

LIVING



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WEEK SIX Observing the Lord's Supper

THE MISSIONARY TASK

Component Four: *Healthy Church Formation*

INTRODUCTION

The Lord's Supper, also known as Communion, is one of two ordinances instituted by Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry. Partaking in the Lord's Supper is an act of obedience as we remember Jesus' atoning death for our sins.

BIBLICAL MATERIAL

We find the first instance of the Lord's Supper in Matthew 26:26-28. Just before going to the cross, Jesus ate what was called the Passover meal with his disciples. At the first Passover meal, which was to be celebrated annually as recorded in Exodus 12, Moses and the Israelites were to eat unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and spread the blood of a lamb around their doorposts. The blood ensured their protection from the tenth plague and subsequent freedom from slavery. The Egyptians, without the blood of the lamb, suffered the death of their firstborn.

Jesus gave new meaning to the Passover meal. He taught the disciples that the broken bread represented his body, and the blood represented his blood that was to be shed on the cross for the redemption of sins. He became the true and perfect sacrificial Lamb.

First Corinthians 10:16-17 instructs us, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, since all of us share the one bread."

We learn from this scripture that the Lord's Supper symbolizes our participation in the benefits of Christ's death. Participating in the Lord's Supper symbolically demonstrates our communion with Jesus Christ, our identification with his broken body and his blood shed for us. Even the very act of taking Communion, reaching into the plate to accept what has been offered, is a personal affirmation of our faith in Christ's payment on our behalf.

In addition, it symbolizes the unity of believers in Christ as "we who are many are one body ... [and] share the one bread." By partaking in the Lord's Supper, we commune with Christ and we commune with others in Christ.

One day, according to Revelation 19:9, those in Christ will participate in the marriage feast of the Lamb. When the bride of Christ, the church, is finally gathered in heaven we will take part in the ultimate communion, feasting with the sacrificial Lamb face to face.

MISSIONARY TASK RELEVANCY

We find in 1 Corinthians 11:26 that, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” Our participation in the Lord’s Supper is a testimony, a proclamation, of our beliefs to a watching world. Communion shares the good news—specifically of the sacrificial death of Jesus to pay for our sins—to a world without hope. Communion demonstrates the unity, the fellowship, we have as believers.

First Corinthians 11-12 further teaches us that disciples and members within the body of Christ receive a visible illustration of that unity as they take the Lord’s Supper. Paul instructs the Corinthians that the Lord’s Supper is a family meal, and each member is called to serve the family into which they have gathered. The Lord’s Supper provides a platform to think about serving as they look around at those to whom they have been called to serve and serve alongside.

When the church remembers, through the act of the Lords’ Supper, the broken body of Jesus and the blood that was shed for us, we are communing with God and with fellow believers for the glory of Jesus. It is for this reason that the Lord’s Supper should be taken only by those who have committed their life to Christ and have obediently followed Jesus in believers’ baptism.

It is a great privilege and blessing to participate in this symbol of Christ’s death on the cross. It is also a privilege to provide a witness to a dying world that needs to understand Jesus’ sacrificial death. We must prepare our hearts and minds to participate in this ordinance as we look forward to the great feast in heaven.

LIFE APPLICATION

1. In 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, we’re instructed to examine our hearts and to not partake of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. What does this mean? How does it apply to you? How does it apply to your relationships with others?
2. Do you take Communion in a manner in which Jesus is honored? Are you truly proclaiming the sacrifice of the Lord as you participate in this ordinance?
3. What are your thoughts about Communion as being an act of fellowship with fellow believers?
4. What do you think the Lord’s Supper looks like to a watching world?
5. How is your day-to-day life impacted by the thought of a future Marriage Feast of the Lamb in heaven? How does reflecting on this future celebration change your perspective today? When Jesus gathers His church, the body of Christ in heaven, will you be there? Why or why not?

