Communion Family Devotional #1

This discussion guide is intended to assist families in having a conversation about the meaning and significance of communion with their children. Kids who have grown up in this church may not have witnessed it often, and some maybe never. We hope that this devotional will help parents discern how their children’s faith is developing, and therefore best guide their children in their participation at the Lord’s table.

# Repentance and Christ's Sacrifice

## Icebreaker Question:

*What do we do when we’ve done something wrong? How do we make it right?*

Passage (Luke 22:19-20):
**ESV**:

“Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise, the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’”

**NLT**:

“Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me.’ After supper he took another cup of wine and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.’”

## Review Questions

1. **Which did Jesus take first––the cup or the bread?**
2. **What did Jesus say that the bread and cup symbolized?**
	1. If your kids do not understand the concept of symbols, try this:
	"Have you ever seen a picture of a heart that people use to show love, like on a card or a drawing? The heart isn’t really love, but it *shows* us love. In the same way, the bread and the cup we use during communion aren’t really Jesus’ body and blood, but they *show* us Jesus’ love and remind us of what He did for us. Just like the heart is a symbol of love, the bread and the cup are symbols of what Jesus did for us."
3. **Why did Jesus break the bread?**
	1. Explanation: When we see the bread broken, it reminds us that Jesus gave His life for us by dying on the cross.
4. **Why did Jesus say that the cup was “poured out”?**
	1. Explanation: The cup was a symbol of Jesus’ life. When he died, he gave up his life for us.
5. **Who did Jesus say that the bread and cup were *for*?**
	1. Explanation: They were “for you.” This means that when we take communion as a church, it is a way of remembering how Jesus died for us. When we say “sorry” for the wrong things we’ve done, Jesus forgives us. When you see the bread and cups being handed out, we also want to say “thank-you” to Jesus for forgiving us.

## Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us so much that you gave your body and your blood for us. Help us to remember what you did for us when we see the bread and the cup. We are sorry for the wrong things we’ve done, and we ask you to forgive us. Thank you for always being ready to forgive when we come to you. Please help us to love you and follow you every day. Amen."

**Parent Reflection Prompt:**
After the prayer, parents can gently ask their child, "How do you feel about Jesus forgiving us when we say sorry? Is there something you’d like to thank Jesus for today?"

# Can my child partake of the elements on Sunday?

If you believe that your child has an age-appropriate level of understanding of the meaning of communion after this conversation, and if you think they have a sincere childlike faith then you may invite them to *partake* (eat and drink with the whole body of believers in unity with Christ) in the *elements* (the bread and cup.)

As your child grows and develops, it will be necessary to explain that they need to decide to follow Jesus on their own as adults/young adults and to be baptized as their declaration of faith. (See the attached ***Guide*** attached.)

Communion and Children:
A Guide for Parents

# Why This Is Important

As parents, you play a crucial role in your child's spiritual journey. Jesus gave us baptism and communion to help us grow as his disciples and as members of his church. This guide will help you teach both *ordinances* (*rites ordained by Jesus*) to your children and help them come to a living and active faith in Jesus and belonging in the church.

# The Two Ordinances: Baptism and Communion

## Baptism:

Baptism is the **personal declaration** of faith in Jesus. Symbolically it shows how we have been joined with Christ in his death and raised with him to walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4) It is reserved for those who have made a personal decision to follow Christ; it is the milestone that marks the beginning of a believer’s life with Jesus. It can also be thought of as a lifelong covenant made between an individual and God.

## Communion:

Communion, also known as the Lord’s Supper, is a celebration of grace and belonging within the church. While baptism is a personal declaration, communion is a **shared act** that reminds us of Christ's sacrifice and our fellowship with Him and one another. Communion is for those who believe that Jesus died for their sins. It’s an opportunity to remember Christ’s sacrifice and reflect on His ongoing work in our lives as believers.

# Children at the Lord’s Table

## Including Children in Communion:

Our church does not baptize infants or young children—not only do we see no example of this in the Bible, we also think that baptism as a lifelong covenant is fitting for an adult (or young adult). However, we believe children can be welcomed at the Lord’s table under the **spiritual supervision** of their believing parents. Here’s why we believe this is important:

1. Modeled After the Passover:
Jesus established the Lord’s supper during the Passover meal. That thematic connection to Passover is maintained throughout the New Testament. During Passover meals, children were always included because it was a crucial time to teach them about God’s salvation:

*"You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.' And the people bowed their heads and worshiped." (Exodus 12:24-27)*
We see communion as a similar opportunity for Christian families. In the early church, communion was a way to celebrate our deliverance from sin through Jesus, just as Passover celebrated deliverance from Egypt. If children were included in Passover, it makes sense that they would be part of communion too.
2. Communion as a Daily Practice:
In the early church, “breaking bread” together was a regular practice. Unlike the annual Passover, they gathered daily in their homes to share meals in remembrance of Jesus. It became a part of the rhythm of Christian life. Often it looked like a potluck. It seems implausible that children were excluded from these daily meals. Including children in communion today follows this biblical model of **family and community participation**.
3. Spiritual Supervision:
Parents have a vital role in **spiritually supervising** their children as they grow in the faith. While the child is under the care of believing parents, the parent's faith brings a kind of spiritual covering or "holiness" (1 Corinthians 7:14), making the child part of the church community. This type of guardianship is temporary (like all parental authority) and lasts until the child is able to make their own profession of faith through baptism. Parents are called to nurture and guide their children, helping them understand the significance of Jesus' sacrifice and leading them toward a personal decision for Christ in their own time.
4. Approaching in the Worthy Manner:
We are warned against approaching the Lord’s table in an “unworthy manner”:

*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 11:27)*

It is important that children approach the table with a sincere childlike faith. In an age-appropriate way, children should understand that communion is a time to reflect on Jesus' sacrifice. They should be taught to come to the table with **repentance for their sins** and **gratitude for Jesus’ forgiveness**. These devotionals are an important tool to help you discern how your child’s faith is developing. As you engage in these discussions with your children, you can guide them to understand the meaning of communion and recognize their need for Jesus.

**They should see it as something serious–– a way to say “Thank-you” and “I’m sorry” to Jesus. It isn't about being "allowed" to have it, or a little snack.**
	* If they are not understanding or responding, then let them observe the communion meal at church and then tell them why it means so much to you.
	* If they are understanding and responding to the gospel, then you may allow them to partake.

# The Goal: Leading to Baptism

While we include children in communion, the goal of parental discipleship is that our children choose to follow Jesus in baptism. Baptism marks a young person’s own decision to follow Christ. As your children grows, communion can serve as a **way to prepare them** for that decision, helping them see their place in the community of faith.

## Encourage your child:

As parents, your role is to help your children understand that while they belong to the church and are welcome at the table now, baptism is the step they will one day take as a public expression of their faith. Let them know that this is a decision they must make for themselves when they are ready, and as they grow, your hope is that their participation in communion will lead them to the waters of baptism.

* *Pastor Alex Hogendoorn, on behalf of the Board of Elders, October 2024*

Communion Family Devotional #2

# Dedication and Belonging

## Icebreaker Question:

*Have you ever been part of a special team or group? How does it feel to belong?*

## Passage (1 Corinthians 10:16-17):

**ESV:**

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”

**NLT:**

“When we bless the cup at the Lord’s Table, aren’t we sharing in the blood of Christ? And when we break the bread, aren’t we sharing in the body of Christ? And though we are many, we all eat from one loaf of bread, showing that we are one body.”

## Review Questions:

1. **What do the bread and the cup remind us of?**
*Answer: They remind us of Jesus’ body and blood, and that He gave up His life for us.*
2. **Why do we use one loaf and one cup?**
**Explanation:** When we take communion together, it shows that we belong to Jesus and to each other, like how being on a team means everyone works together. But there’s something even more special—Jesus gave us one loaf of bread and one cup to share. This is like how we are all part of one big family in Jesus. Just like how everyone on a team works together with one goal, we are all one family in Jesus because we love and follow Him. When we share the same bread and cup, it shows that Jesus brings us all together, no matter who we are or where we come from. It reminds us that we are all connected through Him, and that we help and care for each other like a family does.
3. **Side note on the above:** You will notice that there are many little cups, and many little pieces of bread. Our church treats the trays like one big cup, and the plates for the bread as one big loaf.
4. **Why do we all share the bread and cup together?**
**Explanation:** When we eat the bread and drink from the cup, we are all remembering the same thing—that Jesus gave His life for us. Communion is something we do together because we are one big family in Jesus.

## Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank you for making us part of your family. We are so happy to belong to you and to each other. When we take communion, help us remember that we are all one family because of your love. Please help us to love and care for each other just like you love us. Thank you for giving us the bread and the cup to remind us that we belong to you. Amen."

**Parent Reflection Prompt:**
After the prayer, parents might ask, "What do you think it means to belong to Jesus? Do you feel like you are part of His family? What does that mean to you?"

Communion Family Devotional #3

# Christ’s Welcome

## Icebreaker Question:

*Have you ever been invited to a special meal? What did it feel like to be welcomed?*

## Passage (John 6:35-37):

**ESV:**

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.’”

**NLT:**

“Jesus replied, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But you haven’t believed in me even though you have seen me. However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them.’”

## Review Questions:

1. **What does Jesus call Himself?**
*Answer: Jesus calls Himself the "bread of life."*
2. **Why does Jesus invite us to come to Him if we are hungry or thirsty?**
**Explanation:** Have you ever been really hungry or thirsty? Maybe after playing outside or after a long day at school? When we’re hungry, we need food, and when we’re thirsty, we need a drink. But did you know there are other kinds of hunger and thirst too? Sometimes, we feel like we need something inside our hearts, like love or a friend to care about us. Jesus invites us to come to Him because He can fill up our hearts. He gives us love, forgiveness, and everything we need to feel full inside, even when we’re not eating or drinking. That’s what Jesus means when He says we won’t be hungry or thirsty when we come to Him.
3. **How does communion show that Jesus welcomes us?**
**Explanation:** When we take the bread and drink from the cup, it reminds us that Jesus invites everyone to come to Him. Just like at a special meal where you feel welcomed, Jesus is always happy for us to come and be close to Him.

## Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank you for inviting us to come to you, just like being invited to a special meal. We are so glad that you welcome us with love. Help us to always come to you when we need help, when we are sad, or even when we are happy. Thank you for being the bread of life and giving us everything we need. Please help us to love you more every day. Amen."

**Parent Reflection Prompt:**
After the prayer, parents can ask, "How does it feel to know that Jesus welcomes you? Do you want to come closer to Jesus and love Him more? How can we do that together as a family?"