

Celebrating Communion in Your Small Group

We believe the context of a small group is a great place for communion to happen. The following paragraphs are meant to give you some guidelines to make this a meaningful celebration within your group.

What is communion? (The Lord's Supper)

It 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 did 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 Jesus wanted us to remember His love and forgiveness of our sins (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

These verses also explain that communion is a time of personal examination. It is a time to examine our relationship with the Lord and others (1 Corinthians 11:27-32).

Where and how often should we celebrate it?

We believe that it 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. In Acts 2:42-47, we read that believers met on a regular basis in their homes to celebrate communion. We can celebrate regularly and often. God invites us to celebrate as often as we feel is appropriate.

Who can take communion?

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

Who can serve communion?

Biblically speaking, anyone can serve or facilitate communion. Strategically, we think that the group leader or apprentice would be the one to serve. It is a great opportunity to demonstrate 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. It is at the leader's discernment and discretion.

Is there a "best" time to serve communion in the life cycle of the group?

We believe that it is important to get to know one another fairly well, first. This could be done within the first six months of your group. But again, you may desire to celebrate sooner than this at a mealtime together.

How can we serve communion?

There are many ways to serve communion. The Bible does not dictate a certain method. Feel free to be creative. You could celebrate communion after a meal together as often modeled by the early church (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 to remember is that this is a time of worship. This is a time of celebration. This is a time of remembrance and reflection. Enjoy it and you will see you and your group members grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Here are a couple of ideas to get you started:

1. Place a loaf of unsliced bread on a platter and some grape juice in a nice cup on a table in the middle of your group.
2. Begin your time of celebration by reading some selected passages of Scripture that remind us of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection.
 - Psalm 22
 - 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
 - Galatians 2:16-21
 - Ephesians 2:1-10
 - Philippians 2:1-11
 - Isaiah 53
 - Mark 15:21-29
 - John 19

3. After reading the Scriptures, pass the bread around and ask each group member to tear off a small piece. Remind them that this bread represents the body of Jesus which was broken on our behalf.
4. Then read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.
5. Next pass the cup of juice around and have everyone dip their bread into the cup. After everyone has dipped, remind them that the cup represents the blood of Jesus which was shed for us.
6. After the bread and juice have been consumed, encourage everyone to spend a few minutes in prayer and reflection.
7. Conclude your celebration by singing a song, listening to a praise song, or having a time of prayer in thanks to God.

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