**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 where they sell things like summer sausage, cheeses, and nuts. Well, I know my dad loves cashews, 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.” And 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 receivers are we when it comes to the gifts God is giving us? 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 lives 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 and minds 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 of 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 thinking, “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 as I reflected on the experience, I had to ask myself: Does that mean that 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. He said:

***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, and a lot of it has to do with our posture. Now, I don’t mean whether we’re sitting up straight in our seats, but rather the posture of our heart. For example, sometimes we enter into this time in…

* **A Hurried Posture** – 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.
* Sometimes we hold *(add)* **An Angry Posture** – Maybe 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, 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** can also get in the way. Sometimes we don’t receive because we are not willing 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.
* And sometimes we hold *(add)* **A Passive Posture**. Sometimes we don’t receive simply because we are not expecting to receive. We sit as passive observers rather than engaged participants and we come and go without expecting much of anything.

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.

* Sometimes what he has for us to receive comes through the **message**, from teaching based on his written Word.
* Sometimes it comes through a phrase in a **song**, words that seem to jump off the screen 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 it 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 celebrate Communion, gathering together to receive the bread and juice, it can become routine. Have you ever experienced this? We can just go through the motions, receiving Communion as if it’s commonplace.

But Communion is anything but commonplace! Did you know that Communion, the receiving of the bread and juice, was originally the whole reason why Christ-followers gathered?!?

Understand, most of the earliest Christ-followers were Jewish and had grown up celebrating an annual feast called Passover. In the Passover meal, the Jewish people celebrated that God delivered them out of slavery in Egypt into freedom in the Promised Land. God had rescued them!

On the last night before his crucifixion, Jesus celebrated the Passover feast with his friends – but – and this is important – he took the intent of Passover and gave it new meaning. Through his death and resurrection, he would now deliver *us* from the slavery of sin, brokenness, and fear; and lead us to a place of freedom where we could experience love, wholeness, and hope. Jesus has rescued us!

(*Matthew 26:26-28)* And so as Jesus shared this final Passover feast with his friends, what we call The Last Supper, he established a new practice, a celebration we call Communion. He did this so that we would remember what he did for us in sacrificing himself as we receive something tangible, the bread representing his broken body and the juice representing his shed blood. And Christ-followers around the world have done this for the last two thousand years!

The very first Christ-followers gathered for communion in the form of huge banquets or feasts. They would share a meal as they told stories about their personal encounters with Jesus and who he was and is in their lives. Eventually as more people joined these gatherings who hadn’t known Jesus personally, they grew into having a speaker share something from a letter or tell a story about Jesus, and then perhaps sing a song or two together.

But as time went on, sometimes these meetings weren’t done in the correct spirit and people began to distort this common meal. Paul wrote a letter to the church in Corinth to address some of these problems. *(1 Corinthians 11:20-22)* Remember, for these early Christ-followers, Communion took place in the context of a full meal but evidently in the church in Corinth, the people who’d brought the most food would get to eat first while the poorest, those who couldn’t afford to share, would be left to eat last or sometimes not at all because the food had run out. Paul says, **“…one person remains hungry and another gets drunk.”** Evidently some people were enjoying the Communion wine a little too much if you know what I mean! Can you imagine? Paul says, “You are distorting the meaning of this meal! It’s not just a meal; it’s special! It’s significant! God has something very meaningful for you to receive here!”

And while today we don’t practice Communion with a full meal, at times we might be in danger of distorting its meaning all the same by…

* Approaching it mindlessly.
* Or passively.
* Approaching it selfishly.
* Or without expectation.

But what if we began to approach Communion intentionally? What if we came to the table with the belief that God *wants* to give us something here? That God *will* give us something, if we are ready to receive?

**Receiving Communion**

Paul writes:

**“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’” -1 Corinthians 11:23-25**

Receiving Communion is not like receiving an after-school snack! No, there is so much more meaning in this meal.

In Communion, we celebrate that **We Receive Grace!** Grace for all our failures. Grace for all our mistakes. Grace for all the ways we have broken God’s heart. This grace isn’t earned and has never been deserved, yet it is always freely given. When we receive the bread and juice, we remember that this grace is made possible because on a fateful day two thousand years ago, the power of sin and death was broken once and for all through Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection.

The Greek word used to name communion is *(add)* ***eucharisto*** – that’s why some traditions refer to Communion as the Eucharist. *Eucharisto* means “to give thanks.” When the early Christ-followers gathered to receive Communion, it wasa time of celebration, of thanksgiving for the grace received! At the table, we receive grace.

And, we celebrate that **We** **Receive Belonging!** Communion is meant to be shared. This common meal reminds us that we are no longer outsiders; we are sons and daughters, part of the family of God!

The Latin word at the root of our word “communion” is the word *(add)* ***communio****. Communio* means ‘collectivity,’ ‘participation,’ or ‘association.’ And each of these meanings gets at Jesus’ intention for this practice. He intends for Communion to remind us that we belong to God and to each other.

We, the family of God, *belong* together! No longer does any one of us have to go through life alone! I am part of something greater. You are part of something greater! We get to *participate* in the family of God together!

And that includes carrying out the mission of Jesus together. Here at COMMUNITY, we always have room at the table for more because we are passionate about what Jesus is passionate about…helping people find their way back to God. God’s family is never full! There are always more seats, more bread, more juice. At the table, we receive belonging.

And, in Communion, **We Receive Hope!** Could anyone use a little hope? We can lose sight of hope pretty quickly with all the challenges and trials we race in life. Communion helps us to remember that this life isn’t the end or even the goal – our hope is in something greater. Paul says: *(add)*

**“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” -1 Corinthians 11:26**

Until he comes. Jesus is coming back for us, friends. As we gather around the table we remember that…

The problems we are facing won’t have the last word.

The struggles we encounter don’t tell the whole story.

The challenges we live with won’t last forever.

Jesus is coming back for us, friends. And as we gather to receive the bread and the juice, they help recalibrate our hearts to our promised future. At the table, we receive hope.

**Creative Moment: Receive**

*(Start pad)* I don’t know what you need to receive today…what you need from God today. But I am confident of this…God has something he wants to give you here today. Are you willing to receive it? Are you ready to receive it?

During these last 15 minutes of the service, I want to encourage you to posture your heart to receive. In fact, go ahead and close your eyes.

In these next moments, we are going to pray, the band is going to lead us in some songs, we’re going to receive Communion together. Maybe God has something for you to receive through prayer? Maybe it is something in a line from a song? Maybe it is grace, belonging, and hope as we receive Communion together? I don’t know what you need from God today, but I know God has something he wants to give you here today. In the quietness of your mind, just say to him, “God, I'm ready to receive.”

*Allow a few moments of quiet.*

***Pray****:* God, we know you are here. We know your very nature is to give and so we believe that you have something for us to receive today. I pray in these next moments, you would give us ears to hear, eyes to see, a heart to know. Speak to us, Lord. We are ready to receive.

**Song: All About You**

***Communion:***

**“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”**

This morning, I want to invite you to come forward to receive the bread that represents the body broken for you and the juice that represents the blood shed for you. Here at the table there is grace, there is belonging, there is hope. You are invited to receive. Also, during this time, if you would like to receive prayer, we have Prayer Team members in the back of the room who would love to pray with you.

So let’s continue to open our hearts to God. We invite anyone who wants to remember and celebrate Jesus to come receive Communion today.

*NOTE: Have ushers holding trays and say, “This is the body and blood of Christ given for you” as each person receives Communion.*

**Message 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.

**2 Songs to Conclude Service**