



Communion Guidelines

The purpose of this guideline is to offer a brief explanation of the sacrament of communion.

What is communion?

Baptism and Communion (also called the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper) were commanded by Christ and practiced by the church since its inception. These two sacraments were given to us by the Lord Jesus himself and confirmed by the teachings and practice of the early church.

Merriam Webster defines the word sacrament as:

“a Christian rite (as baptism or the Eucharist) that is believed to have been ordained by Christ and that is held to be a means of divine grace or to be **a sign or symbol of a spiritual reality**”
(emphasis added)

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he gathered his disciples together in an upper room to share the Passover meal with them (Luke 22:7). The Passover meal was part of the Jewish Passover festival (Exodus chapter 12) commemorating the freedom of the nation of Israel from Egyptian slavery. When Pharaoh refused to let the nation leave – God sent plagues upon the Egyptian people. The tenth and final plague God sent upon the nation was the angel of death. When the angel of death passed over at midnight, all the first born in the land were to die.

The children of Israel were given strict instructions on how they might avoid this terrible plague. The instructions were simple - they were to kill a lamb and place its blood on the lintel and doorposts of the house. If they obeyed the Lord, the angel of death would pass over their house and their firstborn would be spared. The Passover meal is part of a mandatory Jewish holiday which was instituted by God (Exodus 12:24). For the Jewish people the Passover serves as an annual reminder of God's great deliverance out of Egypt and the bondage of slavery.

It was likely during this Passover meal that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with his closest followers.

Luke 22:19 says:

And he took the bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Luke 22:20 says:

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

In Isaiah 53:1-12 we see a prophecy given which clearly shows us what Jesus would accomplish for us at the cross. It speaks of Jesus as a lamb whose body is broken so that we can be healed and declared righteous.

Why do we take communion? Jesus commanded us to do it for two reasons:

1. To remember what He has done (death, resurrection, new covenant) - 1 Cor. 11:25
2. Looking forward to His return and our union with Him - Mat 26:29; 1 Cor 11:26

How often should we take communion? There is no prescribed times for us to take communion. We are encouraged to do it regularly and to include it in our fellowship with one another (1 Cor 11:26)

Who should take communion? Any person who has placed their faith in Jesus. You may want to share communion with your young children making sure to explain its meaning and significance.

What should I use when I take communion?

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper he likely used unleavened bread (without yeast) and wine (fruit of the vine; fermented grape juice) as was the custom of his day.

We typically use unleavened bread and grape juice (as a suitable alternative to fermented wine) when we participate in communion.

How do I participate in communion?

One simple way to take communion is to simply read the account of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper (communion) in one of the following passages, stopping to partake of the bread and wine in the same manner as Jesus did.

Here are three suggested references you may use as a guide:

- Matthew 26:26-29
- Luke 22:14-20
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

You may also choose to do additional readings of scripture beforehand to help remember the work of Christ and focus your hearts:

- Isaiah 53
- John 6:22-69

In 1 Cor. 11:28 Paul tells us that we ought to examine ourselves so that we do not take communion in an unworthy manner.

In the spirit of Matt. 5:23-24, we ought to make things right with our fellow man and deal with any known sins before taking communion. This is not commanded explicitly but highly recommended as the correct way to approach a holy God (Matt 6:12 "forgive us as we forgive our debtors").