

D-LIFE BOOT CAMP

Training for a lifestyle
of discipleship.



Keeping it Real

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Pastor Dale L. Crawley Sr.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

Rev. Dr. Deborah Crawley, Teacher
Sis. Tammi Brown, Asst. Teacher

What Is Communion?

Pieces of bread or hard little wafers. Wine or Welch's. Or maybe you get fancy with sparkling grape juice. Weekly, monthly, or hardly ever. Communion is celebrated in Christian churches around the world, but it's more than a mid-sermon snack. So, what is it actually?

The Lord's Supper is also called:

- "The Lord's table" (1 Corinthians 10:21)
- "Communion," "cup of blessing" (1 Corinthians 10:16)
- "breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42)
- "eucharist" or giving of thanks (Matthew 26:27)

What is Communion?

The account of the institution of this ordinance is given in Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20, and 1 Corinthians 11:24-26. It is not mentioned by John.

It was designed:

1. To commemorate the death of Christ: "This do in remembrance of me."
2. To signify, seal, and apply to believers all the benefits of the new covenant. In this ordinance Christ ratifies his promises to his people, and they on their part solemnly consecrate themselves to him and to his entire service.
3. To be a badge of the Christian profession.
4. To indicate and to promote the communion of believers with Christ.
5. To represent the mutual communion of believers with each other.

Origin and History of Communion

Communion was instated by Jesus Himself. The story is recounted in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Take a look at the following passage:

- "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-28).

Jesus uttered these words at the last meal He shared with His disciples before His death. It was the Passover, a time during which the Jews commemorated their escape from slavery in Egypt, and it was an important meal.

The twelve disciples were gathered with Jesus, and it was a somber time, though the disciples didn't quite understand why. He foretold His death, and His betrayal by Judas. However, He had also foretold that His death would be "a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). In this ritual of breaking the bread and taking the cup,

Jesus was reminding His disciples of what He was about to do.

As early as Acts 2, early Christians are recorded “breaking bread” with one another. In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Paul gives specific directives for celebrating what he calls “The Lord’s Supper.”

Communion, is not a ritual produced by later Christians, but something instituted immediately. And it has been celebrated ever since. From the 2nd century writings of Justin Martyr to the Fractio Panis fresco depicting believers partaking in communion, history shows that the early church was committed to the Lord’s Supper.

As one of the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, the Eucharist was administered by priests. However, with the Protestant Reformation and the birth of Protestant ideology, communion began to change once more for those who adhered to Protestantism. As Protestants fractured into dozens of denominations, various ways of taking communion developed, until today where we have a multitude of traditions, from the wine-vs-grape-juice debate to the frequency of partaking, to church membership mandates, to the communal goblet vs. little plastic cups.

What Is the Purpose of Communion?

Jesus told us why we celebrate communion when He instated it. He said, “Do this... in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:25). When we take communion, we are remembering Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. The bread and wine are tangible, visible reminders of Christ’s love. Rather than simply saying “remember,” Jesus gave us a reminder. Just as we depend on food and drink to live physically, we can only live spiritually through Christ.

Communion is a time of just that: communing. It is a chance to bring ourselves before the Lord and partake in the life He has given us through His death and resurrection. Communion is also a time to be in community with fellow believers, past and present. As an ordinance that has stretched from the original disciples to twenty-first century believers and is celebrated all over the world, it brings us together as the body of Christ.

We should also take the time to examine ourselves to ensure that our relationship with Christ is authentic and genuine. Not only recalling the inauguration of our relationship with Christ, but also seeking to discover if there is any unconfessed sin impeding our current fellowship with God (1 John 1:6–9).

Lastly, we would be remiss to ingest these symbols of Christ without a heart that is purposefully thankful. Paradoxically, the Lord’s Supper is not only a reminder of his brutal death, but it is also a celebration of the incredibly generous grace of God and the invaluable privilege of being forgiven.

What Is the Right Way to Take Communion?

Jesus didn’t give very many specifics on how to take communion. Instead, He gave an object lesson to His disciples: See how this bread and drink are necessary to bring you life? In the same way, I will give you life.

As mentioned above, churches have reasons for differences in celebration. Often, it is a difference of emphasis: The Orthodox Church gives extreme care to honoring the physical elements in order to honor Christ, while most Protestants focus on directing internal thoughts and prayers to God and see the elements as more of a metaphor. The Catholic Church focuses on coming to the Lord’s Supper pure of sins, while Protestant congregations often call worshipers to repentance through communion.

There are hundreds and thousands of resources out there from all of the different traditions, outlining reasoning for celebrating communion one way or another. Each offer interesting perspectives on communing with God and honoring Christ. However, at the end of the day, we all agree: communion is a powerful way to remember Christ’s sacrifice and show our devotion to Him.