



WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE LORD'S SUPPER

WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER?

The Lord's Supper (also known as communion) is one of two sacraments (the other is baptism) that we celebrate at CrossPoint. A sacrament is a blessing from Christ which is a sign (a picture) and a seal (a mark of being set apart) given to believers in order to teach and assure us of our salvation. Participation in the sacraments does not bring salvation; this comes only by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 2:16).

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during the Passover meal on the night before he was crucified. We read in Matthew 26:26-29:

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered 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. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.'"

The Lord's Supper is the sacrament which uniquely depicts continuing fellowship with Christ, a repeated act in which we, as believers, remember the Lord's death and renew our commitment to be united with Jesus and his church (1 Cor. 11:27-34). In eating and drinking the elements, the believer is nourished and strengthened to grow in grace (1 Cor. 10:16).

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER?

The meaning of the Supper is rich and full. There are several things that are symbolized and illustrated:

- ◆ The Death of Christ - The meal symbolizes the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins. The breaking of the bread illustrates the breaking of the body of Christ, and the pouring of the cup illustrates the pouring out of Christ's blood for us. As we participate in the Lord's Supper, we *proclaim* his death until he comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26).

- ◆ Spiritual Nourishment - Just as ordinary food nourishes our physical bodies, the wine and bread of the Lord's Supper give *spiritual* nourishment to us when we receive them by faith. They are a picture of what Christ gives to us—his life as a substitute for our life. The life of Christ, given as the payment for our sin on the cross, provides spiritual nourishment to us when we trust and receive him by faith. Jesus tells us that unless we eat his flesh (the bread) and drink his blood (the cup), we do not have eternal life (John 6:53). Jesus goes on to teach his disciples that he is speaking about his life and the grace that God gives to those who put their trust in him (John 6:63).

- ◆ The Unity of Believers - Participation in the Lord's Supper is a sign of our unity as believers. The Apostle Paul writes: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). This unity is possible because all who come to the table recognize themselves as sinners, all must depend on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and all are united as they trust in the same Savior for salvation.

- ◆ The Hope of Christ's Return - Receiving the bread and the drink is also a way of affirming our hope in the return of Jesus Christ. Jesus promised that he would again eat and drink with us when he returns. The Lord's Supper is a picture to us of the final end-time banquet that we will celebrate when our Savior returns to judge the world, renew the earth, and establish the eternal kingdom of God.

HOW DO BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER DIFFER?

Baptism is observed only once in the life of a Christian, as a sign of their inclusion into the community of faith, either as an infant or as a believer. The Lord's Supper is to be observed repeatedly throughout our Christian lives, as a sign of continuing fellowship with Jesus Christ.

HOW IS CHRIST "PRESENT" IN THE LORD'S SUPPER?

In distinction from Catholic and Lutheran views, our church (along with most Protestant churches) teaches that the bread and wine are *symbolic* of the spiritual presence of Christ.

However, it is important to recognize that the sacrament is a *real* and very important act where we meet with Jesus Christ, who is present among believers through the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises to be present whenever believers gather for worship (Matt. 18:20), but he is present in a special and unique way when we celebrate the Supper together.

When a person receives the bread and wine, trusting in the promise that God will accept them and forgive their sins because of what Jesus has done, we believe that Jesus Christ is truly and spiritually present to the believer. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus meets with each person who receives the bread and cup, and our hearts are united with Jesus Christ by faith. This is a time of great encouragement for believers as they experience an encounter with the living and risen Christ.

Believers encounter Jesus through the act of eating and drinking the elements of the Lord's Supper:

- ◆ As they are reminded of their sin and Christ's forgiveness of sin
- ◆ As they hear the hope of the gospel
- ◆ As they contemplate the promises of God
- ◆ As they respond with an attitude of trust and faith
- ◆ As they rest in the assurance of God's love
- ◆ As they are filled with the Holy Spirit

When we come to celebrate the Supper in this way, we believe that there is a ***symbolic*** and ***spiritual presence*** of Christ in the bread and drink.

WHO SHOULD RECEIVE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Since the Lord's Supper is a sign of continuing relationship with Christ, it should only be received by those who believe in Christ and trust in him for the forgiveness of sins. Participation in the Supper is open to anyone who has been baptized and has made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. The Supper we celebrate is the *Lord's Supper*, and is for all those who follow Christ, not just the members of our church.

WHEN SHOULD A CHILD RECEIVE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Because the Lord's Supper is a sign that we repent of our sins and receive forgiveness through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins, it should only be received by those who have been baptized and have made a personal confession of faith in Jesus as determined by the parents of the child.

Often, children will show expressions of faith and evidences of repentance before they are ready to make a profession of faith. These are gracious moments which parents would be wise

to seize upon with positive words and encouragement. At the same time, we often witness many children who have at some moment expressed faith in Christ but who now show no evidence of that faith. Thus, we recommend that parents respond by explaining the meaning of communion, reinforcing the gospel message to their child. Continue to pray and wait for the time when your child is ready to respond to the gospel and make a personal confession of their faith in Jesus.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER?

The Bible teaches us that we should “examine” ourselves before we participate in the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:27-29). This examination begins by giving careful thought to any areas of unrepentant sin in our lives. We should take time to pray and invite the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to our hearts and minds so that we can confess our sins and receive the Supper as a reminder of God’s grace and mercy to us.

Secondly, we must take time to reflect upon our relationships with other believers. The Lord’s Supper is a time for “discerning” the body of Christ (1 Cor. 11:29). Are there ways that we are acting that display disunity in the body? Carefully examine your life to see if there are relationships that need to be restored. Is there someone you need to confess to? A person you need to ask forgiveness from? Take time to examine your life and your relationships within the body of Christ before you receive the Supper. The Apostle Paul warns us against receiving the Supper in an “unworthy” manner.

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-EXAMINATION

These are some questions that you may find helpful as you prepare to receive the Lord’s Supper. You may want to use these questions as you pray and ask the Lord to help you examine your heart and mind.

1. What are the areas of conscious sin in my life that I need to confess before the Lord?
2. What are the areas of unconscious sin in my life? Pray for God to bring conviction of sin.
3. Am I truly sorry for my sin? The Bible teaches us that true repentance is different than feeling bad or guilty. It is a recognition that my sin is hateful and evil to God. When we repent, we agree with God and make a choice to abandon sin and follow God. One way of examining our heart is to ask this question: do I love what God loves and hate what God hates?

4. Do I believe that the body of Jesus was broken for me and the blood of Jesus was shed for the forgiveness of my sins? Have I allowed Jesus to cleanse my guilty conscience? Do I have doubts about my acceptance before God? Receiving the sacrament is a way of reaffirming God's promise of mercy and grace through Jesus.

5. Am I living in peace with other Christians in my church family? Are there relationships where I need to ask forgiveness for a wrong I have committed? Are there relationships where I need to let go of my bitterness and forgive someone of the wrong they have committed against me? Receiving the sacrament is an expression of our unity as brothers and sisters in Christ. It is important that we seek to restore relationships, inasmuch as it depends on us, before participating in the Lord's Supper.

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

If, after reading this booklet, you still have more questions, please contact our church office at (909) 606-9833 and inform us. We can help you make arrangements to talk with a pastor or an elder.

If you are a shut-in or are unable to attend services at CrossPoint, and you would like to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, please contact the church office. One of our pastors and an elder will be able to visit and serve you the Supper.