



# COMMUNION Milestone

“Do I love Jesus & desire to be part of His family?”

## **Professing Faith & Celebrating the Lord's Supper**

*“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.”*

**1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

## **What is Communion?\***

*\*Please note, we recognize that there are different interpretations of Communion and have been different ways of participating in the Lord's Supper throughout church history and in churches today. We view these issues as “disputable matters” (Romans 14) from Scripture. We do not wish to coerce our stances on these matters on you or others in a way that communicates that we have the only right way. But below are the interpretations that we at HFFBC think align best with Scripture and that we choose to practice here in our local church.*

Communion is a holy time established by Jesus Himself for us to celebrate our relationship with God and the cleansing Jesus offers for our hearts. As Christians, we believe we meet with the living Christ in the Lord's Supper. We believe Jesus is spiritually present as we partake of the elements of Communion. As we eat the elements, we are receiving Him and connecting with Jesus as we look to Him in faith. We seek His Spirit to help us have the power and strength to live with and for Him in the days ahead. It is a regular time of renewing and deepening our relationship with Christ.

### **Q: What is the Lord's Supper?**

A: Christ commanded all Christians to eat bread and to drink from the cup in thankful remembrance of him and his death. The Lord's Supper is a celebration of God in our midst, bringing us into communion with God and with one another; feeding and nourishing our souls. It also anticipates the day when we will eat and drink with Christ in his Father's Kingdom. (New City Catechism)\*

*\*Please note that the New City Catechism book is a resource we have provided for you to use with your family. It is in your Communion Milestone packet!*

#### **COMMUNION & OUR PAST:**

God is assuring us of our forgiveness through Jesus' death and resurrection - We remember that Jesus died for us and rose again - Our sins have been paid for, Jesus died in our place - God promises us that we are his loved and forgiven children.

#### **COMMUNION & OUR PRESENT:**

God assures us that we are part of his family - Jesus chose a family meal to remind us of his love! - We are part of his family as his sons and daughters - Jesus continues to be with us today by his Holy Spirit. - We are celebrating with thanksgiving that Jesus is here and we are part of his family!

#### **COMMUNION & OUR FUTURE:**

God promises that one day we will be with him forever. - There will come a day when God will make all the sad and bad things go away, and people will live at peace with one another. We will eat and drink with Jesus in God's Kingdom. We look forward to that day!

### **Communion here at HFFBC:**

At HFFBC, we celebrate the Lord's Supper every month on the first Sunday in both morning worship services. Children who have been instructed about the meaning of Communion and have put their trust in Christ are welcome at the Lord's Table when parent(s) or guardian(s) believe the child is ready.

At HFFBC, we also have started to regularly schedule a parent and child (usually for 5-6<sup>th</sup> graders) communion class to help explain the significance and meaning of the Lord's Supper and to promote intentional conversation between parents and children in our church.

## Communion - the Family Meal:

When we celebrate communion, we are remembering the last meal that Jesus had with his friends. Bread and wine were an important part of each meal in the days when Jesus lived. Jesus picked up the bread and broke it to show his friends that his body would be broken for them. He poured out the wine to show them that his blood would be shed for them. He was showing them that he was about to die for their sin so they could be forgiven and be a part of God's family. After Jesus rose from the dead and went to be with God, his friends continued to eat this meal because they knew that Jesus through his Holy Spirit was still there with them, reminding them of his grace and forgiveness.

### Communion - the Church's Meal (1 Corinthians 11):

So our church family gathers for Communion. Because Communion is a family meal, that means it's the *church's* meal. A little bit of bread and grape juice is served *by the congregation to the congregation*. Yes, the deacons and pastors serve the meal up front to begin, but each individual member of the body of Christ (the Church) passes the bread and juice to each other as a reminder that this is a meal for the body to share in together. You don't need to approach a holy altar to receive the bread and cup, but rather we pass these elements to each other, as the body of Christ sharing this special meal together and displaying the oneness we share in Christ together to each other.

As we eat, we remember Jesus and feel that God is still with us in a special way and will continue to be with us tomorrow and the days and months and years after that. What do you do when someone gives you a present? You receive it. So when you come to the Lord's Supper, you are receiving the present of God's love and forgiveness again and again. All you have to do is receive the bread and juice as good news that Jesus has died for you and that he is with you and loves you. Be thankful and happy.

And you know what else? Everyone in the church is like a big family. When we have Communion, we know that all over the world, wherever there are followers of Jesus, they, too, share Communion. When you see the table in front of the church set up with bread and grape juice, you'll know the time for Communion has come again...a time to remember and celebrate how Jesus loved us and gave his life for us.

## Communion Explanation & Preparation for Your Children:

Your children should be able to understand what the bread and wine represent in order to fully comprehend the spiritual nourishment given. Because children by 8-10 years old are usually able to think abstractly, to understand metaphors and symbolism in their mental development, they may be able to comprehend that:

**The bread** represents Christ's own body broken on the cross for our salvation.

**The wine (juice)** represents Christ's blood, shed for us. Embracing these precious elements is the recognition of:

- Jesus' forgiveness and cleansing of our sins
- God's acceptance of us because Jesus takes our imperfect record and exchanges it for His perfect one
- Jesus' power given by the Holy Spirit to renew our motivation to live as Jesus directs

As each Communion Sunday approaches, parents may review with their children that it is through the Lord's Supper we can give thanks to God, remember Jesus, celebrate Jesus giving His life for us, and celebrate our togetherness as a church family. Faith is the key to fruitfully receiving the Lord's Supper. Faith means opening your heart and mind to God and prayerfully inviting the Holy Spirit to enter and become a part of you. Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit – with it you may truly experience the gift of God's love at the Lord's Supper.

Gathered around the Lord's Table, we receive the power of Christ – the ability to give ourselves completely to God and to our neighbors. Having received Communion, it is up to us to carry out this love into the world so that others may benefit from the gifts God gave us.

## Ways to Assess Your Child's Readiness:

Seeing your child participate in Communion when they are ready is pure joy. Determining your child's trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior is imperative. Paul compels each person who approaches the table of the Lord to "judge the body rightly" (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

- Are your children able to tell you who Jesus Christ is and what His sacrifice on the cross means?
- Can they identify themselves as individuals who are forgiven in spite of sinful ways?
- Do they truly realize they need a Savior?

Expressing a personal faith commitment is an essential indication of your child's readiness for Communion. Talk with them about their trust in Christ and what the Table of the Lord means. Church leaders are available to meet with you and your children to talk about the meaning of Communion and provide time for your child to talk about his or her faith in Jesus Christ.

## The Right Time?

So the question arises, when is the right time for a child to come to the table? There is disagreement about this, but I think there are at least two important factors to keep in mind:

- **Factor 1: The Child's Desire** - This first factor emphasizes the desire of the child as a sign of the Holy Spirit's work in the child. When a child desires to come to the table and is drawn to it, it is a sign that the Holy Spirit is working in the child's life and prompting her to come to the table. We respond to that desire in faith by instructing our children and bringing them to the Supper.
- **Factor 2: The Child's Awareness** - This second factor emphasizes the child's understanding of the Lord's Supper, but note that understanding will vary. It's not vital that your child recount the nature of substitutionary atonement and justification! It can be simply enough that they understand that this is about Jesus dying for them because he loves them. Indeed, they will come to understand that truth more and more as they regularly come to the table.

**So when should a child come? To sum up, at HFFBC we would say this:**

*A child is ready to come to the Table when he or she both desires to come to the Table and expresses an age-appropriate awareness of Jesus' love and mercy expressed there. In that case we joyfully welcome that child to come to the table through the care and direction of the parent(s) and the church community.*

A beautiful Scriptural image of this is **Matthew 19:13-15**.



*Christ Blessing the Children, by Anthony Van Dyke, 1618*

Children are brought to Jesus by parents and others who loved them and desired that Jesus would bless them. Jesus was so excited about this, and he was upset at the disciples who tried to discourage the parents. "Let the children come to me," Jesus demanded, "and do not hinder them!" He then reached out his hands, and even held them in his arms. He even states very boldly that "the kingdom of heaven belongs to little children." This is a beautiful image for us as parents bringing our children to the table as soon as possible. In this story, it is not the children who exercised faith; it was those bringing them to Jesus. So this is our greatest calling as parents: to bring our children to Jesus. Jesus states that the Kingdom belongs to them. We respond to him by saying Yes, Lord, I believe that promise and receive it for my child! Bringing our children to the Lord's Supper is a powerful, tangible way we bring our children to the real presence of Jesus. And what does Jesus do? He loves them. He touches them, embraces them, receives them. He blesses them with the blessings of God.

*"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." **John 6:35***