

Ancient Practice

Communion

Note for Leaders: This week's study is focused on communion. There are fewer questions this week so that if you choose you can have time to celebrate communion as a group. Communion was celebrated in the homes of believers of the early church as well as in large gatherings of the church. If done properly and respectfully, communion can be a wonderful way to develop fellowship within your Circle. Below the lesson, you will find suggestions for a successful time of communion with your group.

Ice Breaker: Tell us about a time when you used something designed or purchased for one purpose, but used it for a completely different purpose.

1. What was the original purpose and symbolisms of Passover celebration?
(Exodus 12:1-17)

Exodus 12:1-14 *The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 2 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. 3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. 4 If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are.*

You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. 5 The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. 6 Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. 7 Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. 8 That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. 9 Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. 10 Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. 11 This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover. 12 "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. 13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. 14 "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—a lasting ordinance.

2. How did Jesus change the purpose and symbolism of the Passover at the Last Supper referenced in Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:14-20?

Matthew 26:26-28 *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." 27 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."*

Mark 14:22-24 *22 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.*

Luke 22:17-20 *17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."*

Note: In 1 Corinthians 11:17-28, Paul chastises the Corinthian church for not celebrating the Lord's Supper the way they were originally taught. Paul clarifies the Lord's Supper for the church to follow by reframing it as communion (fellowship or "koinonia" in Greek) of the believers and gives us the purposes behind the symbolism.

1 Corinthians 11:17-28 *In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20 So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter! 23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 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." 25 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." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 So then, 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. 28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.*

3. How was the Corinthian church celebrating the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner?

4. What would be a worthy manner inferred by Paul?

5. LOOK UP - How does the celebration of communion focus the individual and the church on God and Jesus? (1 Corinthians 11:24-25; John 3:16)

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

6. LOOK BACK - How does the celebration of communion remind us of our past and what Jesus has done for us? (1 Corinthians 11:24-25, Matthew 26:28, Romans 6:6-7)

Romans 6:6-7 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*

7. LOOK WITHIN – How does the celebration of communion encourage us to adjust our attitudes and remind us that we need a savior? (1 Corinthians 11:27-28; 1 John 1:9)

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

8. LOOK AROUND – As we as believers each love and abide in Christ (John 15:5) and we love one another (John 13:34-35), it is there that we find true fellowship and koinonia. How does properly celebrated communion help us to strengthen fellowship (koinonia) within the body of Christ and His church? (John 17:20-23)

John 13:34-35 *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

John 15:5 *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

John 17:20-23 *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

9. How and where did the early church of Acts 2 celebrate the breaking of the bread? (Acts 2:42, 46-47)

Acts 2:42, 46-47 *They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.... 46 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, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

10. LOOK AHEAD - How does celebrating communion help us to focus on our future with Christ? (1 Corinthians 11:26, Revelation 21:1-4)

Revelation 21:1-4 *Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.*

They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

A Time of Communion

Preparation:

1. At a minimum you will want to make arrangements for grape juice and bread or crackers for the elements. If you are using Zoom, you will want to alert your people ahead of time.
2. Opening and closing communion in prayer is a good way to lead into, and after communion.
3. Worship music is a good way to provide a solemn and reflective way to lead into communion, and after if you wish.
 - If your group has a musician who can help with worship that is all the better.
 - Another approach is to task someone in the group to download a few worship songs onto their phone and use those.
 - Also, you will also find list of worship songs on Church Central with this lesson for you to choose from or any others you feel would be appropriate.
 - You can either find the lyrics online and print them for your group or your group members can search the lyrics on their phone. Do whatever is most appropriate for your group.
4. Reading of one of the Last Supper texts is the easiest way to lead communion. (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:1-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
5. Remember that Communion is for believers and each person should come to communion in a worthy manner. It is important to emphasize that they can take a moment to get their hearts right with God before taking communion
6. Make sure that it is done orderly and as a group.

Order

1. Make sure everyone has the elements who are participating.
2. Start with an opening prayer to focus on God and his presence.
3. Use singing or quiet prayer time or instrumental worship music to give people a chance to focus on what Christ has done on their behalf and to put their hearts right.
4. Read or have someone read the first part regarding the body and take the bread.
5. Read or have someone read the second part regarding the cup and drink the cup.
6. Finish with more song or prayer.