**Recalibrate Week 3 - Receive**

**Message Big Idea**: Through worship we receive Jesus and his truth for our lives.

**Scripture:** John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Luke 22:14-20

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**Introduction: “Hard to Buy For” People**

Every one of us has that person in our family, right? You know, that “hard to buy for” person. Maybe it’s because they are picky, but more often than not, it’s because they don’t want anything and don’t get particularly excited about the gifts they do receive. Yet twice a year Christmas and that person’s birthday roll around and you are stuck wracking your brain to find something, anything you can purchase to mark the occasion.

How many of you have someone like that in your family? Just out of curiosity, how many would say it’s your dad? Yeah, what’s up with dads? Why are they such challenging gift receivers?

I love my dad, but he is a terrible gift receiver. I remember one Christmas I was in the mall wandering aimlessly trying to think of something to buy him. Right there in the middle of the mall there was one of those Hickory Farms kiosks with all various sausages, cheeses, and nuts. Well, I know my dad loves cashews and pecans and almonds so I decided I would get him one of those giant assortments.

My family still laughs about that Christmas. When my dad unwrapped that 10-pound bundle of Hickory Farms goodness, his response was very unenthusiastic, “Ahhh, nuts.” That about sums up how much my dad seems to care about presents. He doesn’t even attempt to fake any enthusiasm. He’s not a good receiver!

Some people are just hard to buy gifts for. But have you ever stopped to consider: How good of a receiver am I when it comes to the gifts God is giving me? Sure, if he wants to give us the winning lotto ticket, we’re all in! But what about the less obvious gifts, the ever-present gifts he is giving to us all the time?

**Series Recap**

We’re in week three of our series “Recalibrate” that is all about how worship recalibrates our hearts to God. Most of us know that as we go through the crazy twists and turns of our days, we can drift off course spiritually. We lose perspective. We forget the truths we know. We wander from God. Sometimes we end up in places we never intended to be.

Like a compass pointing north, we need something to recalibrate us and point us in the right direction. Worship is that something. Worship points us to Jesus. Worship recalibrates our hearts to God.

So during this series, we’re learning more about what it means to worship. Last week we learned that worship is about (Remember) remembering…remembering who God is and who God says we are. When we take the time to remember, we are reminded of God’s greatness and our belovedness.

Today, we’re going to learn that worship also involves (*add*: Receive) receiving. Through worship, we receive Jesus and his truth for our lives. God is a generous giver. He is always giving to us. Yet, candidly, sometimes we’re not very good at receiving.

For example, have you ever left a church service saying, “I didn’t get anything out of it?” Admittedly, I have.

A few years ago I (Tammy) was traveling and visited a church with some relatives. I will confess, I didn’t enjoy it. I didn’t like the style of music. I got distracted by something I noticed in the pastor’s style of delivery. I started zoning out during the message. I left thinking, “I got nothing out of that.” However, later that day, I felt convicted by the Holy Spirit about how I had approached the whole experience. I sat in the church as more of a critic than a participant. Honestly, because the service was not my “preferred style,” I didn’t go into it expecting to receive anything.

But I had to ask myself: Does that mean God didn’t have something he wanted to give to me there? And then I realized: If he did have something he wanted to give me, I missed it. I didn’t receive it.

**God is Always Giving**

When Jesus was preparing to leave his disciples and return to the Father, he comforted them with this encouragement:

***But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. -John 14:26***

God is present with us through the presence of his Holy Spirit. He is in us. He is all around us. Through his Holy Spirit, God is always revealing truth to us. He is always speaking. He is always teaching. He is always reminding. Yet, let’s face it… sometimes we’re not very good at receiving.

There are lots of distractions that can keep us from receiving what God has for us when we gather here. To name a few:

* **A Hurried Posture Heart** – Sometimes we rush in here late and half the service is over before we have even calmed down enough to pay attention to the Holy Spirit. We haven’t created enough margin in our lives to slow down, to breathe, to listen. Add transitions…
* *(add)* **An Angry Posture Heart** – Sometimes we don’t receive because of unresolved conflict in the community. There is an elephant in the room and it distracts us. In his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, Jesus tells us that if we come to worship and realize that a brother or sister in Christ has something against us, we should leave and go reconcile with that person first. Unresolved conflict in the community can get in the way of receiving from God.
* *(add)* **A Resistant Posture Heart** – Sometimes we don’t receive simply because we are not expecting to receive. Like me in my relative’s church, we sit in the Celebration Service like a movie critic evaluating the experience instead of entering into it.
* An Apathetic Heart

Yet, I firmly believe that when we gather here to worship, God has something for us to **Receive**. And the amazing thing about God is that while he likely has something for us to receive collectively, I believe he also has something for us to receive individually. What he has here for me today might be different than what he has for you because the Holy Spirit is active in this time and there are many different ways we can receive from him.

Shorten 2 and 4

* Sometimes what he has for us to receive comes through the **message**, from teaching based on his written Word.
* Sometimes what he has for us comes through a phrase in a **song**, the words seem to jump out at us as we sing them.
* Sometimes what he has for us to receive comes through a **conversation** with a person, an encouraging word, a moment of connection.
* Sometimes what he has for us comes through the ministry of **prayer**, when we invite another person to lift up our needs before God.
* Sometimes what he has for us to receive comes through a sense of his **presence**, a recognition that he is here, he is with us.

What if every week we entered into this time together with expectation? What might we discover? What might we receive?

There is one practice we engage in every week here at Community where God always has something for us to receive…Communion.

**Communion**

Sometimes as we begin to celebrate communion, gathering together to receive the bread and juice, ~~it can become stale.~~ Or commonplace. Have you ever experienced this? I certainly have lost sight of its power at times in my life. I sometimes think I’ve squeezed all the meaning out of it or gotten all I can from receiving ~~taking~~ communion!

But communion is anything but stale or commonplace! Communion, the giving and receiving of bread and juice that represents Christ’s death and eventual resurrection, was originally why Christians gathered! It was hugely symbolic to the earliest followers – most of whom were Jewish – to celebrate a Passover feast in which the lamb was given once and for all.

You see, in the Passover celebration, the Jewish people celebrate that God delivered them out of slavery in Egypt into the Promised Land. This was a land where God ruled, not Pharaoh! And so every year Jews celebrate Passover to remember this. And on the very last night of Jesus’ life, he also celebrated Passover surrounded by his friends and some of his family – but – and this is important – he took the intent of Passover and declared it fulfilled. He would be the lamb that was slaughtered to deliver us from the slavery of sin, of brokenness, of failure, of a life lived in fear of judgment instead of in hope.

This is what Jesus did at the Last Supper – he established communion! (*1 Corinthians 11:23-25)* He did this so that we would have something tangible to remember and memorialize him by. And Christians have done this for the last two thousand years!

So the very first Christ followers gathered for communion, in the form of huge banquets or feasts. ~~Probably a little different from our potlucks or picnics.~~ They shared what they had in common and would have told stories about Jesus and who he was and is in their lives. Eventually that grew into having a speaker share something from a letter or tell a story of Jesus, then perhaps sing a song as more and more people joined their gatherings who hadn’t known Jesus personally or hadn’t even known the people who’d known Jesus alive.

But like any gathering of people, sometimes these meetings weren’t done in the correct spirit and people began to distort this common meal. *(1 Corinthians 11:20-22)* They began to decide who deserved to eat and who didn’t. Or, the people who’d brought the most food would get to eat first while the poorest, who couldn’t afford to share, would be left to eat last or sometimes not at all because the food had run out meanwhile the richest were getting drunk on the communion wine! Can you imagine? Build a bridge to a modern distortion of this.

So this is the context for what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 when he lays down directives for communion. He’s reminding everyone that communion isn’t *just* a meal it’s special. It’s different. It’s a way for us to receive from God! And when we forget that, when we assume we have already received all we can from God, or when we don’t expect to receive anything at all – we lose sight of the true meanings of communion. When that happens, we lose that expectation, that hope, and begin to distort communion. Perhaps not as extravagantly as the church in Corinth, but we can distort it all the same by:

These could be the bridge above…

* Approaching it mindlessly
* Approaching it with boredom
* Approaching it without hope or expectation
* Add Selfishly

But what if we began to approach communion differently? With receptivity? With the belief that God *wants* to give us something here? That God *will* give us something, if only we approach communion differently?

**Receiving Communion**

When we receive Communion we’re not taking bread and juice without purpose – like an after-school snack – no, we’re receiving so much more! What Jesus established for us was a way to remember that our posture toward God should be one of receiving undeserved gifts, one of receptivity, one of expectation – all of which happens in communion if we’re open to receiving it. Honestly, we receive many things in communion, but three of the most important gifts from God bear a deeper look.

In communion we celebrate that (add clarifiers) We Receive Grace. A grace that wasn’t earned and wasn’t deserved, but a grace that is part of God’s plan to redeem creation! We are given grace because on that fateful day two thousand years ago, the power of sin and death was broken once and for all with Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection. Communion celebrates this grace!

We can see it in the Greek word used to name communion, they called it *eucharisto* which means “to give thanks.” When early Christians gathered together, it wasa time of celebration, of thanksgiving for the grace received! It’s the word we get Eucharist from – so when we gather to celebrate communion or the Eucharist – we’re gathering in the name of thankfulness to celebrate grace freely given!

We also get the opportunity to draw other people into this grace! Communion is meant to be shared. It’s meant to be a celebration, a party, and a chance for us to remember what God has done in our lives and receive the grace to continue forward into what will come!

Which leads to a second major gift in communion We Receive Belonging! We are no longer outsiders, people afraid of this world or afraid of judgment, we are now a part of God’s family! The Latin word that we get “communion” from is the word *communio. Communio* means ‘collectivity,’ ‘participation,’ or ‘association.’ And each of these meanings gets at Jesus’ hope for communion. That it would become a way for Christ followers to be reminded of their belonging to God and to each other.

*(add - 1 Corinthians 11:25)* Remember, when Jesus established communion, he used the imagery of the Passover feast, an identity marker for Jewish people but he changed it to become a new identity marker for Christ followers who are privileged to bring God’s kingdom here and now. We, the family ~~people~~ of God, *belong* together! No longer do I have to go through life alone – I’m part of something greater. You’re part of something greater! I get to *participate* in this new kingdom with you!

And part of that belonging is inviting others into the family of God. Communion happens weekly here at COMMUNITY because we want to always have room at the table for more and more people to find their way back into the family of God! God’s family is never full (repeat); there are always more seats, more bread and more juice. How exciting is that?

A third major gift we receive in communion is hope. (We Receive Hope *on screen*) That seems pretty simple, right? Hope. But hope is one of the hardest things to try to hold onto with our own power. We can lose sight of hope pretty quickly when our lives become run down, humdrum, and hard. Communion helps us to remember that this life isn’t the end and that this life isn’t the goal or the hope – our hope is in something greater. Something larger – the promise that Jesus is coming again! (*add - 1 Corinthians 11:26*)

If our hope is in Jesus and his return, then communion signals to us that we can continually renew that hope! It allows us to recalibrate our hearts to hope and not to despair! Instead of losing sight of what life is truly about, we can look beyond ourselves to the promises and hopes of Jesus!

**Creative Moment: Receiving Communion**

The ADs are going to brainstorm this moment. We will write the intro to it once we know what they are doing.

**Conclusion: Receive to Give**

At the table we receive grace, we receive belonging, we receive hope. We receive from God what we need to recalibrate our hearts.

Yet what we receive in here is not meant to stay in here. We receive “in here” so that we can give “out there.”

* Every day we live and work and play among people who are in need of **grace**, and we have received grace so that we can give grace.
* Every day we live and work and play among people who long for a sense of **belonging**, and we have received belonging so we can extend belonging.
* Every day we live and work and play among people who are desperate for **hope**, and we have received hope so we can share hope.

We receive so that we can give. So let’s take what we have received and give it to a world that desperately needs to receive Jesus.