

We believe that a Small Group is a great place to celebrate Communion more frequently than the few times we corporately share in it. The following paragraphs are meant to give you some guidelines to make this a meaningful celebration within your group. Please feel free to contact the Small Groups staff with any questions.

What is Communion (The Lord's Supper or Eucharist)?

Communion is the regular remembrance and celebration of the Lord's sacrificial death. The breaking and eating of bread has to do with Christ's body being broken on the cross. The drinking from the cup has to do with the shedding of Christ's blood whereby we are forgiven. (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24)

What is the purpose of Communion?

The primary purpose of Communion is to take time to remember all that the Lord has done for us. It is a time to worship and give thanks for the forgiveness of our sins and the new life and relationship that we have in Jesus Christ. This time of remembrance was initiated by Jesus just before his death. Because we tend to be forgetful people, in the Old Testament believers were called to remember the faithfulness of God through various memorials. In the New Testament, this is the way that Jesus wanted us to remember his love and forgiveness of our sins.

For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NLT)

These verses also explain that Communion is a time of personal examination of our relationship with the Lord and others.

So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without 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. But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way. Yet when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world. 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 (NLT)

Where and how often should we celebrate Communion?

We believe that Communion is a good thing for believers to celebrate, not only at church or in the church building, but also in homes and appropriate places all around the city. God invites us to celebrate as often as we feel is appropriate.

In Acts 2:42-47, we read that believers met on a regular basis in their homes to celebrate communion

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. (NLT)

Who can take Communion?

Any person who has believed in and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ alone for his or her salvation may take Communion. This means it is possible that some members of your group may not want to participate.

Who can serve (give, facilitate, administer, or officiate) Communion?

Biblically speaking, anyone can serve or facilitate communion. Strategically, we think that the Small Group Leader or Apprentice would be a good person to serve it. This is a great opportunity for the leader to model servant leadership in the same way that Jesus served his disciples. However, there may be other members who are equally able to lead and serve in this celebration. This is left to the leader's discernment and discretion.

Is there a better time to serve Communion in the life cycle of the group?

We believe it is important to take time to get to know one another before participating in Communion together. Groups could share Communion as early as in the first six months of their group cycle.

How can we serve Communion?

There are many ways to serve Communion. The Bible does not dictate a certain method. Be creative and use variety. You could celebrate Communion after a meal together. This seems to be the way the early church did it (Matthew 26:26-29; Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 11:20-26). You could make this the centerpiece of your time together or you could partake in it before or after you complete a study and discussion time. The important thing is to remember that this is a time of worship. This is a time of celebration. This is a time of remembering and reflection. Enjoy it and you will see yourself and your friends grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Some ideas to get your started:

- Get a loaf of unsliced bread and some grape juice. The bread can be placed on a platter and the juice in a glass or small pitcher.
- Create a beautiful, worshipful environment with music and candles (if desired).
- The tradition of the Passover meal includes singing a song. You could sing a song or read a Psalm to begin your time of celebration. (Try one of these: Psalm 46, Psalm 63)
- You can then read some selected passages of Scripture that remind us of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. Here are several options you could use:
 - Isaiah 53
 - Luke 23:44-56 & Luke 24:1-9
 - Philippians 2:1-11
 - 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
 - Ephesians 2:1-10
- Encourage members to spend a few minutes in personal prayer, examining their heart and asking God to reveal any unconfessed sin. During this time of self-examination and prayer encourage them to confess their sin to the Lord and receive his forgiveness as they prepare to take communion. Here are some scripture options to read during this time:
 - 1 Corinthians 11:27-32
 - Matthew 5:21-24
 - Psalm 139:23-24
 - Psalm 51:1-12
- After a time of personal prayer and confession, pass the bread around and ask each member to tear off a piece, which represents the body of Jesus Christ that was broken for us.
- Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-24 or Luke 22:19
- Pass the cup of juice around and invite members to dip their bread into the cup or have pre-poured cups of juice for each member.
- Read 1 Corinthians 11:25-26 or Luke 22:20
- After all members have been served, close the time with prayer and praise. If you would like, read one of the following passages as a prayer of thanksgiving:
 - Psalm 66
 - Psalm 100
 - Psalm 138

Or you can have the bread and cup in a central location in the room. After a time of sharing, reading, and prayer, invite group members to tear off a piece of bread, dip it in the juice, and serve themselves. You may also consider having group members serve one another.

Conclusion

These few ideas are simply to help you think about how to participate in Communion with your group. This is a great opportunity for your group to worship and celebrate together. If you have any other questions about Communion or its celebration in your group, please contact the Spiritual Development Pastor.