

As you prepare for this time of worship during our 2020 Good Friday service, please take a few moments to read this letter we have prepared for you. The service begins online at 6pm.

In our lives, most important celebrations are remembered with a ceremony. Many of these ceremonies include special foods we eat. These foods are so closely attached to the celebration, the moment we taste them we are flooded with memories of times past. Is it any wonder that Jesus, in ensuring we would regularly pause & remember all that He would do for us, introduced us to a ceremony - & even a special food for us to eat?

Yet, over time, people changed Jesus' original plan to imply something magical about that food. Some even implied salvation was dependent upon eating that food. That was never Jesus' plan. He simply desires us to consistently take time to stop, remember all that He has done for us, & recommit to living in the power of His grace for everyday life.

Later, we learn from the Apostle Paul, this ceremony has become an important part of church gatherings. Whether you are alone, or with your loved ones & friends, you are a part of the Stonegate Family. As we participate online together in this ceremony, take a moment to read this passage & remember all Christ has done for us.

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, & when he had given thanks, broke it, & said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, & said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread & drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body & blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread & drink from the cup. For whoever eats & drinks without recognizing the body, eats & drinks judgment on himself. This is why many are sick & ill among you, & many have fallen asleep. If we were properly judging ourselves, we would not be judged, but when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brothers & sisters, when you come together to eat, welcome one another. (1 Corinthians 11:23-34a)

An important part of this ceremony is a chance to stop & examine our lives. Here are a couple of questions to ask ourselves:

1. Am I honoring God in the way that I am living right now?
2. Am I living a life of mercy, grace & forgiveness that represents Jesus well?

Stop for a moment & silently examine yourself. In a spirit of humility & trust, ask God to show you anything in your life that needs to be changed. Trust that His desire for you is always for His glory & your ultimate joy.

Finally, together with the Body of Stonegate Fellowship, we are going to celebrate this ceremony of communion. As you watch this online Good Friday service, Jay Mayo will lead us through this time. Together, we will take these elements in unity. We are one Body, united in Christ, regardless of where we are gathered in this season.

A few simple directions:

- You are welcome to use juice & bread/crackers for this ceremony. The items you use are not important. What is important is what they symbolize: the broken body & the shed blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ.
- If you have picked up elements from one of our campuses, you will notice that each has two seals. One is thin & clear & hold the cracker we will eat together. The other is foil & covers the juice.
- In preparation, you may want to take the seals off of the cups & set the crackers & juice on a plate for easier (& spill free) access.

As we conclude this time together, we will have time of music to worship our Lord & Savior. Though it may seem strange to sing in front of the TV or computer screen, we pray these songs wash over you & bring you God's peace. If possible, we encourage you to sing along. Or, you may choose to quietly allow God to use his servants to sing His grace over you.

Wherever you are, we pray God's special blessings on you & your loved ones. If we can pray for you, please text STONEGATE to 97000. As well, on Monday, April 13, our Elders will be available from 6-7pm by calling 432-694-5100. We desire to pray in person with you.

Looking forward to this time together & our celebration of Christ's resurrection Sunday. The Good Friday service will begin online at 6pm at www.stonegategfellowship.com.

The Elders of Stonegate Fellowship.