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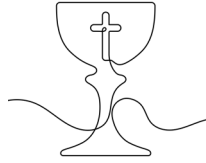
FAMILY GUIDE
TO THE
LORD'S SUPPER

While they were eating,
Jesus took bread,
and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and gave it
to his disciples, saying,
"Take and eat; this is my body."

Then he took a cup,
and when he had given thanks,
he gave it to them, saying,
"Drink from it, all of you.
This is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many
for the forgiveness of sins."

MATTHEW 26:26-28

FOR PARENTS



Communion: How are the children of Christian parents to participate?

Our celebration of Communion (The Lord's Supper) takes place in the "family" of the church, the congregation.

The Roots of Communion Are Found in the First Books of the Old Testament

The shedding of blood for the sin of God's people is found early in Genesis. God forgives Adam and Eve and calls them back into communion with Him after their sin of rebellion. He covers their bodies with the skins of animals. Biblical scholars believe that the death of these animals is the first instance of the shedding of blood related to forgiveness recorded in Scripture. In God's Word, blood has the highest value because it is the primary physical component of the gift of life. As Moses said in Leviticus 17:11, *"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."*

The gift of physical life defined by blood stands next to the spiritual component of life: *"For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring'"* (Acts 17:28). Every creature depends upon God for its existence. God alone has life in and of Himself and gives life to everything: *"In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession..."* (1 Timothy 6:13).

God Delivered Israel from Slavery and Sin

The most dramatic Old Testament picture of this shedding of blood for forgiveness and redemption was the “Passover” instituted in Exodus 12. The Jews sacrificed a lamb and put its blood on the door posts of their home, and this prevented the angel of death from inflicting the punishment due to the Egyptians upon the Jews. Exodus 12:13 says, *“The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.”* The Jews were sinners, too, and deserved death, but God’s deliverance and redemption of the Jews from slavery and the sin of Egypt came through the blood of the lamb slain for them, prefiguring the work of Jesus Christ.



Passover Was Family Worship and Children Were Integral To It

The annual Old Testament celebration of Passover was held in the home. Children participated by asking why the family, and indeed the nation, was participating in this sacrifice as recorded in **Exodus 12:26-27**: *“And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ You shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in*

Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’ And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.” Passover pointed to and prefigured the ultimate work Jesus would accomplish as the sacrifice for atonement and the forgiveness of the sins of His people.

Jesus Is the Passover Embodied

The Old Testament priests stood between the people and God and presented the shed blood of sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. They and the sacrifices pointed the way to the true High Priest and the true sacrifice of Jesus’ blood. The New Testament writer of Hebrews helps us see that Jesus fulfills all that was inherent in the Passover. Jesus, as the true High Priest, offered His own blood for the forgiveness of sins: ***“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption”*** (Hebrews 9:11-12, ESV).

The Communion (The Lord’s Supper) we celebrate is directly related to the Old Testament Passover. Jesus is actually called ***“the lamb that takes away the sins of the world”*** by John the Baptist in John 1:29. The Apostle Paul identifies Jesus as the ***“Paschal (Passover) Lamb”*** in 1 Corinthians 5:7: ***“Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”***

The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper/Communion Is Part of Our Worship

The Lord Jesus instituted the Communion Supper for His spiritual family. He taught that it was to be celebrated in remembrance of Him until He returns for His people. The symbols, or “signs,” of His presence are bread and wine. The Holy Spirit ministers in a special

way through the celebration of Communion. There is mystery in all the worship we enjoy because we worship God, who is unseen and is known through His Word and Spirit. This mystery is that Christ is in us through faith, and we worship Him in spirit and truth. Children deal with mystery every day. They accept it and tend to seek wisdom to understand. Parents hold the practical key for their children and worship.

Is My Child Ready to Join Us in Celebrating the Sacrament?

We include covenant (baptized) children in the Sacrament of Communion following the Old Testament pattern of children participating in worship. We expect the parents, as the primary disciple-makers of their child, to understand the child's heart and mind better than we. The pastors and elders will pass the elements to all, depending on the parents to direct their child in receiving them.



Guidelines for Parents

What are the Parents' Responsibilities in Home Life?

Parents are disciple-makers of their children. This ministry is graphically described in the Old Testament: ***“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates”*** (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NIV).

This passage first emphasizes that the Word of God, including His works and ways, should be upon your (the parents') hearts. The parent is the foremost disciple-maker to children in the household; therefore he/she must be engaged daily with God through the Bible, prayer instruction, and mission. The command to *impress* is better translated “sharpen” or “hone.” The image is the process of sharpening a blade. In Moses' era the honing of a blade to sharpness was a time-consuming, intense, vitally important activity that could mean the difference between life and death.

Moses further defines this disciple-making process with the verbal phrases, *talk about them*, *tie them*, and *write them*. When is there a time in family life when parents or children are not “sitting at home,” “walking along,” “lying down,” or “getting up”? This simply encourages constant discipline in God's words, works, and ways. The Jews literally tied the Scripture to their heads with “phylacteries” and wrote the Scripture on their doorframes with the “mezuzah.” The principle here is the use of simple mnemonic devices which correspond to memorization, use of music and art in the home, and other devices that can convey God's words, works, and ways. The primary place to make a disciple is in the family. God and His Word, works, and ways should be interwoven in every aspect and activity of our lives.



The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that an examination must be made by the worshiper as to his or her relationship with the Lord before participating in Communion: *“Whoever, 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. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself”* (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). All believers must live an examined life which pursues a daily right relationship with the God of grace through faith and repentance. This reminder makes it incumbent upon the parents to critically assess the readiness of their child to receive communion. Parents are responsible to lead their families in worship.

Maturity does not always come with age, and that is true of spiritual maturity. Small children have been known to be incredibly sensitive to God’s words, works and ways. Samuel was ready to hear and obey God as a very young boy (1 Samuel 3:1-19).

The young slave girl in the house of Naaman the Syrian, who was healed from leprosy by God through Elisha, understood the power of God. *“Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram... He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. She said to her mistress, ‘If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy’”* (2 Kings 5:1-3).

The Apostle Paul affirmed that his companion Timothy was a disciple trained from his early years: *“I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also”* (2 Timothy 1:5).

Discernment: You have a wonderful responsibility and privilege to discern whether your child is ready to partake of the Lord’s Supper.

We believe that only God can see the true heart of any person and that the Holy Spirit makes His presence in our lives evident. The Scripture gives some guidelines for discernment which can help a parent to assess the spiritual condition of a child. True believers of Christ should display certain marks in a measure appropriate to their age and growth. Parents may consider the following indicators as useful tools in preparing their sons and daughters for worship, and especially for participation in Communion.





1. Conviction of sin (John 16:8)

Does my child recognize and acknowledge his or her own sin?

Is my child bothered by his or her sin?

Has my child told me that he/she has trusted Christ to forgive him/her of sin?

2. Repentance, turning from sin to Christ (Mark 1:15)

Is my child expressing a desire not to sin?

Does my child ask God for help to obey Him/

Does my child express an increasing desire to learn about and do things God's way?

3. Confession that Jesus is Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9)

Has my child made a conscious, personal decision to embrace Jesus as Savior and follow Him?

Does my child recognize that God is the "boss" of his or her life?

Does my child respond appropriately to God's authority?

4. Love for God, His Word, and His People

(1 John 4:8, 20; Psalm 119:24)

Does my child seem to love God, and not just to want or demand things from Him?

Does my child desire to read the Scriptures? Does my child ask me to read him or her Bible stories?

Does my child enjoy being around Christians?

5. Spiritual fruit produced by the Holy Spirit in the heart and life (Galatians 5:22)

Is my child growing more patient, kind, loving, self-controlled, joyful, peaceful, full of goodness, and gentle?

Am I seeing evidence that the Holy Spirit is changing my child's heart and making him or her more like Jesus?

6. Understanding that the Communion elements are “signs” (symbols) that remind us of Jesus (John 6:63)

Does my child understand that the bread and juice are not the real body and blood of Jesus but reminders of Him?



We pray that these guidelines will foster within each family an awareness of God's presence and providence, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

FOR CHILDREN



What is The Lord's Supper, also called Communion?

A Symbol

During the first Passover, God commanded each Israelite household to kill a lamb and to paint the lamb's blood over their doorposts. The blood told the Angel of Death to "pass over" that household because death had already visited them. The lamb died instead of the people inside the home. The blood was a symbol or a sign that pointed to God's love and forgiveness and pointed the Angel of Death away from the people inside. The blood kept the Israelites safe from death.

In the same way, when we take the Lord's Supper, we are remembering that it is by Jesus' blood that we are kept safe. God tells us that the punishment for sin is death (Romans 6:23). Because we have sinned, we deserve His punishment—death. But by God's great mercy and kindness, our punishment was taken on by another, by Jesus Himself. John the Baptist called Him the "Lamb of God that takes away sin." He took the punishment for our sins in His death on the Cross.

When we take the Lord's Supper, the juice is reminding us that Jesus' blood is what keeps us safe from the punishment that we deserve. The bread reminds us that He took our sins upon His body. Jesus took the punishment (of death) that we deserved because of our sin. That means we are no longer considered guilty because of our sin—we are free from the punishment for our sin and also free

from the guilt that our sin brings. Jesus has paid the debt that we owed. Jesus does not only forgive us; He gives us His life as we trust in Him and receive His Holy Spirit. God was pleased with Jesus' life and so He will be pleased with us, too!

A Meal

We all like to eat, right? And even more than that, we have to eat to stay alive. We need the nourishment, the good things, that food gives us. In the same way, the Lord's Supper is a meal that points to all that Jesus has done for us. Remembering all that Jesus has done for us, talking with Him in prayer, and spending time with Him in fellowship should nourish us, just like a really good meal. We should walk away from the Lord's Supper feeling full—not full of food, but full of the Lord's promises, His presence, and His peace.

Participation

The best meals are enjoyed with other people—God designed them that way. In the same way, the Lord's Supper is meant to be enjoyed with other Christians. Eating the same bread and drinking the same juice together reminds us that we all have one hope, and one Rescuer, to save us from the punishment we deserve. We are not just a bunch of strangers. We are a family, with one Father (God) and one Savior (Jesus).





Presence

In a mysterious way, one that we can't fully understand, Jesus is present with us when we take the Lord's Supper. The Scriptures tell us that Jesus's body is present with the Father—He sits at God's right hand in heaven, praying for all Christians, and waiting to return and set all things right. However, something special happens during the Lord's Supper—through the Holy Spirit, Jesus visits with us in a special way to encourage us, and to remind us of all that He has done to set us free from sin. He fellowships or, another way to say it is, He communes with us because we are part of His new family of faith. And, one day, we will be able to eat with Him, at the same table—the Lord's Supper is a reminder, a sign, a promise, and a “sneak preview” of that coming day!

*“By faith, Christ joins us at the Supper,
and we anticipate the day when faith gives way to sight
and we eat with the Savior in the Father's Kingdom.”*

—Thabiti Anyabwile

What Happens During Worship?

During the two traditional worship services: The elders will go to the front of the Sanctuary. The pastor will read some Scriptures, telling how Jesus taught His disciples to practice the Lord's Supper and how Jesus explained to them what everything meant. Then the pastor will hand out trays of bread and juice to the elders. The elders will pass those trays up and down each row, starting in the front of the Sanctuary and moving to the back.

During the Ignite worship service: The pastor will read some Scriptures, telling how Jesus taught His disciples to practice the Lord's Supper and how Jesus explained to them what everything meant. Then the elders will hold bread and juice, and each person will come to the elders, take a piece of bread, dip it in the juice, and eat it.

Only people who are Christians will take the bread and the juice. If anyone is not a Christian, they will not take the bread and juice. The Communion service will continue until every Christian in the room has had an opportunity to take the bread and juice. When the Communion service ends, the pastor will remind everyone of what the bread and juice represent and will lead everyone in prayer.

Some people will wait until everyone has their bread before they eat theirs. They will do the same thing with the juice (waiting for everyone to get theirs). That gives them time to pray, and to remember all that Jesus has done for them. It also reminds them that there are many others there who need to be fed by Jesus, too, and that we should be considerate of our brothers and sisters when we take the Lord's Supper. We're a family, after all.



What Should You Be Doing?

Most people will close their eyes and pray while they are waiting for their turn to receive the bread and the juice. Don't worry—your parents will tell you when it's your turn. Take time to close your eyes. Forget about the homework you still need to finish. Forget about what you're going to eat for lunch. Instead, think about what the bread and the juice point to Jesus' body and blood. Think about all Jesus sacrificed, all He gave up, just to bring you into God's family. He gave up heaven, His own life, and His righteousness, taking our sin instead. Think about your sin that Jesus took onto His body; every sin of yours was punished on the Cross. Jesus took the punishment (of death) that you deserved. Isn't that amazing?

pray

Are there any sins that you need to confess to God? Confessing sin doesn't save us or make us more worthy to take the Lord's Supper—rather, it helps us to remember the cost that Jesus paid to bring us back to God. Confessing our sins also helps us to have better fellowship or communion with Jesus. When you say or do something hurtful to your mom or dad, they don't stop loving you. But your relationship with them may not feel the same—you might feel guilty, or sad, or ashamed. It's the same way with Jesus. He doesn't stop loving us when we sin.

Confessing our sin to our Father, God, helps us to grow closer in our relationship with Him. It also makes us more grateful for all that He gave up to save us, and it reminds us that there is no sin that is too big for Jesus! We can take our sin to Him because we know that we will find forgiveness, cleansing (heart-washing), and peace. He desires for us to enjoy being with Him, and to have happy hearts that aren't troubled by guilt or shame.

How to Become a Child of God

If you've read this book, and you're thinking, *I'm not sure I'm a Christian*, we have a question for you...

Do You Want to Become a Child of God?

Jesus said that all are welcome into His family—however, He is the only “door” into God’s house. That means there is no other way to get back to God. We can’t be good enough. We can’t try hard enough. We can’t do enough good things. We can’t stop sinning enough. Our sin has broken our relationship with God.

The only way for our relationship to be fixed is through Jesus. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). When we choose to sin, we say to God, *I don't want to listen to you. I don't want to do what you say. I want to be in charge. I want to run the show.* God tells us to repent. Repentance means that we turn away from our sin, and turn to God (through Jesus).

Pray this Prayer

You can say to Him, ***I want to be part of Your family, and for You to be my Father. I want to live with You forever, in Your house. I don't want to do things my own way anymore, because Your way is the best way. I believe that Jesus lived the perfect, obedient life that I couldn't live, and died the death I couldn't die, taking the punishment for my sins. Now that I'm Your child, I want to listen to You, live for You, and love You all the days of my life. Thank You for adopting me into Your forever-family. Amen.***



You can pray to God at any time, and in any place. You only need to come to Him in faith, trusting that He is who He says He is, and that He does what He promises. He knows you need Him—don't be embarrassed to tell Him that! He has perfectly provided for **all** of your needs through Jesus!

Do You Have Questions?

If you have any questions, contact one of us:

Our Pastors

Tina Jones, Children's Ministry Director

Karen King, Director of Elementary Education

Evelyn Penkert, Director of Early Childhood and Primary Education

I am a child
of God

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 1:23-26

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