

A Theology of The Lord's Supper and Practical Tips for Faithfully Participating

Church Family,

Many of our church family members have mentioned a desire to participate in The Lord's Supper together virtually. Therefore, we will participate in the Lord's Supper together during our Good Friday online service and potentially during your Easter Sunrise Service at home.

Remembering Jesus' death by participating in The Lord's Supper is a command from our Lord Jesus and, therefore, an ordinance for the Church. Jesus' Church has observed this ordinance since its foundation! I have written below on the theology of The Lord's Supper and given practical tips for how you, your family, or your small group can participate together online in a way that honors God.

Theology

All four of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) record what we call the "Lord's Supper." See these chapters for more details ([Matthew 26](#), [Mark 14](#), [Luke 22](#), and [John 13-17](#)). (John does not report the eating and drinking, but he does write about the evening and the conversation.)

The term "Lord's Supper" is first seen in Paul's writing to the Church in Corinth ([1 Corinthians 11:20-24](#)). Paul likely calls it the Lord's supper because it was already being referred to in this way by the community of Christ-followers. The Lord Jesus instituted the supper, and its purpose is to remember His death. I highly recommend you read what Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. See the passage below:

But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "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 the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

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. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would

not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come."

It is during the Lord's Supper that Jesus broke bread, passed it out to his followers, and declared that it represented His body that would soon break for His disciples. He then poured out wine and passed it out to His followers, saying that the wine represents His blood that was about to be poured out for the forgiveness of many. Jesus then invited those who were with Him to eat the bread and drink the wine. Jesus also commanded that His followers continue this practice until His return.

This practice of eating bread and drinking wine or juice is an opportunity to obey Jesus and remember what He has accomplished for us through His death. Participating in The Lord's Supper is a symbol that we have received by faith the work that Jesus accomplished on the cross. Jesus died on the cross in our place and for our sins. The gospel can be summed up in four words, "Jesus in our place."

As best we can tell, the church throughout history has obeyed Jesus' command to take communion together. However, it has not always happened without error. There are three specific errors we must be aware of before we lead people to observe the ordinance of communion— Unregenerate Participation, Compromising the Gospel, and Irreverence.

Unregenerate participation - Communion (The Lord's Supper) is for God's people. It is not an act for unbelievers. In history past, churches who have allowed people to participate in communion without their believing the gospel have exchanged the ordinance of remembering for a meaningless religious task. This does not mean that unbelievers must not be present. Contrarily, the act of remembering is to be public. In [1 Corinthians 11:26](#), Paul says, *As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* Therefore, there is a proclamation of the gospel that takes place when we take communion. However, it is always reserved for those who have received the gospel by grace through faith.

Compromising the gospel - Throughout Church history, in every generation, there has been a push by some away from the gospel of grace. This push away from the gospel often looks like religious actions that must be taken in order to gain or earn more grace from God. In other words, they believe that the death of Jesus on the cross was not enough to put them in right standing with God. Therefore, they participate in communion to gain favor or grace from God. Any work of our own to earn anything from God, apart from faith in who Jesus is and what He has done, should be dismissed out of hand as contrary to the gospel.

Irreverence - Paul speaks of the irreverence that was taking place in the Corinthian church. Many were not treating The Lord's Supper seriously. They were coming together for their own selfish gain and were not considering God or one another. Paul says that many of them had fallen asleep (died) because of the way they mocked God and one another through their irreverent participation in the Lord's Supper. The point here is that we should not take the Lord's Supper lightly. We must approach it with proper respect. We must "examine" ourselves before participating by making sure we are believing the gospel and participating with reverence. We should move both joyfully and sincerely toward the Lord's supper.

Practical Tips For Participating In The Lord's Supper:

Always Proclaim the Gospel - I love to read [1 Corinthians 11:23-36](#), or [Matthew 26:26-29](#). This helps us to "remember."

Examine Your Heart - Examine your heart and have the people you are leading examine their own. Make sure they are "in the faith." Do you believe the gospel? Do they? How are you approaching this moment? With joy and reverence?

Bread and Wine/Juice - There is not a place in the New Testament where a specification is given around the type of bread or how it is to be broken. There is only one statement about what was in the cup. This statement is given in one verse each in Matthew, Mark, and Luke: *I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom* ([Matthew 26:29](#); [Mark 14:25](#); [Luke 22:18](#)). All three of these verses use the phrase "fruit of the vine." I don't think we should make a big deal over whether pure grape juice or wine should be used. However, we should be careful that we don't lose the picture of the body and blood of Christ by being too liberal with our substitutes. Using animal crackers and Dr. Pepper leads us away from remembering. The Lord's Supper is not something in which we should be playful.

Tips For Leading Your Children Through the Lord's Supper

Gospel Opportunity - This is an incredible opportunity to share the gospel with your children!

- Read one of the gospel passages listed above.
- Have your children share with you about what the bread and juice represent.
- Ask your children why they are thankful for Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross.

Who should participate? Ultimately, it is up to you as a parent to discern whether or not it's appropriate for your kids to participate. The Bible speaks clearly about allowing everyone who has received Jesus Christ as Lord to participate.

Pray – Take a moment and pray with your family. Below is a short prayer you can use at home:

Father,
We are thankful that you love us. We are thankful that you sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. We remember your saving work on the cross. We love you. In Jesus name we pray.
Amen.

We look forward to remembering the work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with each one of you who have received Him by faith!

Grace and Peace to you,
Josh Lilly
Discipleship Pastor
Fellowship Bible Church Rowell