

COMMUNION INSTRUCTIONS FOR GROUP LEADERS

Many have expressed a desire to celebrate communion more frequently than the few times we corporately share in it. We believe that the context of a community group is great place for this to happen. The following paragraphs are meant to give you some guidelines to make this a meaningful celebration within your group. Please feel free to contact your Group Director with any questions.

What is communion (The Lord's Supper or Eucharist)?

It is the regular remembrance and celebration of the Lord's sacrificial death. The breaking and eating of bread has to do with Christ's body being broken on the cross. The drinking from the cup has to do with the shedding of Christ's blood whereby we are forgiven.

{Matthew 26.26–28; 1 Corinthians 11.23–24}

What is the purpose of Communion?

The primary purpose of communion is to take time to remember all that the Lord did for us. It is a time to worship and give thanks for the forgiveness of our sins and the new life and relationship that we have in Jesus Christ. This time of remembrance was initiated by Jesus just before His death. Because we tend to be forgetful people, in the Old Testament, believers were called to remember the faithfulness of God through various memorials. In the New Testament, this is the way that Jesus wanted us to remember His love and forgiveness of our sins.

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." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11.23-26

These verses also explain that communion is a time of personal examination. It is a time to examine our relationship with the Lord and others.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined

so that we will not be condemned with the world.
1 Corinthians 11.27-32

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Where and how often should we celebrate it?

We believe that communion is a good thing for believers to celebrate not only “at church” or in the “church building” but also in homes and appropriate places all around the city. We can celebrate regularly and often. God invites us to celebrate as often as we feel is appropriate. In Acts 2.42-47 we read that believers met on a regular basis in their homes to celebrate communion.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Who can take communion?

Any person who has believed in and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ alone for their salvation may take communion. This means it is possible that some members of your group may not want to participate.

Who can serve (give, facilitate, administer or officiate) communion?

Biblically speaking anyone can serve or facilitate communion. Strategically, we think that the Community Group Leader or Apprentice would be a good person to serve communion. This is a great opportunity for the leader to model servant leadership in the same way that Jesus served His disciples. However there may be other members who are equally able to lead and serve in this celebration. This is left to the leader's discernment and discretion.

Is there a better time to serve communion in the life cycle of the group?

We believe that it is important to take time to get to know one another fairly well before participating in communion together. Groups could share communion as early as in the first six months of their group cycle.

How can we serve communion?

There are many ways in which to serve communion. The Bible does not dictate a certain method. Feel the freedom to be creative and use variety. You could

celebrate communion after a meal together (this seems to be the way the early church did it Matthew 26.26-29; Acts 2.42-46; 1 Corinthians 11.20-26). You could make this the centerpiece of your time together or you could partake in it before or after you complete a study & discussion time. The important thing is to remember that this is a time of worship. This is a time of celebration. This is a time of remembering and reflection. Enjoy it and you will see yourself and your friends grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

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Here are a couple of ideas to get you started:

- a. Get a loaf of unsliced bread and some grape juice. The bread can be placed on a platter and the juice in a glass or small pitcher.
- b. Create a beautiful, worshipful environment with music and candles (if desired).
- c. As you begin your time of celebration you can read some selected passages of Scripture that remind us of the Lord's death, burial and resurrection for us:
 - Psalm 22 • 1 Corinthians 15.1-8
 - Isaiah 53 • Galatians 2.16-21
 - Mark 15.21-29 • Ephesians 2.1-10
 - John 19 • Philippians 2.1-11
- d. After a time of reading, pass the bread around and ask each member to tear off a piece which represents the body of Jesus Christ that was broken for us.
- e. Then you can read 1 Corinthians 11.23-26
- f. Then pass the cup of juice around and invite each member to dip their bread into the cup.
- g. Encourage each member to spend some minutes in personal prayer and reflection after they have taken the bread and juice. Consider sharing those reflections with one another.
- h. After all members have been served, close the time with prayer and praise.

Additional idea: Have the bread and cup in a central location in the room. After a time of sharing, reading and prayer, invite group members tear off a piece of bread, dip it in the juice and serve themselves. You may also consider having group members serve one another.

Conclusion

These few ideas are simply to help you think about how to participate in communion with your group. This is a great opportunity for your group to worship and celebrate together. If you have any other questions about communion or its celebration in your group, please contact your Group Director.