

Your Child & Communion

The question:

A tray of crackers is already coming down the row. Your child tries to get your attention when asking, "Can I take communion today?" You have only a few seconds to respond. What do you say? Who should take communion? As parents, we must give spiritual guidance to our children by being ready to respond to their questions about communion and their desire to participate. While this scenario may play out during a worship service at MCC, it is our homes that provide a safe place for dialogue with our children about communion.

Who is invited?

A simple answer to the question of who should participate is "all Christ-followers", that is, people who "confess Jesus Christ as Lord." Children who believe and confess that Jesus is Lord have an authentic faith. However, they may have a limited understanding of the meaning and depth of communion. Though children can participate, we highly encourage parents to insure their child understands its meaning and significance.

What does communion mean?

As Christ-followers, to participate in the Lord's Supper is to declare that God's gift of grace and forgiveness has been accepted and a personal relationship with Christ has been established. Participants have a 360-degree perspective of salvation. Looking back, we are able to remember God's plan of salvation described in scripture, and our personal salvation story. Looking to the future, followers of Jesus anticipate Christ's triumphant return. Participating in the Lord's Supper expresses that memory and anticipation. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, the apostle Paul describes, "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.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

How can I take communion?

Communion common items, grape juice and bread. Oftentimes the bread is in the form of a cracker. When a family is ready to take communion within their home, they can purchase the juice and crackers at a local grocery or convenient store. The crackers and juice are not the actual body and blood of Christ, but rather represent this. This is a common question from young children as they process communion.

How often should we take communion? MCC offers communions every first Sunday of the month during both services. At the same time, communion can be taken at Community groups, and by families in the home. This can be done often, as it is a celebration and remembrance of Christ!

What is taking communion in "a manner that is worthy"?

While understanding that the meaning of communion involves a look backwards and forwards, it also involves a good look at the present. Paul writes further in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself." As Christ-followers, we are called to reflect upon the condition of our relationship with Christ and even our relationships with others (see Matthew 5:23-24). This involves self-examination, confession of sin and the recognition of forgiveness received.

Do I have to be baptized to take communion?

No, baptism is not required to participate in communion. As a church, we recognize the importance of believer's baptism as a testimony to others of the individual's desire to be a Christ-follower and the change in their life. In the New Testament a confession of faith was typically followed by immediate baptism (Acts 8:12;16:29-33). We encourage every Christ-follower to follow Jesus Christ's example (Matthew 3:13-17) in obedience by being baptized as an outward sign of the inward change in their life.

Giving guidance to our children

There are times in life when the best learning experience is participation. Communion is a celebration that may be enriched by opportunities to learn before participation. The following are some basic steps to assist you in preparing a child for communion. They move through three stages: observation, involvement and participation. The following diagram illustrates this progression.



Observation

The most basic form of participation is watching others take part in communion. The observation stage engages children by raising questions (Exodus 12:26-27). Observation may occur during a Sunday morning service at MCC, within a Community group, or also within your own family. Believing parents are able to serve communion to each other during a time of family worship. This environment demonstrates the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9-10) and provides an opportunity to share what communion means to God and to you. Single parents that are believers may also teach their children about communion taking the bread and juice while teaching through Jesus' words at the last supper.

Involvement

As observation increases understanding, the desire to participate may also increase. Make it a point to involve your children as they continue to learn. Before communion, lead them through a time of personal reflection just as you would engage in self-examination to prepare your own self. Help them understand both the seriousness and the celebration of thankfulness that accompanies forgiveness. Encourage them to ask questions to other Christians such as pastors, teachers, and grandparents. Read the story of Jesus' Last Supper (Luke 22:7-20) and communion scriptures in the New Testament with them (1 Corinthians 11:11-22).

Our homes are a great place to have conversation about about communion and the time of reflection and prayer that occurs before receiving it. Here are a few questions and thoughts to have your children ponder in this time.

- How am I loving God this week?
- How have I loved others? My family, friends, neighbors?
- Have I hurt anyone with my words or actions?
- Is there sin that needs confessed? Forgiven?
- Take some time to pray about the above questions.
- Remember Jesus' sacrifice and how we can be forgiven of our sins!

Participation

A child who has been involved in the previous stages will have shown whether they are ready to participate. The question, "Can I take communion today?" will not come as a surprise. You will be able to respond with confidence that your child has understood the significance and meaning of communion. At MCC, in a community group, or within the home, the *invitation to participate in communion is open to all Christ-followers, young and old*. You are best suited to determine if your child is genuinely trusting in Christ as their Savior and Lord. As parents, take the initiative to serve your child. Be sensitive and recognize that peer pressure may be a factor in wanting to participate, both for your child and other children. This is something that one must also be sensitive to within the home. Just because they have taken communion before does not dictate whether they should take it this time.

How do you know your child is ready for Communion?

- Has your child confessed that Jesus is Lord of their life? (Romans 10:9)
- As a parent, you can judge a tree by its fruit. What evidence is there in their life of the Holy Spirit and the transformation that He brings? (Luke 6:43-49)

Prayerfully ask for the Spirit's guidance in this process as you walk with your children. Answering questions can be difficult, but is crucial as your children are aimed towards Christ in the remembrance and celebration of His sacrifice and defeat of sin and death.