

Communion Preparation for Kids

By Brian Martin

A Note to Parents:

Lilac bushes are a little more unpredictable than some flowering trees and plants. That's because lilacs can start blooming early (or late) based on a variety of factors. Lilacs can bloom because of flooding, because of drought, because of an early bout of spring temperatures, or a late warm spell in the Fall. All of that to say: there really isn't just ONE TIME that a lilac bush might bloom. It varies from season to season and year to year. But when they bloom, your eyes (and nose!) will certainly notice!

In the same way, we don't know when your child might be ready to participate in the ordinances of communion and baptism. It is not a particular age or a particular time of year. The right time to welcome them into these traditions, however, is when they have spiritually bloomed.

It is our hope that you can use this as a tool to help you assess and observe whether they are ready now, or if it's more important to wait a little while. Further, please know that the FamMin team is always here to answer your questions, or answer your child's questions. We may also offer this material as a class of sorts periodically so more than one family can participate together.

In prayer and in Christ's love,

The FamMin Team

Also, parents: Your child has the matching document. When you see a word bolded and underlined, that will be a "blank" on their sheet that they can fill in as you look at this together.

What is Communion?

Communion is the ritual of eating bread (or a cracker or wafer) and drinking wine (or grape juice) to remember what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Communion is also sometimes called "the Lord's Supper" or also "Holy Communion." Sometimes, you might also hear that communion is a "sacrament," but this word has a little bit different meaning, so it's not a word we use in the Free Church to describe communion.

Communion is also a way that we worship. It's a way of showing that we love God and that we want to be thankful for all He has done!

The parts of the word "comm/union" mean literally "joining together." This is important because the act of communion *joins together* the heart of the person taking communion with God. The act of communion also *joins together* all the people who take communion together, meaning it connects people to other people. It is a joining act for a local church who participate in communion together, and also for the Universal, Worldwide Church.

How do we take Communion?

We usually take Communion during a church service, though there are other times when it may happen, too. Communion can also be taken with your family, for example.

We participate in communion by eating bread or a cracker of some kind, and drinking grape juice or wine, yes, but there are more elements to our practice of communion as well. In our tradition at Calvary, we first usually read scripture and remember Jesus's words and instructions about communion. Common passage to read would include: 1 Corinthians 11, or Matthew 26. *[These would be GREAT things to read on your own to understand more about Communion!]* As we practice communion, we also take time to reflect on our sin, remember what Jesus has done for us on the cross, ask for God's forgiveness, and pray.

While other parts of following Jesus are fun and joy-filled, communion is a serious time to think about our sin and our need for a savior.

What is the purpose of taking communion?

There are two primary purposes to communion:

- 1) To remember what Jesus has done on the cross, and to remember the New Covenant
- 2) To connect us to Christians in all places and throughout all time

REMEMBER

The most amazing thing that anyone has ever done for you or ever will do for you is what Jesus did for you on the cross! He loved you so much that he looked at your sin and failures, and he decided to love you anyway (you can read Romans 5:8!). In fact, he loved you so much he was willing to die so that you could live forever with him! You can read it in John 3:16-17.

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Jesus dying on the cross for you is such an amazing thing that Jesus wanted you to remember it, because by remembering it, you can grow in your love for Him.

Read the following passage and look for Jesus's instructions to remember his work on the cross and to remember the New Covenant.

1 Corinthians 11:23b-25

...that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,²⁴ 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."²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

A "covenant" is another word for a promise. But, it's bigger and more important than a promise. It's a promise between God and people, and God ALWAYS keeps his promises.

The New Covenant is the promise that God made to all people, everywhere. God promised that he would save all people who received his free gift of grace (unmerited favor) and had faith (or trust) in him! That promise is made clear in Ephesians 2:8-9:

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

What's so amazing about this promise is that, like a gift on our birthday, all we have to do is receive it. Jesus is offering us this gift. He did the work for this gift. He paid the price for this gift by dying on the cross. It is his gift to give, and yours to receive!

When we take communion, we REMEMBER all that Jesus has done and all that he has offered us through his special promise called the New Covenant!

CONNECT

We also take communion for the purpose of CONNECTING with all followers of Jesus. The bible often talks about all of God's people together as being like a body – lots of different parts, but together, making up one special thing. Taking communion helps us remember that we are one part of something bigger. Consider this passage:

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

What's more, communion is a practice that all Christians have participated in since the time of Jesus! That's 2000 years of Christians on every continent, holding church services in thousands of languages, and having different traditions, different types of church buildings, and even some different beliefs about how to follow Jesus. And yet, despite all that time and space and variety, we are reminded that we are united as ONE BODY together, and communion is the common thread practice that we all do, have done, and will do into the future until Jesus returns!

Why do we take communion?

We take communion to remember and celebrate.

We REMEMBER everything God has done (as we just talked about above).

We CELEBRATE all that God is doing, and the hope we have in him!

However, we do NOT take communion as a way to get into heaven! People who love Jesus SHOULD take communion (because Jesus commanded us to do it often in remembrance of Him), but it is not the way into heaven.

Think of it this way: You should do your chores as a way to be a good participant of your family; NOT in order to *BECOME* a member of your family. Communion is similar: it is something people in God's family *should* do, but it is NOT the way to get INTO God's family.

Who Should take Communion?

To answer that, let's start by reading this:

1 Corinthians 11:26

²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

What can we learn from this little passage above? That every time we take communion, we are "*proclaiming the Lord's death.*" That doesn't mean that we are just saying that Jesus died (a long time ago), but rather, that his death was unique and important. And, that his death is giving us life in God's family forever!

Therefore, who should take communion? Anyone who:

- 1) believes that Jesus lived, died, and rose again.

AND

- 2) acknowledges Jesus as their Lord (boss/king/leader)!

****Do you believe that Jesus lived, died, and rose again? Do you treat Jesus as your Lord, boss, king, and leader?***

Who should NOT take Communion?

A person should NOT take communion if: 1) He/she does not believe that Jesus lived, died, and rose again; OR 2) if that person cannot take communion in *a worthy manner*.

1 Corinthians 11:27-29

²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself

What does it mean to take communion in an “unworthy manner?”

The answer is not entirely clear to people who study the bible, but here are a few things it might mean.

- 1) The church in Corinth (to whom this part of the bible was written) had been eating big meals as a part of the communion/the Lord’s supper. It had become a bit of a party. However, some people were eating a lot, and others were left hungry; people were being selfish and lacked generosity. Some people were drinking so much wine that they were getting drunk, which was a bad example to set. To participate in these kinds of things and connecting them with communion was a bad choice, and therefore an “unworthy manner.”
- 2) One of the big reasons we participate in communion is to show unity with other people who follow Jesus. That requires humility. If someone takes communion as a way to think he or she is better than others, that person is taking communion in an “unworthy manner.”
- 3) Communion is to be like a memorial service or a funeral. Anything we might do during communion that we wouldn’t do at a funeral could mean we are participating in an “unworthy manner.” Communion is about serious reflection, not silliness or loudness.
- 4) The example that Jesus set through his work on the cross was a posture of humility. Therefore, followers of Jesus should demonstrate their humility through communion with humble repentance that mirrors Jesus’ attitude and actions. To not be humble in the taking of communion, and to not confess sin humbly, may be an “unworthy manner.”

Whatever is meant exactly by “unworthy manner,” we know that when we participate in Communion, it is important that we: 1) remember Jesus’s sacrifice, 2) remember the promise he made through the New Covenant, 3) confess sin and ask God to align our lives with His will, and 4) celebrate the unity we have with all of God’s people everywhere.

When should someone take communion?

Sometimes when you are growing up, there are certain things that you are allowed to do “now that you are 8...or 9...or 10.” However, there is no special age when someone should start taking communion because it’s not about how old you are!

You should start taking communion when:

- 1) you understand what communion means, and
- 2) when mom or dad (or another grown up) says you are ready.

Secondly, because communion is about the unity of God’s people, we should only take communion when we are with other people. Communion is not a “by myself” kind of activity.

Are you ready to take communion?

Here are some questions you can answer to find out:

- 1) Do you believe that Jesus lived, died, and rose again?
- 2) Have you talked to your parents or another trusted grown up about your trust in Jesus?
- 3) Have you talked to your parents or another trusted grown up about communion?
- 4) Does that parent or grown up think you understand communion well enough to start taking it?

If you can say “yes” to all these things, then you are ready to start taking communion! Woohoo!

If you are not quite ready to say “yes” to all of these things, that’s okay too! We are SO EXCITED that you are interested in learning more, and that you and your parents or grown-ups are helping you understand more about Jesus and communion. Woohoo to you, too!