



Communion & the fellowship

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com•mun•ion

1. the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level.
 2. the service of Christian worship at which bread and wine are consecrated and shared.
- synonyms: Eucharist, Holy Communion, Lord's Supper, "the breaking of the bread during Communion"



I. Why do we celebrate Communion?

- a. Reminds us of what Christ did for us & His promised return
- b. We are commanded to "do this in remembrance" of Christ (Luke 22:19)
- c. We "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor 11:26)
- d. Communion identifies us as believers
- e. Communion provides fellowship with other believers
- f. We affirm "the new covenant" (Luke 22:20)
- g. To represent the mutual communion of believers with each other

II. How the 'early church' practiced communion

- a. Early church worship was divided into two parts:
 - i. 1st part was open to anyone, & included prayers, singing of psalms, readings from scripture, and teaching.
 - ii. 2nd part was for **baptized believers only** — anyone not baptized had to leave before the second half — and included the "love feast" we now call Communion. Back then it was an actual meal that included the elements of bread and wine in memory of Jesus
- b. In the early church, communion and the meal were presided over by the apostles, and later by people trained by the apostles (called "bishops" meaning 'shepherds')
- c. The early church met secretly in private homes (Home Churches). Buildings openly dedicated to Christian worship didn't come into play for 100 years or more, mostly because Christians, being members of an illegal religion, could not openly own property until the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 313 with the Edict of Milan
- d. The Letters of Pliny the Younger, c. AD 61-113, (a prominent Roman Lawyer and Politician) records *"They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food - but food of an ordinary and innocent kind."* (Book Ten, Letter 96) ... link: <https://bit.ly/3RgvT5I>

III. Is the bread and wine the literal 'body and blood of Christ'?

- a. Protestant doctrines do not believe it is the literal body and blood as Catholics do ('transubstantiation'). Some Lutherans & Episcopalians believe in 'consubstantiation', i.e., Christ is present (spiritually) with the bread & wine.
- b. Jesus said "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." (John 6:63-64).

IV. Does it have to be unleavened bread?

- a. Christ was celebrating a Passover feast, which does use unleavened bread (Greek word *azumos*), however... ALL the gospel accounts use the Greek word *ártos* – properly, bread; figuratively, 'divine provision'; all the sustenance God supplies to believers.
- b. If we 'had' to use unleavened bread, we would also have to use actual red wine mixed with water

V. "One Loaf..."

- a. Communion is not an individualistic matter; it is a body matter to be shared 'communally'.
- b. We commune as a body; we come to the Lord's table as a family.
- c. This is bound up in the biblical symbol of the one loaf and the one cup.
- d. "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" - (1 Cor. 10:17).

VI. What's the "unworthy manner" Paul warns us about in 1 Corinthians 11:26-29?

- a. Not recognizing communion represent the sacrifice that Christ made for us
- b. Taking communion with willful, unconfessed sin
- c. Having unresolved conflict with a fellow believer (vs 19 & 29)
- d. Making communion an opportunity for self-indulgence (verse 21)

VII. What if we struggle with one of these issues?

- a. We are ALL sinners (Romans 3:23) ... Communion is for Christians who are sinners.
- b. Our struggle against sin shows we must depend upon Christ and His grace.

- c. Communion is a vindication of our position with Christ and shows our need for communion as an act of dependence upon Christ's work in us & His grace to us.
- d. Repent & ask God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9)