

An Introduction to Communion

*“In Communion we look **in** at ourselves and confess the things that have gone wrong. We look **back** to Calvary and praise Jesus for his death for us. We look **up** to his risen presence, longing to nourish us through the bread and cup which he said were his body and blood. We look **around** in love and fellowship with other guests at God’s table. We look **forward** to his return at the end of all history, the marriage supper of the Lamb, of which every Communion is a foretaste. And then we look **out** to a needy world; Communion is battle rations for Christian soldiers. [Adapted slightly from Michael Green, *One to One* (Moorings, 1995) p. 102].” The Manual of the Free Methodist Church in Canada.*

Communion is a special meeting time with God!

This bread and this juice are more than symbols of something that happened two thousand years ago – they are also Jesus’ promise to always be with us, to save us, to forgive us, to love us AS WE promise to follow Him, love Him, live with Him **NOW**.

Communion is about **NOW** and **TODAY**: “**NOW** as I take this bread I **REMEMBER** Your sacrifice for me Jesus, on the cross – how important it is for me today!”

“**NOW** as I take this juice I **REMEMBER** Your promise to forgive me, to heal me, to love me, and as I take it, I am saying ‘thank You’ and ‘I want to live for You, please teach me how.’”

NOW, TODAY, REMEMBER

To **REMEMBER** in the Bible, means not just to bring something to mind, but it means to act on what comes to mind. Much like when your mom says, “**REMEMBER** your manners!” Mom is saying to recall or bring to mind what she has taught you about manners AND to do it! **REMEMBER** is an important Bible theme (maybe because we have an amazing capacity to forget!). God gave His people remembering opportunities and commands in the Old Testament such as festivals, altars, markers, names of places and of course Deuteronomy 6. In the New Testament He gives us baptism and communion to help us **REMEMBER**. Communion is a special meeting time with God to **REMEMBER, NOW, and TODAY** the story of Jesus, His love for us, the opportunity He invites us into, and to step into it!

In this package you will find:

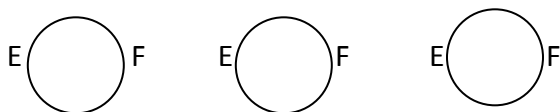
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Communion Study:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 11: 17-22. What is the tone of Paul's writing in this passage (i.e. happy, sad, etc)?
2. What are Paul's main concerns with the Corinthians and communion?
3. Read verses 23-25. Let's consider the actual ritual:
 - a) The actual historical Last Supper occurred on the Passover. Why did Jesus choose the Passover meal to mark the beginning of His sacrifice (i.e. what are the connections between Jesus' sacrifice and the Passover (Goggle "Passover" to help you)?
 - b) Read Leviticus 16:1-10 and have a discussion about the purpose of the sacrifice and how it was to be carried out. Make note that Jesus is the "high priest", and the sacrifice and the scapegoat. Helpful questions: a worshiper would bring a sacrifice to the priest – what would the priest do with the animal next (what are the sacrifice steps)? Why would the worshiper have to stay and watch? Why was a sacrifice even necessary? Why blood? Now how did Jesus' sacrifice fit into history?
 - c) Back to 1 Corinthians. When Jesus gave thanks, what specifically was He giving thanks for? Was it the traditional Passover grace? He knew what was about to happen to Him, was He thankful about that?
 - d) "This is my body which is broken for you": It does not say that this bread will change into my body (the Catholic view of communion), but neither does it say that this bread is "like" my body – a mere symbol of Jesus' sacrifice (a protestant view). It says "this is my body" so we are left with a mystery. The word mystery in Paul's writings means revelation, something that God is revealing in His time. The Trinity is a mystery, and prayer is a mystery. In both cases we have some understanding but we will not have the full understanding of Trinity or prayer until we meet Christ! Communion is that special opportunity that Jesus gives us to step into the mystery (the bigness, the hope, the revelation) of the fullness of Christ. We believe that Jesus is saying that He meets with us (He is with us) when we communion. Discuss all this.
 - e) "This cup is the new covenant in my blood": What does "covenant" mean? What is the old covenant? What are the differences between the old and the new? How does the old covenant contribute to our faith today?

- f) Note the word “remembrance”. This is a major Bible theme. Why – why is God quite concerned that we “remember”? What does God want the people to remember in the Old Testament, and what does Jesus want us to remember here?
- g) In the Old Testament or covenant, God encouraged “remembering” how? What commands, what opportunities did God give the people to help them remember? Read Deuteronomy 6:4-12 and Joshua 4:1-7 and discuss “remembering” here.
- h) Remembering God and His attributes, His promises, His work, etc will nurture in us: our identities in Christ (who we are to Him and that we belong to His Church), our mission, and worship. Discuss how remembering helps nurture each of these three (for instance, how does remembering His sacrifice in communion, inspire me into mission?)?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 11:25. What does it mean that we “proclaim” His death? To whom? (hint: “proclamation” here is like a stand we take, and the accompanying lifestyle choices we make).
5. Read verses 26-33. Wow, we can take it in an “unworthy” manner – that’s a little sobering isn’t it? What would an unworthy manner be (note: remember the whole passage so far)? Does this mean that I should not take communion because I do not feel “worthy”? It means that you should make things right, right away – we have that opportunity in Christ to confess right away, and resolve right away to make things right!
6. How do we examine ourselves? What steps, procedures or habits help you examine yourself? The following is one helpful tool – we highly recommend that you use these gauges in your journal every couple of weeks. And one final note about using these gauges, be sure that you remember that God gave us “US”! **Examination is not complete without someone else helping you:**

Discuss the following three gauges – obviously they overlap, but try to tease them apart for the sake of conversation (“E” empty, “F” full):



Emotional

Physical

Spiritual

- “Emotional” is defined in terms of the health of your personal relationships (i.e. forgiveness, fights, conflicts, passive aggression, etc).
- “Physical” is defined in terms of your personal health (i.e. diet, exercise, medical, etc).
- “Spiritual” is defined in terms of your relationship with God (i.e. prayer life, Scripture, power, etc).

The Communion Liturgy

I am very pleased that your group is considering leading a communion service!

Participants need to have prayerfully prepared their hearts before service. Your group may choose to go with the traditional liturgy or you also have the opportunity of using other “options” listed below. Please choose only one “option” for each category listed below. Please inform Pastor at least four days prior to service about your choices.*

Each liturgy reader should prayerfully practice the week prior, and show up for the pre-service run-through. Again, I am so pleased that you are willing to be involved in this way!

We traditionally use one of two methods for serving: 1. intinction (where people come to the front, take a piece of matzo and dip it in Welsh’s juice); or 2. we fill little communion cups and bread trays and have the ushers distribute (we use Rice Thins as a gluten free option – your team will be responsible to pick these up too).

Your group will discuss these two methods and pick one. Please inform Pastor four days prior to service so that she/he can inform worship team.

If you choose intinction then Pastor will make preparations. If you choose for the ushers to serve then your group is responsible for the following:

- purchase or bake bread and cut into pieces;
- purchase Welsh’s (always check with us first as we may have some already);
- Purchase Rice Thins as gluten free option (again check with office to see if we have some already);
- show up by ____AM on Sunday morning to prepare trays and place them in sanctuary;
- be the servers when Pastor calls you up;
- clean up after the service.

*Your group also has the option of writing your own “Pre-service”, “Invitation” and / or “Confession”. Pastor will help you – these would need to be submitted to Pastor one week prior to the service.

A. Pre-service prayer (on screen as people arrive): This one screen is to help people prepare their hearts as they arrive.

Option 1:

O God, let something essential happen to me;
something more than interesting or entertaining or thoughtful.

O God, let something essential happen to me;
something awesome, something real. Speak to my condition, Lord, and change me somewhere inside where it matters.

O God let something essential happen to me...

Option 2:

God aches over our distance and preoccupation. He mourns that we do not draw near to Him. He grieves that we have forgotten Him. He weeps over our obsession with muchness and manyness. He longs for our presence. And He is inviting you to come home. Home to serenity and peace and joy, home to friendship and fellowship and openness, home to intimacy and acceptance and affirmation. (Richard Foster's definition of "prayer")

B. The Invitation (Read by someone in your group before Gathering song): the Invitation is the opportunity we have to welcome each other into the communion. This moment frames in or gives the service a context (i.e. "today we get to do this"):

Option 1:

To those of you who have the courage to ask the burning questions;
To those who are ready to do something with God's answers;
This invitation is for you.
These are holy things we are about to do and a Holy God we are about to come face to face with.
In light of all of this it is important that you accept this invitation with humility and thought.

Option 2:

I need this meal.
Jesus prepared the meal, set the table, and is here with us for the meal. He explained a long time ago that that He is in the meal too: He has poured His love into this meal. And when I come to His table and eat at this table, Jesus is so very pleased because He has poured Himself into this meal.
In taking this bread and this juice, I am agreeing that what He did on the cross and then how He rose from the dead three days later is all absolutely necessary for me.
Jesus I need this meal.

Option 3 (Invitation continued):

Here we are Lord.

**We don't enter into this with self-confidence,
stupid pride in ourselves,
or trusting in our own goodness.
We just trust in You and Your mercy.
If "just ourselves" is all we had going for us
then we couldn't even eat the crumbs from this table.
Thankfully, we have You with us.**

We ask that as we incorporate these molecules of wheat and grapes into our physical selves, that we would also incorporate Your Spirit, Your character, Your new life, into the whole of ourselves.

**In taking communion we ask that You would make us one with You,
And one with each other,
So that we can make a difference in the world.**

Option 4:

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with your neighbours, and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking henceforth in his holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament for your comfort; and humbly bowing make your honest confession to Almighty God.

- C. Apostle's Creed (Read by worship team or a member of your group right before or after the worship package): This ancient and traditional creed is a declaration of our faith. The only "option" on this one is to remove the line "We Believe" – otherwise this creed is pretty set! Do you know when it was written and the circumstances as to why it was written or by whom?**

WE BELIEVE

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.**

WE BELIEVE

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.**

WE BELIEVE THAT

Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day He rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

WE BELIEVE

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

D. The Confession (Read by a member of your group right after sermon): It is tradition to have a moment where we offer everyone the opportunity to confess sin.

Option 1:

Lord forgive us for...

Ignoring You, and forgetting You daily.
Forgive us for our lack of love to You, our family, our church family, and our community.
Forgive us for believing the lies of the devil,
And believing the lies of the world.
Lies we listen to and choose to live by,
Lies we haven't challenged with Your Word and in prayer.
Forgive us for living like everyone else: busy.
Forgive us for laziness in our commitment to You.
Forgive us for grudges, and un-forgiveness.
Lord please forgive us.

And Jesus' answer is "I do!"

Option 2:

"Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Maker of all things, Judge of all people, who with great mercy has promised forgiveness and deliverance to all who turn to you with hearty repentance and true faith, we confess that we have sinned against you and are hopeless without your grace. Have mercy upon us, O

merciful Father, have mercy upon us; pardon and deliver us from all our sins: from blindness of heart and lack of love; from the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil; from false doctrine and neglect of your Word; from disbelief and lack of trust. O God, our Saviour, keep us this day without sin. Give us strength to serve and please you in newness of life, and to honour and praise your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Option 3:

(Ask the congregation to pray this with you)

Dear God I sin. I sinned this week.

This isn't news to You, but here and now I'd like to make things right...

All week You longed for time with me, and I often didn't show up.

All week You hoped that I would use gifts that You gave me – gifts to help others – and sometimes I did, but mostly I was too busy.

This week there were times that You were saddened by choices I made.

This week you were saddened when I told lies, and believed lies without checking in with You!

I know that there is a spiritual war going on but I prayed so little.

And because I sinned this week I hurt those I love – my family, my church family and friends.

I sinned this week and I'm so sorry, Father.

Please forgive me.

Option 4:

(ask the congregation to pray with you)

Dear God I want... You made me to want.

You made me to want You!

You made me to want to belong with others – to love and be loved.

You made me to want to make a difference.

But because of my sin, what I “want” is all messed up...

Instead of You, I want “other gods” like money, power, safety, entertainment...

I fill my want for others with selfishness – I want them to make me feel good.

And instead of making a difference, I want to make a name for myself.

In this most honest moment Jesus I'm asking you to fix my “want”:

I want You Jesus.

I want to belong – love and be loved by my family and church family.

I want to use the gifts you gave me to make a difference in other people's lives.

Oh God forgive me a sinner and heal my “wants”.

Option 5 (Confession continued):

“Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all people, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your holiness, and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger. We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and every failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge that we are hopeless without your grace. Have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us most merciful Father, for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died for us. Forgive us. Cleanse us. Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life, and to honour and praise your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

- E. Lord’s Prayer: This prayer that Jesus taught us could be prayed at the beginning of the service after the Invitation, or as the Invitation. It could be prayed during the worship package, or after the Confession or at the end of the service BY A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name,
Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever, Amen.

- F. Pastor will CONSECRATE the elements:**

“In the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: “Take, eat, this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

“In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me.”