrowed it. Our worship was beginning, and we were left with the choice of either foregoing our Communion or using a Paper Cup and a Paper Plate. We paused for a moment, contemplating the importance of this decision, and we decided to go forward. As I carried the bread and juice to the pedestal at the front of the room, I couldn't help but feel a little sacrilegious. I thought, "Our Lord deserves far better than a paper cup and paper plate!" I prayed silently for the words to explain what had happened to the men.

In that moment, the Spirit seemed to reveal a deep truth into my soul. When the time came, I went forward and spoke. "Guys, you might notice that the ceremonial elements this morning are on a paper plate and in a paper cup. I'm embarrassed to tell you that we don't have our normal chalice and plate. I think the Lord wanted to remind us of something very important. We are much like this paper plate and cup. We are very ordinary vessels. Like this paper, our flesh will deteriorate and be discarded. We are not worthy of holiness. Yet Jesus, through His death on that cross, brings His holiness into our mortal beings and brings His value into us. It is not what you see on the outside, like when you look at this paper cup. The power is inside! When we receive Jesus into our unworthy bodies, we receive His power. This power will take us into eternity."

In that moment, it seemed very appropriate that this ceremony would happen in this manner. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." As we took that bread and that juice, despite the vessel in which it was served, we remembered Jesus' sacrifice. No matter how imperfect we are, Jesus' perfection overshadows us. This communion is not about us. It's about Him! That particular Friday, no matter how unorthodox our celebration might have appeared, Jesus' power and His glory were abundantly evident. All in the room felt His presence.

Every time I partake in The Lord's Supper from now on, I will remember the lesson of the paper cup. No matter how frail or weak I may be, I have the Lord Jesus within me, and He brings power and meaning to my life. I don't need to try to put on a good face, for it's not about the presentation but what it is on the inside. I may feel worthless at times, like a paper cup, but my contents bring me great value.

*"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Corinthians 12:8b-10*