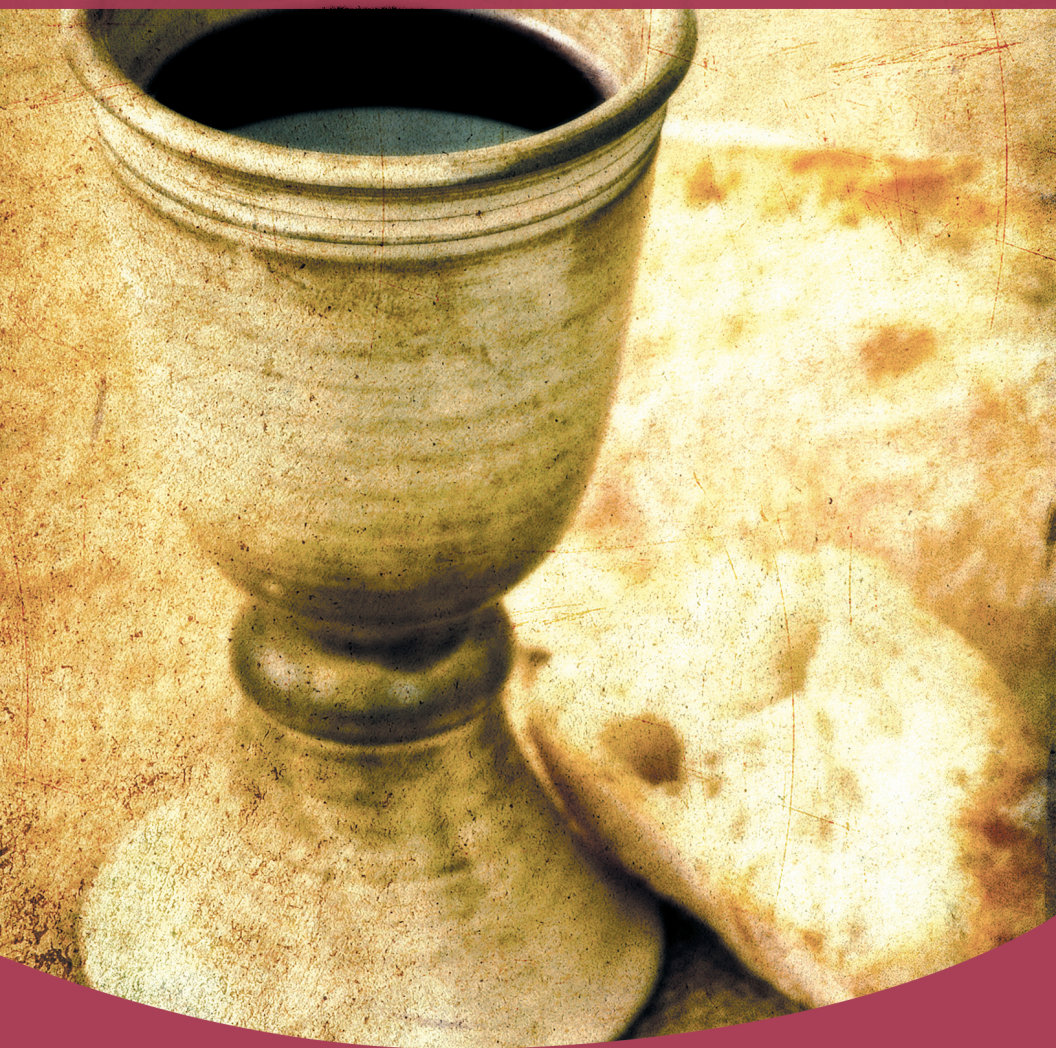


THE ANCIENT PRACTICES SERIES



nora gallagher

THE SACRED MEAL

FOREWORD BY PHYLLIS TICKLE

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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STUDY GUIDE

THE SACRED MEAL

Nora Gallagher

“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”

—JEREMIAH 6:16

INTRODUCTION

In what ways have the distractions of your daily life interfered with your spiritual growth? How could a regular practice, such as taking communion, become “Pilates for the soul”?

CHAPTER 1: SCOTCH TAPE AND BALING WIRE

Have you ever taken communion at a time when you needed spiritual or emotional healing?

In what ways does sharing the sacred meal “string” us together in a spiritual web of people?

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNION IS A PRACTICE

How does communion build community when it is taken in silence? How does it bond us, moving us “out of one place and into another?”

When human nature causes us to be attracted to those in power over us, how can communion remind us of another type of power, that of Christ’s compassion and vulnerability?

CHAPTER 3: WAITING

What are the things in your life that keep you “buried” when you come to the altar, that keep you distracted from the possibilities of communion?

What can you do in the coming week to find the kingdom of heaven in the midst of your everyday life? How can you help others see it?

CHAPTER 4: RECEIVING

When was the last time you spent an afternoon doing “nothing,” the way you did as a child? How did you feel afterward?

Why do you think we as a culture have a hard time receiving unearned gifts? How can regularly participating in communion help us to understand God’s unearned gift of grace?

CHAPTER 5: AFTERWARD

How did you feel after your last communion? Can you recall that feeling just before participating in the next communion?

When you’re taking communion, take note of the people immediately around you, even if you don’t know their names. Pray for each of them before and after. Pray for them daily in the week following communion. How does this affect your practice of taking the sacred meal? Does it change the way you view the world around you?

CHAPTER 6: EATING THE BODY AND BLOOD

Do you have childhood memories of taking communion?
How do those memories differ from your experiences with communion today?

Nora Gallagher describes the consecration of the elements as “calling out of these ordinary elements their essential beauty and their life-giving core.” How is your spirit “nourished” by partaking in the sacred meal?

CHAPTER 7: MAGIC AND THANKSGIVING

Whatever you believe about the elements of communion, Nora reminds us that this is a ritual of thanksgiving. What type of remembrances and thanks do you bring to the table? Are there problems (baggage) that block you from being truly thankful?

In what ways would you like to see your life, your spiritual growth transform? How do you think the regular practice of communion could keep you focused on a larger vision of God’s grace in your life?

CHAPTER 8: MYTHS AND TRADITIONS

Have you encountered rules and regulations about communion that have kept you from the table? How would it feel to be denied this gift of community because of some transgression?

How do you react to the statement, “You are a guest at God’s feast. You are an honored guest”? How does the openness of God’s table compare to the gift of his grace in our lives?

CHAPTER 9: A HISTORY IN BRIEF

As Nora recalls the history of the sacred meal—and how food and celebration have long been a part of our faith communities—she reminds us that Jesus used simple, everyday routines to “bring us to our senses.” In what ways does sharing food with friends and family compare with the sacred meal of communion?

Jesus washed his disciples feet possibly as a way of showing them vulnerability. Are there times we should be as vulnerable and humble before our friends and family?

CHAPTER 10: THE SOUP KITCHEN

How do you take the lessons of the sacred meal into practice in your everyday life?

In what ways does the sacred meal transform your spirit?

CHAPTER 11: GOING OUT INTO THE WORLD

Christ is in the bread and wine. With this lesson of communion in mind, how do you take Christ out into world with you?