

LEADING COMMUNION IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

At *our church* we do something unique which is not common in other churches; that is, we allow our Small Group leaders to facilitate a communion remembrance service in their groups. This is an important responsibility, as the Scriptures make it clear that communion is not to be taken lightly. *“So if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, that person is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord.” (1 Cor. 11:27)*

Therefore, I want to ask you to carefully read and complete this worksheet for your own sake.

COMMUNION, A SYMBOL OF CHRIST’S SACRIFICE

Key text:1 Corinthians 11:23-26 *“For this is what the Lord himself said, and I pass it on to you just as I received it. On the night when He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread, 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” 25 In the same way, He took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and you, sealed by the shedding of My blood. Do this in remembrance of Me as often as you drink it.” 26 For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord’s death until He comes again.”*

1. UNDERSTAND THE PRACTICE OF COMMUNION IN THE EARLY CHURCH

- a. The Lord’s Supper was a Fellowship meal, followed by the special time of remembrance. It’s roots were in the Passover, but not limited to that. It was a shared meal (rather like our modern-day potlucks), in which the church came together, broke bread (to eat), and broke bread (in remembrance). (I Cor. 11:20-23, Jude 12, Acts 2:42-47).
 - Some Small Groups have scheduled a group potluck dinner on the night’s in which they shared communion.
- b. The Scriptures do not specify:
 - i) Whether the loaf should be raised or unraised (I Cor. 11:23)
 - ii) How often we should celebrate Communion (I Cor 11:26).

- Each Small Group is free to decide what manner of bread, and the frequency of the service for their group.
- c. Communion is a symbolic act of remembrance, not a “sacrament”. (A sacrament in other traditions is a ceremony which “conveys grace” just through the act itself.)
- The Small Group needs to take time to remember Christ’s death, maybe by re-reading the passion narratives again as a group.

2. UNDERSTAND THE ATTITUDE ABOUT COMMUNION

- a. We must partake of the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner.
- This word “unworthily” is a reference to the manner in attitude and action by which we partake of communion. It cannot mean “unworthy” because no one is worthy to share in the shed blood of Christ; it is a reference to an attitude of reverence which must be conveyed during communion.

1 Corinthians 11:27-30 *“So if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, that person is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God’s judgment upon yourself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.”*

- The implications of this is that no person who is knowingly a preChristian should partake of communion, because the leader will be then helping to bring down judgment upon that person. For they cannot participate in something for which they have never understood and accepted their own need of repentance and forgiveness. Without that, communion is meaningless.
- The Small Group leader then needs to prayerfully consider the appropriate time and location for a communion service so as not to either bring judgment upon, nor offend a seeker.

- b. We must examine **ourselves** and privately confess all known sin to the Lord.
- Too many people examine *others* and whisper about why so-and-so is taking communion... This is completely contrary to the teaching of this Scripture:

1 Corinthians 11:31 *“But if we examine ourselves, we will not be examined by God and judged in this way.”*

- The Small Group leader needs to lead the group in a time of private and possibly, public confession of sin as a part of the communion service.

- c. You must be at peace with others before you participate in the Lord’s Supper

1 Corinthians 11:17-19 *“But now when I mention this next issue, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. First of all, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that those of you who are right will be recognized!”*

- The Small Group Shepherd must decide in cases of sin or division, when s/he will allow someone to participate in communion. The individual should also be considered to prayerfully consider the implications of partaking of communion, if relationships are not where they need to be.
- If there is division between any parties in the Small Group, the leader is responsible to see that this is addressed.

3. COMMUNION AT OUR CHURCH

- a. Large group
 - We practice Communion in large group settings
- b. Small group
 - We allow and encourage Small Group leaders who have studied these passages and discussed them with Pastor to lead communion for their group.

c. The Communion Ceremony

General flow of the ceremony is as follows:

1) Welcoming people to this Remembrance Ceremony of the Lord

■ Read 1 Cor. 11:27-31

So if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, that person is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. 29 For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died. But if we examine ourselves, we will not be examined by God and judged in this way.

- explaining the seriousness & importance of communion
- emphasizing the nature of Christian fellowship together
- Have them make sure their relationships are where they need to be before sharing in communion

2) Reading 1 Cor. 11:23-25 -- The Bread

For this is what the Lord himself said, and I pass it on to you just as I received it. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

- Explain the broken body for our sins
- Have a time of quiet meditation & repentance of sin
- Have someone pray at the end of the moment of silence
- All partake of the bread together.

3) Read 1 Cor. 11:25-26 – The Cup

25 In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and you, sealed by the shedding of my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." 26 For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

- Explain the shed blood to provide cleansing & forgiveness
- Have someone pray after a time of silence
- All partake of the cup together

4) Final Prayer, or Group Prayer or Song

- You could all recite the Lord's prayer together; sing a chorus of a well-known song; have someone else close in prayer;
- Emphasize group fellowship: you could receive an offering to provide for someone in need in your group; could be as simple as \$30 for flowers; or send a card out as a group; or buy a small remembrance gift.
- Group hug!

I have read these passages (1 Cor. 11:17-34; Acts 2:42-47), and have prayerfully considered their implications for me and my group.

(signed)

(dated)

We intend to have Small Group communion
on_____.

We expect to have it with this frequency_____.

We *will* / *will not* also have a shared meal on that day.