

COMMUNION

Most of us have taken Communion at some time in our lives, and yet, the practice of Communion as a time of reconciliation to God is often overlooked. When taking Communion becomes an occasional chore, we have missed the point. On the opposite end of the spectrum, when taking Communion is viewed as a means of salvation, we have also misunderstood its purpose in our lives.

As Christians, we are disciples or followers of Christ. In the Gospels, Jesus told his disciples to take Communion in remembrance of him. Therefore, we receive Communion because Jesus told us to. In the early church, Christians practiced Communion regularly in their homes meeting together to break bread and drink wine in remembrance of their Savior. Today, however, the idea of taking Communion outside of the walls of a church feels foreign to some. It shouldn't. Matthew 18:20 tells us, "For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them."

Along these same lines, there is a belief that only the spiritual leaders (pastors or priests) can serve Communion. While Communion is a holy practice that should be practiced in churches, it does not have to happen only within the walls of a church or given by a church leader. Like those in the early church, we can gather together and break bread in remembrance of Him anytime.

Anyone Who Believes May Partake

When we partake in Communion, we are following a religious ordinance. We are told to eat the bread and drink the cup in remembrance of Christ. Therefore, this is a significant time for those who believe in Christ's death and resurrection, as it represents his body and his blood. Followers of Jesus view this time as a blessing and a time to reflect on Jesus' sacrifice for their freedom and salvation. It is not that participating in Communion leads to salvation; instead, Communion is something believers do to remember what Christ did on the Cross to save them.

However, Communion should not be treated as a casual act. Paul issues a clear warning in 1 Corinthians 11:23-30:

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

Before we partake in Communion, we must examine our hearts, confess any sin that's crept in, and make sure we are honoring the Lord's Supper for its intended purpose – to remember Christ.

Therefore, it is possible for Jesus followers to partake in the Lord's Supper outside of an official church service. If you recognize the importance of Communion as a time of holy reflection, you can practice Communion with others and even alone.

Communion for the Homebound

For many homebound Christians, the opportunity to take Communion is rare. As these individuals do not get to attend regular church services, they rely on church leaders visiting their homes and bringing Communion to them. A church leader will bring the Communion elements and spend time praying with these individuals and leading them in the Lord's Supper.

Communion with Small Groups, Friends, and Family Members

Some of the sweetest times for small groups or families are when they participate in the Lord's Supper together in their homes. The Bible stresses the importance of unity in Communion, which is why taking Communion with those you do life with on a regular basis can be powerful. On these occasions, believers gathering together can remember Christ's sacrifice much like the early church. In Acts 2:46, it says, "[...] they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."

It is a beautiful way to honor Christ when groups are praying together, studying God's Word, or enjoying a time of fellowship.

Communion for Individuals

Churchgoers will often hear a pastor speak about communing with God, which usually refers to a time of devotion, Bible study, and prayer. However, many believers also partake in individual Communion. In this case, the individual spends time reflecting on the body and the blood of Christ and asking for forgiveness and reconciliation. During times of extended fasting, I made it a point to begin my day and devotion time every morning with the Lord's Supper – all by myself. This was one of the most meaningful, precious, and deep spiritual times I can recall with the Lord. I began my day with reflection, confession, and all the elements of Communion in a very special way as I drew close to God each morning. Be sure practicing Communion never becomes a hurried, empty ritual that loses its meaning. A desolate routine defeats the entire purpose of this sacred time with the Lord.

A Simple Guide for Communion

For those desiring to participate in Communion outside of church services, here are the basic requirements:

Have the Communion elements (bread or wafer for Christ's body) and wine or juice (for Christ's blood)

Search your heart for unconfessed sin (1 Corinthians 11:23-30).

Confess your sin to God (1 John 1:9).

If there is unresolved conflict in your life, seek reconciliation (Matthew 5:23).

Reflect on all Jesus did and went through to pay the penalty for your sin (1 Corinthians 11:23-30).

Read Matthew 26:26-28 or 1 Corinthians 11:23-30.

Continue in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads and give thanks for the body and blood of the Lord that was shed for you (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Participating in Communion is considered a privilege for believers.

It is both a somber reflection and beautiful celebration of Christ's sacrifice for all who put their faith in him.