



REAL LIFE

GROUPS

Celebrating Communion in Your Small Group

We believe the context of a small group is a great place for communion to be celebrated and taken together. This resource is meant to give you some guidelines and direction to make this a meaningful celebration within your group.

What is communion?

We believe celebrating communion was both modeled and commanded by Christ. We believe communion is a memorial, a proclamation, and is representative of the new covenant in Christ Jesus as defined by Scripture: *"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.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25 NIV)*

What is the purpose of communion?

The primary purpose of communion is to take time to remember all that the Lord did for us. It is a time to worship and give thanks for the forgiveness of our sins and the new life and relationship that we have in Jesus Christ. This time of remembrance was initiated by Jesus just before His death. Because we tend to be forgetful people, in the Old Testament, believers were called to remember the faithfulness of God through various memorials. In the New Testament, this is the way Jesus wanted us to remember His love and forgiveness of our sins. Communion is also a time of personal examination. It is a time to examine our relationship with the Lord and others.

Where and how often should we celebrate it?

We believe that it is a good thing for believers to celebrate not only "at church" or in the "church service" but also in homes and appropriate places all around town. In Acts 2:42-47, we read that believers met on a regular basis in their homes to celebrate communion. We can celebrate regularly and often. God invites us to celebrate as often as we feel is appropriate.

Who can take communion?

Any person who believes in and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for his or her salvation. This means it is possible that some members of your group may not want to participate. We do not recommend that young children, who do not understand salvation and relationship with Christ, take it. If you have non-believers in your group, ask them to participate by listening and answering questions but not by taking the elements. There will be a time at the end to ask them if they would like to accept Christ as Lord and Savior after hearing the Gospel and witnessing the communion celebration.

Who can serve communion?

Biblically speaking, anyone can serve or facilitate communion. Strategically, we think that the group leader or apprentice would be the one to serve. It is a great opportunity to demonstrate servant leadership in the same way that Jesus served His disciples; however, there may be other members who are equally able to lead and serve in this celebration. It is at the leader's discernment and discretion.

Is there a "best" time to serve communion in the life cycle of the group?

We believe that it is important to get to know one another fairly well, first. This could be done within the first six months of your group. But again, you may desire to celebrate sooner than this at a mealtime together.

How can we serve communion?

There are many ways to serve communion. The Bible does not dictate a certain method. Feel free to be creative. You could celebrate communion after a meal together as often modeled by the early church (Matthew 26:26-29; Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 11:20-26). You could make this the centerpiece of your time together or you could partake in it before or after you complete a study and discussion time. The important thing to remember is that this is a time of worship. This is a time of celebration. This is a time of remembrance and reflection. Enjoy it and you will see you and your group members grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another!

Here is one way to celebrate together:

1. Place pieces of bread and small cups of grape juice in the center of the group.
2. Begin your time of celebration by reading some selected passages of Scripture that remind us of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. Remind the group before reading about the following:

Celebrating communion is a time of remembrance, self-examination, and worship. The following time together is intended to provide us an opportunity for personal self-examination before the Lord in light of the sacrifice He has made on our behalf and to give us the chance to share with one another what it means to us today.

3. Have a few different members of the group read the following verses aloud:
 - 1 Corinthians 15:1-6
 - Ephesians 2:1-10
 - Philippians 2:1-11
 - Mark 15:21-27
4. After reading the Scriptures above, pass out a piece of bread and a cup of juice to each group member.
5. Ask the group to take a minute or two and go before the Lord in prayer in the quietness of their own hearts and minds and confess any sin to the Lord before partaking in the communion celebration.
6. After the moment of prayer, read 1 Corinthians 11:17-26 aloud and enter into a time of questions, prayer, reflection, and sharing:

Question and Reflection #1:

Re-read verse 18 describing “divisions among you.” Ask the group to take a minute and pray and reflect on if they have any division in relationships in their life right now that could use repair and to contemplate what is one step they could personally take towards repair. You may suggest steps like forgiveness, repentance and confession, apologizing, encouraging, or thanking another. Provide an opportunity for the group to share with each other.

If during the share time there is a relationship between members of the group (spouse, friend, etc.) that needs repair, ask the person who is taking the step towards repair to look at and speak directly to the other person(s) involved and not to the group in general. Remember, this is an activity in self-reflection and personal effort to **repair** division and relationship, not to cause further division. As the leader, be prepared to re-direct or end any sharing that does not support that effort. Also, be prepared as the leader to model and go first in sharing personally with the group.

Question and Reflection #2:

Re-read verses 23-24 and make note that Jesus “gave thanks” before they ate and remembered Him. Ask the group to again take a minute and pray and reflect on all of the things they are thankful to God for in their life right now. Provide an opportunity for the group to share with each other.

7. Re-read verses 23-24. Remind the group that this bread represents the body of Jesus which was broken on our behalf. Lead the group in eating the bread.
8. Re-read verse 25. Remind the group that the cup represents the blood of Jesus which was shed for us. Lead the group in drinking the juice.
9. Re-read verse 26. Make note that we are to “proclaim the Lord’s death until he returns.” In light of this truth, encourage the group to be courageous in living their lives for Christ daily and proclaiming the good news of the Gospel which you have just celebrated and remembered together. Ask the group if there is anyone who feels like they would like to commit (unbelievers) or re-commit their lives to Christ! If so, celebrate and pray with and for them, then baptize them immediately if you can!
10. Conclude your celebration by having a time of prayer in thanks to God!

*Don’t forget to share all the amazing experiences your group has together with you coach, groups pastors, and ministry leaders!