

Communion

Communion is a beautiful gift that Christ left with us and is one of the two central signs that identify us as Christ-followers (baptism being the other). It is a symbolic re-enactment of the gospel where the bread represents the broken body of Jesus and the grape juice represents his blood that was shed. When we eat the bread and drink the grape juice, we are symbolically showing our participation in Christ's death (by dying to our own sin and accepting that Christ's death paid the penalty for that sin) and rejoicing in the life that his resurrection brings.

A central part of communion is remembering and giving honour to Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, as this is the foundation of Christianity. Therefore, by participating in communion, we testify to our faith in this saving work of Christ.

Normally communion is shared in community as that also gives witness to the fact that the gospel has created a new community – the *Church*. Therefore communion is also the means to unite us one to another around the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. But in this unique season we cannot meet corporately in a physical sense, it is still right and honourable to worship God in this way, even if you may be doing this on your own, as long as you do it in a manner that considers and is thankful for the greater Church body.

So communion has a number of points of focus:

1. Looking back – considering Christ's sacrificial death where he took our place and bore the full wrath of God for sin in order that we might be spared that wrath
2. Looking inward – examining our own hearts and recognising our need of Jesus' saving work
3. Looking up – confessing our sin to God and accepting the forgiveness that the cross affords with gratitude and praise
4. Looking around – recognising that being united with Christ unites us with every other believer. Therefore we choose to accept one another with love and grace and forgiveness. We also pray for others to know and accept this saving work of Jesus
5. Looking forward – joyfully anticipating the day when Christ will complete his redemptive work and bring us home to our heavenly Father

In other words, the communion table is a symbol of redemption (Christ buying us back from death), reconciliation (we find forgiveness and therefore peace with God and one another), restoration (we find fulfilment and purpose in Christ), renewal (the hope of completed redemption in Christ in his second coming).

So, with our blessing Church, may you be encouraged to partake of communion in your homes. There is only one warning from Scripture:

1 Corinthians 11:27-29: *"Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself; in this way let them eat the bread and drink from the cup. For whoever eats and drinks without recognising the body, eats and drinks judgement on themselves."*

In other words, may this be a respectful time of worship for you and your loved ones.

How to do communion:

There are no strict rules as to how communion must be done, but the following order may be helpful:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26:
“On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, saying ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he also took the cup after supper and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”
2. Prayer of thanks for the bread and grape juice and therefore thanks for Christ’s death paying for our sins.
3. Offer the bread to every person present.
4. Offer the grape juice to every person present¹.
5. Eat and drink together.
6. Pray a blessing over one another or say the Lord’s Prayer together.

You might want to include a statement of faith such as the Apostles’ Creed before you begin with the reading from 1 Corinthians:

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
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,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic² church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

¹ The elements are not the focus. The focus is Jesus. Therefore, if you need to substitute the elements you may.

² The word “catholic” here just means universal

