

Discussion Questions

Preparation:

What style of Communion do you like: Intinction (The dipping of the bread into the juice) or the traditional way of passing the elements individually and partaking in the pews together? Which style better connects you to the Lord and why?

Passage:

²⁰ So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, ²¹ for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. ²² Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ 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. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. ³² Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

³³ So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. ³⁴ Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.

1. How does the Lord's Supper connect the present to the past? What helps you to discern this connection so that it becomes a present experience with the past event it remembers – the cross of Jesus?

Practicing the Christian Life: The Supper

I Corinthians 11:20-34

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2. When you think of *"do this in remembrance of me"* (vs. 25) what does that mean? Is the Lord's Supper merely a memorial or is there more to the celebration than cognitive recall of the cross?

3. Read the following passage. Have you ever personalized it? Does it make a difference personalizing it verses leaving it as a corporate reflection, "us"?

*He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.*

Like one from whom people hide their faces

he was despised, and [I] held him in low esteem. (Not "we" held him in low esteem)

⁴ *Surely he took up [my] pain*

and bore [my] suffering,

yet [I] considered him punished by God,

stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ *But he was pierced for [my] transgressions,*

he was crushed for [my] iniquities;

the punishment that brought [me] peace was on him,

and by his wounds [I] am healed.

⁶ *[I was], like a sheep, having gone astray,*

[I] turned to [my] own way;

and the LORD has laid on him

the [my] iniquity]. Isaiah 53:3-6

4. Paul says we should *"examine [our]selves before we 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. (vss. 28-29)*

How well are we at doing this? What are ways we can do this better without turning it into a legalistic exercise that *"fences the table"* from unworthy participants?

Fencing the table was an old Scottish practice. Unless you attended the Thursday preparatory service you could not receive communion on Sunday. What do you think about that practice?

5. Share a time when your heart was connected to the Lord during Communion.
6. How does Communion connect us to each other? What are ways we can contradict that connection nullifying our celebration of the Lord's Supper?

"So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat..." (vs. 20)

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7. What can we do to protect ourselves from just going through the motions of taking Communion and actually observing the heart of it?
8. What difference does it make to remember that the Lord's Supper connects us the ultimate Lord's Supper, the wedding supper of the Lamb?

*Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!*

*For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.*

⁸ *Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."*

⁹ *Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"*

9. What can we do to make our Communion services more reflective of its meaning so the experience really connects people to the past, to the Lord, to each other and to the future?
10. It used to be under the PCUSA you could only celebrate Communion if the Session gave approval and an ordained clergy was present to institute it. Under ECO, anyone, rightly trained, is permitted to institute the meal and it can be celebrated in settings outside the church.

What do you think about those changes, good or bad? Debate both sides of it. How can it be good? How can it be bad?

Consider celebrating the Lord's Supper together to close your time together.