

The Lord's Supper:

Common Questions About the Supper and Practical Advice for Parents

What is the Lord's Supper?

The two ordinances given by Christ to the church are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Since these ordinances are commands from Christ, the head of the church, they are not optional.

Baptism by immersion is a one-time act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in a new way of life. It serves as an outward sign of a confession of repentance and faith and a sign of entrance into the community of baptized believers.

The Lord's Supper is an ongoing symbol remembering our Lord's death, burial, resurrection, and promised return (1 Cor. 11:23-26), as well as an ongoing symbol reminding us of our unity with one another in the local church (1 Cor. 10:16-17). As surely as all believers are commanded to be baptized, likewise all believers are commanded to partake of the Lord's Supper.

From 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, along with the Gospel writers' accounts of the Lord's Supper, we learn the symbolism of the meal:

- The Bread represents the Body of Christ, broken for you;
- The Cup represents the Blood of Christ, shed for you;
- That we all share "one bread" reminds us that we "who are many are all one body."

The Lord's Supper then is the meal of remembrance and anticipation for baptized believers in a local church.

How then should we receive the Lord's Supper?

Scripture gives an overview of five important looks that one should take before, during, and after sharing in the Lord's Supper:

- *First, we look back to the cross.* The primary message of the Lord's Supper is about remembering the cross of Christ and what was accomplished there for our sins. Any celebration of the Lord's Supper without acknowledging the cause of its celebration causes one to become guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. (1 Cor. 11:27). The purpose of the Lord's Supper is, as 1 Corinthians 11:26 states, "to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."
- *Second, we look inward in self-examination of our own hearts and motives* (1 Cor. 11:28). Considering what this Supper represents, we should examine ourselves: Are you living in blatant, unrepentant sin? Are you right with God and your brother? These matters must be dealt with through faith-filled confession and repentance before receiving the Lord's Supper. Perfection is not required; honest repentance is.
- *Third, we look forward in anticipation.* We look forward to the Second Coming of Christ, the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:19), and the new heavens and new earth. Every celebration of the Lord's Supper is an occasion to look forward to the day when we consummate this great feast with Jesus Christ Himself at the head of the table.
- *Fourth, we look around in fellowship.* The Lord's Supper is for the Lord's body, the Church, and in sharing the Supper we symbolize and affirm our unity as a local church (1 Cor. 10:16-17).
- *Fifth, we look up in expectation.* The Lord's Supper is both a command and a gift to the church. Through this regular, vivid reminder of Christ's death for our sins, God gives grace that strengthens us and encourages us as we follow Jesus together. God blesses obedience and we are right to look up to God in expectation that he will give us spiritual nourishment through the Supper he has commanded.

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A General Response to the Question of Children and the Lord's Supper

When people inquire about children taking the Lord's Supper, please keep in mind that the table at Mountain Creek is open to all baptized believers, including children:

- Who are trusting (note this is the present tense) in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of their sins and the fulfillment of all His promises to us (including eternal life); and
- Who have been baptized; and
- Who intend to follow Him as Lord and obey His commandments.

But, I don't want my child to feel left out...

If your children feel left out, neglected, or deprived because they can't participate in the Lord's Supper, it may be because explanations have been given in terms of denial, not anticipation. "No, you can't" is very different from, "Not yet; it's important that you wait." Parents should communicate a spirit of longing for their child to participate: "Oh, I can hardly wait until you're able to share with us in the Lord's Supper, too!" Each time you receive Communion, prayerfully think of ways to help get your children involved in this time of anticipation for the day they can take the Lord's Supper with the church.

One father writes of his experience of helping his sons wait to take communion:

"As we sat in the pew, or we knelt at the front of the church, I would hold the bread and cup in my hands. I had each of the boys' cup his hands around mine. With each, the bread and the juice- I was receiving, I would explain the meaning of each of these sacred symbols and tell them that God's love was extended to them in a special way in Christ's death and resurrection. They were drawn into the remembrance with me...I am sure that my toddlers did not understand all this truth on a theological level, but during Communion after Communion for many years they grew into the mystery. They knew by my tears, the gravity of my voice and the persistence of the message that this was a profoundly significant event. As the boys grew up, explanations deepened. "To think of how much God loved us... how much it cost Jesus to be obedient unto death to save us...what it must have meant for God to take our sin and place it on His perfect Son... Little by little the message, the elements, the symbolism and the implications for the boys' own faith took root. As they grew older, I began to see an increasingly serious mood and manner in them during Communion. Their senses of awe for this ultimate gift would be evident, joy deepened; resting in God's secure love bought at a great price."

One final note

Your pastors are always here to help you think through questions you may have about discerning your child's readiness for Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time; we would love nothing more than the opportunity to come alongside you in these important conversations.

** Adapted from "The Lord's Supper and Children" (from Truth:78) and "Children and the Lord's Supper" (from North Wake Church), and Dr. John S. Hammett's "Theology Notes."*