

The Lord's Supper

Teaching our children about this special meal

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NOTE FOR PARENTS BEFORE STARTING:

Parents, before going over this with your child(ren), study it all for yourself first, and then come to a determination about whether or not they will be joining you in celebrating. Let your child(ren) know at the beginning of this study whether or not they will be able to participate. For example, you might decide to say, "Child(ren), this Sunday at church, there is a special meal that lots of the adults are going to share together. You will get to be there with us, but you won't join us in eating it for now. Since you're going to see us eat it, I wanted to explain what it means from the Bible."

A VERY SPECIAL MEAL

At Cornerstone Church, we have a special meal on the first Sunday of each month. This meal is called "The Lord's Supper", or "Communion". Many families have their own special meals, like "Friday Night Pizza", or a special meal they eat every Thanksgiving as the larger family gets together. Those are great meals, and they are certainly special, but The Lord's Supper is even more special than that.

THE FIRST LORD'S SUPPER

On the night before Jesus went to the cross, he had a special meal with his disciples, called "The Last Supper." Let's read about that:

READ Matthew 26:26-28 [NirV]

While they were eating, Jesus took bread. He gave thanks and broke it. He handed it to his disciples and said, "Take this and eat it. This is my body." Then he took a cup. He gave thanks and handed it to them. He said, "All of you drink from it. This is my blood of the covenant. It is poured out to forgive the sins of many people."

What did we just read there? Jesus served bread and a drink, but he told his disciples that the bread was a symbol for his body, and that the drink was a symbol for his blood. It's important to notice that they didn't actually eat Jesus, even though he said, "This is my body". This special meal is a reminder of the sacrifice that Jesus was going to make the following day on the cross: His own life given so that sinners could be saved.

THE COMMAND TO EAT IT AGAIN

The meal Jesus served was so special that he wanted us all to share that same meal more than just that one time! He wants us to never forget what he did for us on the cross. A little later in the Bible, the Apostle Paul was writing to the Corinthian church about how to celebrate this meal. Let's see what he wrote.

READ 1st Corinthians 11:23-26 [NirV]

I passed on to you what I received from the Lord. On the night the Lord Jesus was handed over to his enemies, he took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it. He said, "This is my body. It is given for you. Every time you eat it, do it in memory of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup. He said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do it in memory of me." You eat the bread and drink the cup. When you do this, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

What did we just read there? Paul tells the church to make sure they kept celebrating this meal over and over again. At the end of verse 26, he tells them that each time we eat the meal, we are *“announcing the Lord’s death until he comes again.”*

So it’s a special meal. It helps us remember what Jesus did with his body and blood. And it announces that good news to the world. Sounds great, right? It is certainly very special.

WHO THE MEAL IS FOR

The Lord’s Supper is a special meal that is only for followers of Jesus Christ. If this is your first time hearing about this, it might sound like the Lord’s Supper should be eaten every day by everyone who loves Jesus. But each church has to figure out the best way to celebrate this meal. And at Cornerstone Church, we are very careful in how we celebrate it. That’s one of the reasons why we usually share this meal when the children are out of the service in Junior Church or the Solid Rock Café.

So who is this meal for? Good question. It is for the church – not the church building, but the people who make up the church. It’s for the people who have been saved by Jesus. It’s for the people who have been made new by the precious sacrifice Jesus made for them. It’s for the people who are living their lives in obedience to Jesus, and who want to tell the world about him. That’s who it is for. And since it’s for Christians, we know that this meal does not save us from our sins – only Jesus can save us by grace through faith in Him! This meal celebrates that good news.

PARTICIPATING WITH UNDERSTANDING

Since the meal is very special, we want to make sure that the people who join us in the meal have a deep understanding of what it means. In fact, Paul tells us that it is dangerous to take the Lord’s Supper without understanding it well. (See 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 if you’d like to know more). Since we should not eat this meal before we really understand it, our church wants to honor Jesus by being very careful about who eats it.

Some parents will encourage some of their children to join in the meal, if they are confident that there is a full understanding. However, many parents will wait until their children are older. In fact, many Christians throughout history have had children wait until they have been baptized to join in eating this meal. For instance, the largest Protestant denomination in our country holds to that position.

Why baptism? Baptism is a special moment when a Christian publicly identifies with Jesus Christ. But it’s also a church moment. Prior to baptism, the Elders (and the church) affirm that person’s testimony. So, when someone is getting baptized, their church is also declaring to the world that they are identifying publicly with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. In fact, in the New Testament, three things went together as the church grew: Baptism, Church Membership, and the Lord’s Supper. While many children do exhibit awesome signs of faith in Jesus, baptism is the time when they ‘go public’ with that faith. It seems like the perfect time for them to begin sharing the meal with the rest of the church.

PREPARING FOR SUNDAY

I hope this has been helpful. Prayer and studying the Bible are the best tools to help you understand this more. This special meal is a special reminder of the good news that Jesus gave his body and blood so that we might be saved! And at Cornerstone, families might not all make the same decision for their children. Let’s love one another as we prepare for the Lord’s Supper this week – and every time we celebrate it.

-Pastor Dave