

EPHESIANS 4:29

CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

The text 'CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER' is centered between two stylized human figures. Each figure consists of a solid black circle for a head and a solid black oval for a torso. The figures are positioned on either side of the text, with their heads facing each other as if in conversation.

“LET NO CORRUPTING TALK COME OUT OF YOUR MOUTHS, BUT ONLY SUCH AS IS GOOD FOR BUILDING UP, AS FITS THE OCCASION, THAT IT MAY GIVE GRACE TO THOSE WHO HEAR.”

THE LORD’S TABLE

[COMMUNION]

Conversation Guide

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Obviously, the Lord's Supper is not for perfect people, but for repentant people—but that is just the point. The Lord's Supper forces us to keep our inner experience linked with our outward behavior. It demands that we ask:

- [1] Am I truly living a life of gratitude and obeying God, as I would be if I really believed he saved me at the infinite cost of his only Son?
- [2] Am I loving others sacrificially, as I would be if I really believed I was saved by sacrificial love?" - Tim Keller

What is communion? Why does the body of Christ share it at First Baptist Church and churches worldwide? When am I able to participate in communion? These are questions we receive consistently from people who come to the church. The Lord's Table provides a sacred moment for us as the body of Christ.

This guide has been developed to deepen your understanding of the purpose of communion and the requirement to come to the Lord's Table. We are always available to answer your questions and provide more insight about Communion.

I. PURPOSE OF COMMUNION

The Lord's Table, the Lord's Supper, or the breaking of bread, are terms used interchangeably. It is vital that you know what the Bible has to say about it.

Read Luke 22:7-20 Like believer's baptism, the Lord commanded communion, and it is a memorial of His sacrificial death on the cross. Luke records the very first observance of the Lord's Table. Christ had entered Jerusalem with His disciples just before His crucifixion. He had them prepare the Passover meal, a memorial celebrated by Jews each year. The Passover was a God-ordained celebration that commemorated the Jews' deliverance from Egypt by the Lord. At the time of the Exodus from Egypt (some fifteen centuries before Christ's earthly ministry), each Jewish family had been commanded to sacrifice a Passover lamb to avoid the wrath that God sent against Egypt

*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. [Exodus 12:13]*

Almost 1500 years later, Christ entered Jerusalem and died on the cross during the Passover celebration. The symbolism here is rich: *Christ is the new Passover Lamb*, slain to provide salvation from sin for all who believe! The Old Testament sacrifices were a foreshadowing of Christ's sacrificial death. At the institution of the Lord's Table, Christ identified Himself as the perfect and final Passover Lamb, slain to provide deliverance from sin.

What is Christ called in **John 1:29**? _____

*The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,
"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! [John 1:29]*

What does John say Christ can do? _____

Compare **Hebrews 10:4** with **1 John 1:7**.

For the blood of bulls and goats can't take away sins. [Hebrews 10:4]

. . . if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. [1 John 1:7]

What can Christ do that Old Testament sacrifices could not?

Read **Luke 22:7–20** and answer the following questions:

In verse 19, what did Christ use to represent His body? _____

Unleavened Bread

The bread which Christ used in instituting the Lord's Table was the unleavened bread of the Passover. Leaven is often used in Scripture as a symbol for sin. Christ was sinless — “a lamb unblemished and spotless” (1 Peter 1:19) — as is symbolized by the unleavened bread.

Why would Christ's body be “given for you” (v. 19; see v. 15)?

Jesus instructed the disciples to eat the bread “in remembrance of me” (v. 19). What does that mean?

Following the bread, Christ used something as a representative of His blood (v. 20). **What was it?** _____ (The “cup” means the drink or juice used during Communion.)

Why was Christ's blood so important for our salvation? (See Hebrews 9:22 and 1 John 1:7.)

Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. [Hebrews 9:22]

. . . if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. [1 John 1:7]

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23–31. The Apostle Paul used the first communion to teach later believers how and why to continue it. As He did with the bread, Christ said that the cup was to be taken “in remembrance of me” (v. 25). He concludes in verse 26 that when we eat the bread and drink from the cup we “proclaim the Lord’s death.” The bread and juice are simply symbols that help us remember and show Christ’s death!

“My mother would tell me when we ate dinner, “Son, don’t play at the table.” When you partake of the Lord’s Supper, be sure not to play at the table.” - Tony Evans [Book of Illustrations]

Communion is, first of all, *a remembrance of Christ’s death*. However, it is also a reminder of something else (1 Corinthians 11:26 and Luke 22:16 & 18).

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. [1 Corinthians 11:26]

For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. [Luke 22:16]

What is it? _____

No wonder the Lord’s Table is so precious to Christians! It is a memorial of Christ’s death for our sins and a *reminder that Christ will return to take us to be with Him in heaven!* There is indeed cause for a memorial celebration. Yet, it must be observed solemnly and carefully.

II. PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNION

In 1 Corinthians 11:27–31, Paul warns against taking the Lord’s Table “in an unworthy manner.”

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. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. [1 Corinthians 11:27-31]

The Lord is serious about this warning—what are some extreme examples of judgment for abuse of the Lord’s Table (v. 30)?

We need to be careful to partake of the Lord’s Table in a worthy fashion!

What does that mean?

1. Believers in Jesus must partake of the Lord’s Table reverently.

[1] Anyone who has not trusted Jesus Christ as Savior cannot “judge the body rightly” (take communion with understanding and judgment —v. 29).

[2] Christ set this precedent at the institution of the Lord’s table: Judas (an unbeliever) departed to betray Jesus before the Lord’s Supper and so was not present to partake (**see John 13:21–30 and Mark 14:21–22**). Communion is for believers in Jesus!

2. Believers who are in fellowship with God should partake of the Lord’s Table

Between the warnings in **1 Corinthians 11:27 & 29** is a command in verse 28.

What is it? _____

What promise is given to those who “judge themselves” (v. 31)?

Psalm 139:23–24 is a good passage to consider during this time of self-examination and confession. Once you are sure that there is no unconfessed sin hindering your fellowship with the Lord, you are free to partake of the Lord’s Table.

3. Christians must partake of the Lord's Table reverently.

Communion is not something to be taken lightly. Rather, it is a time of worship, remembering Christ's death. **If communion is intended to be a memorial of Christ's death for you, what should your mind dwell on during the communion service (in addition to self-examination)? Be specific.**

Through the Lord's table we look... backward to Christ's death, forward to His coming and inward at our own hearts.

4. Christians must partake of the Lord's Table in unity.

The Lord's Table provides the church an opportunity to fellowship with the Lord (vertically) and with one another (horizontally). It is not a private ordinance, but a public one, one for which the disciples "gathered together" (Acts 20:7).

Indeed, it seems that the Lord's Table was commonly (if not exclusively) observed in conjunction with a love feast, a meal taken together as a symbol of the church's family-like unity.

The Lord's Supper is "the simple rite which at once expressed the domestic (family) idea of the Church and the worth of Christ's death, while it separated the partakers from this crooked generation and bound them into one."

- Alexander Maclaren (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 24.)

Sadly, the church at Corinth had been abusing this time. It had become a huge feast for the rich, while the poor had nothing, promoting division rather than unity (**1 Corinthians 11:18-22, 33-34**). This is the opposite of observing communion in a worthy manner.

The church at Jerusalem provides a far better example in **Acts 2:42–44**.

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. **[Acts 2:42-44]***

What four things did Christians continue doing (v. 42)?

[1] _____

[2] _____

[3] _____

[4] _____

What was their attitude toward each other (v. 44)?

A final note about communion is in order. Unlike baptism, which is practiced only once following salvation, the Lord's Table is repeated.

Why? (see **1 Corinthians 11:26**)

III. QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

What are the three most significant lessons that you have learned in this study? Why are they important?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What is the purpose of communion? What do the bread and juice represent?

What is involved in partaking of the Lord's Table in a worthy manner?

About what should you be thinking during the communion service?

This is a Place for Questions You May Have . . .

IV. SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AND MEMORIZE

[10 Key Bible Verse about the Lord's Supper, crossway.org]

[1] Matthew 26:26-28

[2] I Corinthians 11:23-26

[3] I Corinthians 11:27-29

[4] Mark 14:22-25

[5] John 6:35

[6] Luke 22:14-20

[7] John 6:52-58

[8] I Corinthians 10:16-17

[9] Acts 2:42

[10] Revelation 19:9

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