



Holy Communion

Introduction

The life of a Christian is one of confidence; confidence that our sins have been paid for; confidence that we have a right relationship with God; confidence that we have a hope and future in heaven. Another word for that confidence is **faith**.

The Lord's Supper is a gift God gives to us to build that confidence, to build that faith, and that is what we'll be looking at over these next six lessons. But to start, we need to understand the power behind the Lord's Supper – the Gospel.



Through this course, you will explore:

- How Jesus puts us right with God
- What the Lord's Supper is and how it ties us to Jesus
- Who should receive the Lord's Supper and why
- How to prepare your heart to receive the Lord's Supper

Parent Instructions

Parents, as you get started with the Holy Communion module, here are some steps that will help you be well prepared to lead your kids through it:

1. Pray. When Jesus told his disciples he would send the Holy Spirit to them, he said the Spirit would remind them of all truth. The Spirit still does that for us. You learned these truths at some point in your life - now pray that he would remind you of them as you lead your children!

2. Read about Jesus instituting Holy Communion. You hear the words of how Jesus instituted Holy Communion every time it happens in church. But it's good to take a few minutes and review the story. You can read about it in **Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:14-23, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.** As you read it, here are a few things to think about:

- a. Take note of what is the same in each of these accounts, and what is different.
- b. Think about how those first disciples would have heard what Jesus was saying. "This is my body..." "This is my blood..." Do you think they would have been confused?
- c. How does it give personal comfort to know that Jesus is giving his own body and blood to eat and to drink?

3. Read from Luther's Small Catechism. The first 20 pages or so of that dark blue Luther's Catechism book are the original Luther's Small Catechism. (The rest of the book is designed to take you deeper). Open to the section on the Lord's Supper and Luther's explanations. Read through those explanations. Anything confusing? Anything you want to understand better? Find the longer section in the book and read through the questions, Bible passages, and answers.

4. Read from Luther's Large Catechism. If you don't already have a copy, go get a copy of Luther's Large Catechism. We recommend the one you can find at ww.cph.org by searching "Luther's Large Catechism." Open it up and read the section about "the Sacrament of the Altar." It will give you a better understanding of why Luther wrote the explanations he did.

6. Remember what matters. Your goal here is not to make sure your child can pass a quiz or check the boxes. Your goal here is to help your child understand what Jesus offers in the Holy Communion: his own body and blood for our forgiveness. Keep that in the forefront as you lead your child through this module.

Part 1: Our Relationship with God

Review – Forgiveness Through Jesus

When you went through the Bible module, you learned that all humans have a problem. What is that problem?

You learned in the Apostles' Creed module that God is our Creator. As our Creator, he has a right to expect certain things of us. What does God expect of us?

God made us to be perfect and expects us to be perfect. We are not. We sin. But God chose not to destroy us for our sin. Instead, he chose to love us and help us. What did God do to save us from our sins?

Now, we want to look at a couple of important words from the Bible about what Jesus did for us, and how they restore our relationship with God. Those words are **Redemption** and **Justification**.

Redemption

Read Genesis 22:1-18 to hear the story of God testing Abraham. There are lots of things we could talk about in this story, but let's just focus on the end for now.

- Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, Isaac, but then God stopped him. What does God say Abraham has proven by being willing to carry out the sacrifice?
- What does God provide as an alternative sacrifice instead of Isaac?
- The idea of a "redeemer" is that someone makes a payment or a substitute for the freedom of another. How did God provide a redeemer in this story?
- Jesus is our Redeemer. He pays the price of our freedom with his own blood. By his death on the cross, Jesus redeemed us from sin, death, and the devil.

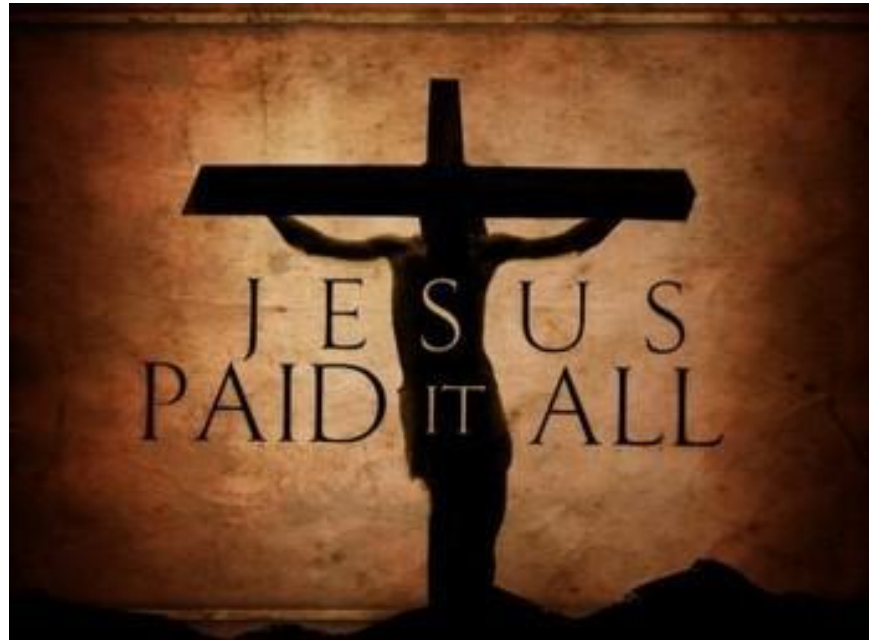
God provided Abraham with a substitute, a way to "redeem" his son Isaac.

Ephesians 1:7 says, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."

God has provided us with a substitute, a way to "redeem" us from our sins. He did this with his own blood. As it says in the explanation to the second article, "He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death."

To "redeem" means to pay a price to buy something back. Jesus paid the price of his blood for you and me.

Family Discussion: Some people – your friends, your classmates, your coworkers – might say that Jesus is just a good teacher, another religious leader, or a great example to follow. How would you respond to someone who says that?



Justification

Jesus made atonement for all people - he won redemption for everyone. But not everyone will go to heaven. How can that be? This next section will help us understand the question: **How does the redemption won for us by Christ become our own?**

Look at these two passages. What do they tell us about who benefits from Jesus' forgiveness?

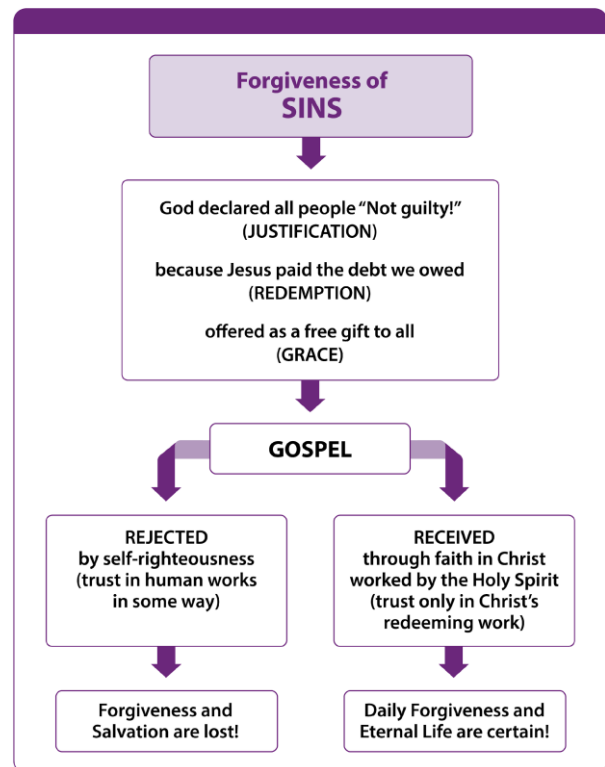
John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

Using your background knowledge, choose the correct definition for the word “Justification”:

- ☐ To be changed into a holy person
- ☐ To be considered holy by your works
- ☐ To be declared righteous by God
- ☐ To be given grace to do good works

In Romans 3:23-24, Paul writes that “all have sinned” and that the same “all” have been “justified freely” by God’s grace. The word we translate as “**Justified**” means “**declared not guilty**” or “**declared righteous.**”



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Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

This section doesn't use the word "**Justification**" but it explains it well.

- "God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's sins against them." The Bible teaches that all people have been justified by God through the work of Jesus.
- "He has committed to use the message of reconciliation." The Bible teaches that not all people know or believe that they have been justified, so we need to tell them.
- "Be reconciled to God." Believing that you have been justified is important to having a right relationship with God. You can't be reconciled to God if you don't trust him.

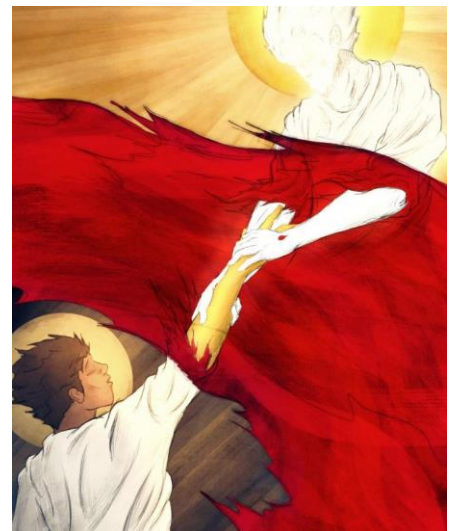
Therefore, while God has taken away our sins and declared us not guilty, we only benefit from this through faith – trusting what God has done.

If faith is the means by which we gain the benefit of justification, then we need to answer the next question: **How do we come to believe in Jesus?**

Romans 10:17 - Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:3 - Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

In your own words, answer the question: **How do we come to believe in Jesus?**



Family Discussion: Talk about how each person in your family came to faith. Were you raised in the church? Baptized as babies? Did you come to faith later in life? Who was most influential in your faith life? Tell your story so that everyone in the family knows it.

Memory Treasure: 1 John 2:2

As a family, work to memorize the following passage:

1 John 2:2 - He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

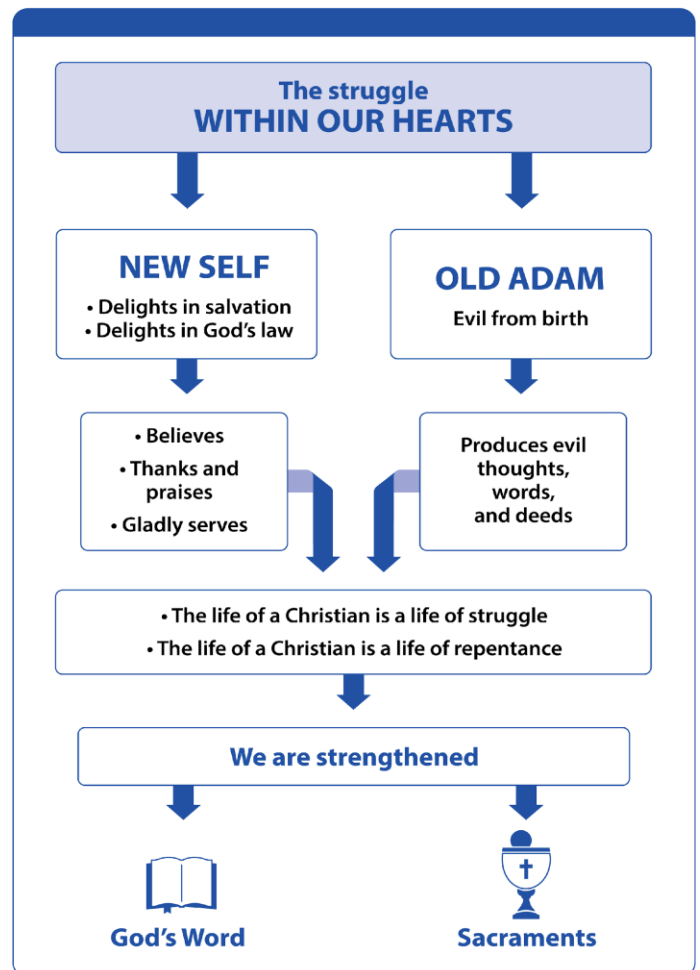
All humans are sinful and in need of a Savior. God fixed this problem: He sent Jesus to be the Savior, to take away the sins of all the world.

We receive the benefit of Jesus' work through faith, and we receive faith when we hear and trust in the Gospel message the Bible gives us.

Jesus' death and resurrection are our one true hope for forgiveness, life, and salvation.

We still struggle with sin. We do not always do what is right. **Romans 7:18-19,21** says, - **For I know that *good itself does not dwell in me*, that is, in my *sinful nature*. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. So, I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, *evil is right there with me*.**

God has given us tools to fight our sinful nature and do his will. Look at the image to the right. What has God given us to help us fight our sinful nature?



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This is one of the main reasons we take Holy Communion, also called the Lord's Supper, often. It is one of the tools God has given us to strengthen our faith and empower us to do what God wants. The next lessons will help us better understand what is given to us in the Lord's Supper, and how we can be prepared to receive it faithfully.

Part 2: The Institution of Holy Communion

First: What is the Sacrament of Holy Communion?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Where is this written?

The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the apostle Paul tell us: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, 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, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Given by Jesus

Read Luke 22:7-20 for the story of how Jesus gave us Holy Communion.

The night when Jesus first instituted the Lord's Supper was packed with drama. With his disciples, Jesus celebrated the Passover Meal, which recalled God's dramatic rescue of the Jews from Egypt. Judas was there but would disappear, only to reappear in the Garden of Gethsemane with betrayal on his lips. In the darkness of the garden, Jesus was arrested and led off to his trial before the Jewish leaders and, later, Pilate. The next day he was crucified.

During the meal, Jesus knew all this was about to happen. Yet, on this night, Jesus was thinking of his disciples and us. He began something new, placing on the lips of his dearest friends the very body and blood that would soon be given and shed for the forgiveness of the sins of the world. Clearly this gift of the Lord's Supper was incredibly special. It mattered to Jesus. It mattered for his disciples. It matters to us too.

- From *Luther's Catechism* Copyright NPH 2017

Question: Why is it sometimes called “Holy Communion” and sometimes called “Lord’s Supper?”

Break the word apart – “Common Union”

Common = something we all share

Union = something that unites us

So, Communion is something we _____ that _____ us.

Why is it called “Holy?” Here are some possibilities. Which do you think sound true?

- ☐ We receive Christ’s true body and blood, which are holy gifts from a holy God
- ☐ We receive forgiveness, which makes us holy in God’s eyes
- ☐ It is a sacrament, a sacred or holy act, that belongs to the Holy Christian Church
- ☐ The bread and the wine become holy and so we revere them, even after the sacrament

We sometimes call it “Lord’s Supper” because it is a meal our Lord serves to us. We don’t do it for him, he gives it to us.

Other names for Holy Communion include:

- a. The Sacrament of the Altar
- b. The Lord’s Table
- c. The Eucharist (which means “Thanksgiving”)

Family discussion: Which name for the Lord’s Supper do you like the most? Why do you like that name? What special meaning does it convey? Make sure each person in the family has a chance to share.

Bread and Wine, Body and Blood

When instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus took earthly elements – bread and wine, gave thanks to God, and gave the bread and wine to his disciples. **What did Jesus say the disciples were receiving along with the bread and wine?**

Read Matthew 26:26-29.

Complete the following sentences with the text from the Scripture:

Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broken it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat...."

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you...."

- **1 Corinthians 10:16** – Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?
- **1 Corinthians 11:29** – Those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

Family Discussion: For two thousand years, Christians have believed that Jesus gives his own true body and blood in the Sacrament. It wasn't until after the Reformation that some people started to question that. How do the passages above help show that he really does? What does it mean to you that Jesus is giving you his own true body and blood in the Sacrament?

The Bible *does not* tell us that the bread and wine stop being bread and wine. When Jesus said, “This is my body,” he didn’t say, “This has become my body.” He said, “This is.” If you examine the bread and wine under a microscope, they are still bread and wine. God is working a miracle by which the bread can also be Christ’s body, and the wine can also be Christ’s blood.

What, then, do we receive in the Lord’s Supper?

Bread	Wine
Body	Blood

In the chart below, we have three separate views about Holy Communion. Which one matches best with what the Bible teaches?

Representation	Real Presence	Transubstantiation
The bread and wine <i>represent</i> the broken body and shed blood of Christ.	Christ’s body and blood are truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine.	The bread and the wine are <i>transformed</i> into Christ’s body and blood and sacrificed again for forgiveness.
Those who receive Communion make a declaration of their faith in Jesus’ forgiving work.	Those who receive Communion are eating and drinking not only bread and wine, but also Christ’s body and blood for their forgiveness.	Those who receive Communion are truly eating Christ’s body and blood as a sacrifice that merits forgiveness and grace.

Key Concept: Real Presence

The Bible teaching that says that in Holy Communion we receive Christ’s true body and blood when we eat and drink the bread and the wine.

“In, with, and under.” We often use these three words to describe what is happening in Communion.

- In = You receive Christ’s body when you eat the bread, not separately from eating the bread, and you receive Christ’s blood when you drink the wine, not separately from drinking the wine.
- With = The bread and the wine are still there, but Christ’s body and blood are also there in a miraculous way. They are together.
- Under = The bread and the wine are all we see, touch, or taste. Christ’s body and blood are hidden, though miraculously, and really there.

Family Discussion: Many people have trouble understanding how it can be that Christ can give us his body and blood to eat and drink in some miraculous way. They think that either it’s impossible, or that it just doesn’t make sense. Why do you think this is a difficult concept for people? What truths about God are they forgetting or ignoring? Why do you think it matters that we recognize Jesus’ body and blood in the Sacrament?



Memory Treasure: John 3:16 & John 8:31

As a family, work to memorize the following passages:

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 8:31 - To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

Suggested Family Activity:

This assignment is an opportunity to have a conversation with someone that may believe something different from you. We would like you, as a family, to talk to a family member, friend, or neighbor that you know goes to church regularly. It doesn't matter what kind of church they go to. Sit down and ask them the following questions:

"Hi, we're working on a special assignment that's part of our family discipleship program at church. We want to ask a few questions about your perspective on the Lord's Supper, sometimes called Holy Communion. Would that be alright?"

Question 1: Does your church practice Communion? If so, how often?

Question 2: Tell us a little about what Communion means to you? Why do you do it, and what does it do for you?

Question 3: Jesus said, "This is my body," and "This is my blood." What do you think he meant by that?

Question 4: Why do you think it's important for a Christian to take Communion?

A few important ground rules about this kind of conversation:

1. Be respectful. Listen carefully, and either jot down things they say or ask if you can record the conversation to review later. (Alternatively, you could do this by email and ask them to write up answers to the questions.)
2. Don't try to argue. Even if they say something you disagree with, your goal should be to hear their perspective first.
3. Don't be afraid to share your belief. After they answer the questions, ask them if it's okay for you to give them your answers to the same questions. (Yes, you're still learning about this, but just say what you know for now.)
4. Don't be worried by what you hear. A person can be mistaken about Communion and still have saving faith. But go back to what Jesus has said, "This is my body... This is my blood."
5. Thank the person for answering your questions.

Talk as a family about the person's answers. What sounded right, and what didn't? Were there any perspectives you hadn't heard before? How did their answers compare with what you've learned from God's Word? How would you respond if you needed to show them the truth?

Knowledge Check #1

1. We call the Lord's Supper "Holy Communion" because...
 - a. when Christians come together in a church building it makes the place holy
 - b. God gives us something holy – Christ's true body and blood – which are united with the bread and wine and unite us as a church.
 - c. it's just a really old-fashioned name someone came up with long ago.
2. We call Holy Communion the "Lord's Supper" because...
 - a. Jesus, our Lord, gave it to us.
 - b. it was the last thing Jesus ate while he was on earth.
 - c. Jesus comes and has supper with us when we take Communion.
3. When we eat and drink the bread and wine, we also receive...
 - a. nothing else, it's just bread and wine.
 - b. reassurance and reminding that a long time ago Jesus died for us.
 - c. Jesus' own true body and blood for our forgiveness.
4. The teaching that Jesus' body and blood are truly present in Communion is called...
 - a. Real Presence.
 - b. Transubstantiation.
 - c. Representation.
5. The best explanation we can give for how Christ's body and blood can be present together with the bread and the wine is...
 - a. they are mixed together, like in a cookie recipe.
 - b. the body and blood are in, with, and under the bread and wine.
 - c. the body and blood magically appear in your mouth at the same time that you eat the bread and drink the wine.
6. **True or False?** We can be sure that Jesus gives us his body and blood because he said, "This is my body..." and "This is my blood..." and "is" means "is."
7. **True or False?** The bread and the wine just represent Christ's body and blood but are not actually.
8. **True or False?** When the pastor says the words, the bread and wine transform into body and blood.
9. **True or False?** Christ's true body and blood are truly present, and we truly receive them, even though we cannot see, smell, touch, or taste them.
10. **True or False?** The fact that Christ can give his body and blood without limit is a miracle, and he can only do it because he is God.

Part 3: The Blessings of Holy Communion

Second: What blessing do we receive through this eating and drinking?

That is shown us by these words: “Given” and “poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in this sacrament.

For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

In 1 Corinthians 5:7, we are told that Jesus Christ is our Passover lamb. How appropriate, then, that the Lord’s Supper was instituted in the middle of a Passover celebration.

Read Exodus 12:1-30. The Passover was a special celebration that pointed forward to Jesus. Below are just a few of the symbols that point forward to Jesus. Talk about how each of the following are foreshadows of Jesus and his work:

- A male lamb without blemish or defect
- A special meal to be celebrated regularly
- Blood on the doorframes that spare people from death

Covenant

What blessing did Jesus promise to give through the Sacrament?

Matthew 26:28 – This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for [the forgiveness of sins](#).

Luke 22:19-20 – He took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

(Finish the sentence) In the Lord’s Supper, God gives us...

_____.

Key Concept: Covenant

“A solemn agreement or promise God makes that he is going to do something for his people.”

- In the Old Testament, God made a covenant with the people of Israel that was two-sided: If his people kept his Word, he would bless their nation.
- But Jesus gives us a new covenant, a promise sealed by his blood, that is one-sided: he will do it all for us.

Family Discussion: Look at the following chart. Imagine your family lived in ancient Israel, where you can be sure of God’s blessings as long as you follow his Law. Would that be easier, or harder? Why is it better that God’s blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation don’t come from keeping God’s Law? How does that help us trust him?

Old Covenant	Israel	God
	Do God’s Will	Bless their nation
New Covenant	Christians	Jesus
	Trust him	Grant forgiveness, life, and salvation



Means of Grace

How did Jesus accomplish the forgiveness of sins?

Isaiah 53:6 – We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

2 Corinthians 5:21 – God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 Peter 2:24 – “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

Look at the image below. Talk about how this image portrays what Jesus did to bring us forgiveness. What do you notice first in the picture? What do you find most striking about it?



Key Concept: Means of Grace

Something by which God delivers his grace and forgiveness to a person, giving and strengthening faith. Often we sum this up by saying, “The Gospel in Word and Sacrament.”

When we say this, we mean that God gives us forgiveness through...

Hearing the Gospel in his Word

Receiving his grace through Baptism

Receiving forgiveness through Holy Communion

Blessings

What other blessings do we get because of the forgiveness of sins?

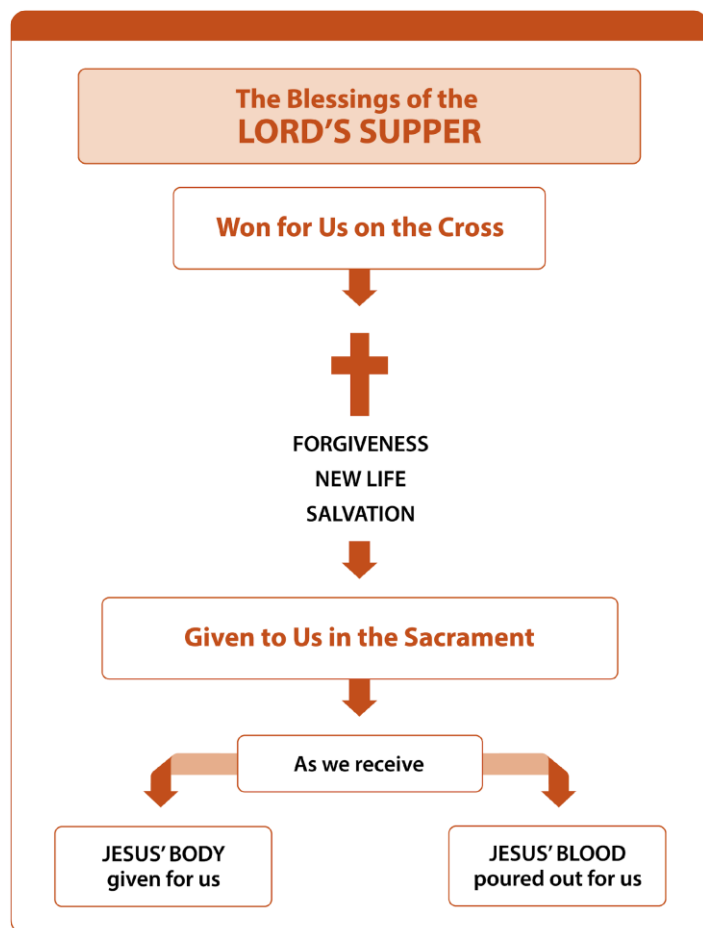
Romans 5:9 – Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!

Romans 6:23 – For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 10:10 – I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Family Discussion:

Knowing that you have forgiveness, new life, and salvation can change your entire outlook on life. Parents, share with your kids about a time that you were faced with a life event or a decision where knowing that you have forgiveness, life, and salvation had an impact on the decision you made. If you can’t think of a time, talk as a family about some of the things you face day to day – challenges at work, relationship issues, problems at school, etc. – and discuss how your identity in Christ guides you in facing those challenges.



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Memory Treasure: Romans 6:23 & John 10:10

As a family, work to memorize the following passages:

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in[a] Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

For You

In our church services, the pastor tells us that we are forgiven. **So what makes receiving the Sacrament especially comforting?**

Look again at Jesus' words in Luke 22:19-20:

*"This is my body, given *for you*... This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out *for you*."*

Here's a little activity:

Take out a packet of crackers or chips or cookies or bread – whatever you have!

Set out one for each member of your family.

Have one person choose one and eat it.

Can the other people around the table taste it? Have those calories and sugars gone into the stomachs of the other people around the table? No? Why not?

Now have everyone eat theirs. Feels better, doesn't it?

When Jesus gives you his body and blood, it is for you. No one else eats and drinks for you. It is yours. Jesus promises that he gives you his forgiveness through this. That means that when you eat and drink his body and blood, you are making his forgiveness your own.



Knowledge Check #2

1. God's covenant with Israel was that...
 - a. if they destroyed their enemies, they could have milk and honey.
 - b. if they followed his Law, he would bless them as a nation.
 - c. they could do whatever they want, and God would still protect them.
2. God's covenant with us is that...
 - a. he will forgive our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus.
 - b. we have to obey his laws, or he will curse us.
 - c. if we follow his laws and do good works, he'll take us to heaven.
3. When Jesus died on the cross, he paid for the sins of...
 - a. only those who were born by the time Jesus came.
 - b. only those who confess their sins and trust in him.
 - c. all people of all time.
4. God brings his forgiveness to us personally when we...
 - a. do good works and earn the right to be called his children.
 - b. are brought to faith in him and receive his grace through Word and Sacraments.
 - c. do nothing.
5. The best way to receive the blessings of Communion is to...
 - a. watch the pastor take Communion for you while you sit in the pew.
 - b. take only the bread, because the wine has Jesus' blood so it's more holy and you shouldn't drink it.
 - c. come with a repentant heart and receive Christ's true body and blood for your forgiveness.
6. **True or False?** The blessings God gives us in Communion are part of the Old Covenant he gave to Israel.
7. **True or False?** We can be sure that God's Covenant promises are always true because he always keeps his promises.
8. **True or False?** We receive life and salvation through Communion because Communion gives us forgiveness, and forgiveness always brings life and salvation.
9. **True or False?** The words "for you" are not really important words in Communion, because they actually apply generally to all people.
10. **True or False?** In Holy Communion, Jesus gives you personally his own true body and blood.

Part 4: The Power of Holy Communion

Third: How can eating and drinking do such great things?

It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words “Given” and “poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking.

And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.

Bread and wine don't look powerful. Some might wonder whether anything impressive can really be happening in the Lord's Supper. Usually when something is powerful, we can sense it. We can tell when an athlete is strong; we watch his performance in awe. We can feel when a rocket thunders into the sky. We shake when a bolt of lightning strikes close to our home.

But bread and wine? Of themselves, they would have no great power. But there is something that changes all that and gives humble eating and drinking power beyond imagination.

- Luther's Catechism, copyright NPH 2017

Read Numbers 21:4-9. It doesn't seem to make sense that looking at a bronze snake on a pole could heal someone from disease. But it did. How? Talk about the following questions:

- **Who commanded Moses to make the snake and commanded that the people should look at the snake?**
- **Whose power was healing the people of the snake bites?**
- **Imagine you're an Israelite, bitten by a snake, and you look at the bronze snake and you're healed. Who do you thank – yourself for looking at the snake, or God for healing you?**
- **The Israelites were healed when they looked at the snake because they trusted God to heal them. Who are we trusting for forgiveness when we take Communion? Ourselves or God?**
- **Based on this, which do you think is true? That Communion is something we do to show obedience to God and our devotion, or that Communion is something God gives us to show us his love?**

Forgiveness, life, and salvation

How do we know that we receive forgiveness, life, and salvation through eating and drinking in Communion?

Jesus says in Matthew 26:28, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Do you believe what Jesus says?

God’s Word

How do we know God’s Word is powerful and able to give us these blessings?

Read Matthew 8:5-13. How does Jesus prove that his word has power in this story?

In **Romans 1:16**, Paul writes, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.”

Family Discussion: Do you believe that God’s Word has power? Do you believe what God’s Word says to you? Talk about the experiences in your life that have led you to trust more fully in God’s Word. But is it your experiences that make you trust him? Or is God trustworthy even when we don’t see it?



Sacrament

We call Holy Communion a Sacrament. But what does that mean? And why is it important?

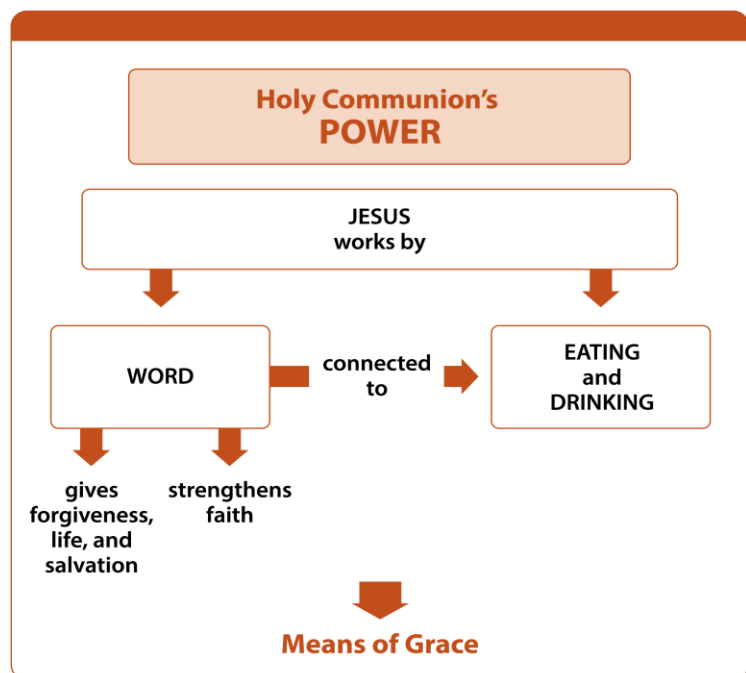
Many hundreds of years ago a guy named Augustine of Hippo came up with the definition of a Sacrament, which the Church still uses to this day. It involves three things:

1. Was commanded by Jesus
2. Has an earthly element (physical thing) combined with God's Word
3. Grants forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation

So how does Holy Communion qualify? In the blank boxes in the chart below, write some words of Jesus that match with the qualification for a Sacrament:

Qualification	Words of Jesus
Commanded by Jesus	
Earthly Element + God's Word	
Grants forgiveness, life, and salvation	

Family Discussion: Parents, what do you think about when you go up to Communion? Do you confess sins? Do you think about what God is about to give you? Do you struggle to stay in the moment? What do you do to try and focus on the gift of Communion?



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Suggested Family Activity:

The power of the Lord's Supper is in the Word, and as we've just looked at, God's Word is a powerful thing. As you read through the Bible, one thing you might notice is that God's Word is full of stories. In fact, God chooses to reveal himself and his plan of salvation through stories. Powerful stories that show who God is and what he's done.

For this assignment, we are going to ask your family to make a video retelling a Bible story. First, go to YouTube and search for a video titled "Kids Bible History David and Goliath."

That one is cute and silly and a lot of fun. Come up with a creative way as a family to retell a Bible story. Practice it with each other, and either film it with a device and send it in to our church office, or present it to family, friends, or your small group.

Memory Treasure: Hebrews 4:12 & Isaiah 55:11

As a family, work to memorize the following passages:

Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints, and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Isaiah 55:11 - so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Knowledge Check #3

1. We can be sure we receive forgiveness, life, and salvation in Communion because...
 - a. Jesus tells us that we receive forgiveness through his body and blood.
 - b. Martin Luther said so, so it must be true.
 - c. when we take Communion, it is a sign that we have earned forgiveness.
2. The power that makes Communion what it is comes from...
 - a. the special words the pastor says.
 - b. the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God and its promises.
 - c. the Church and its long history of apostolic succession.
3. We can be sure God's Word is powerful enough to work a miracle in Communion because...
 - a. it's a really old book, and that must mean something.
 - b. theologians who lived a really long time ago said so.
 - c. Jesus proved that his Word has power by the miracles he did through it.
4. The definition of a Sacrament is...
 - a. a special religious rite that involves saying certain words.
 - b. a sacred act commanded by Jesus that uses an earthly element and gives forgiveness of sins.
 - c. anything that God uses to accomplish his will in the world.
5. Holy Communion is a Sacrament because...
 - a. Jesus said in Matthew 29:112, "Holy Communion is a Sacrament."
 - b. it was commanded by Jesus; it uses earthly elements (bread and wine) and it gives us the forgiveness of sins.
 - c. we decided to call it a Sacrament.
6. **True or False?** We use special wafers and special wine because those special things are what give Communion its power.
7. **True or False?** Ever since Jesus instituted Holy Communion, all bread and wine ever eaten anywhere also contains his true body and blood.
8. **True or False?** It is the Words and promises of Jesus that make Communion what it is.
9. **True or False?** Because it is the Word that gives Communion its power, we don't really need to eat and drink the bread and wine, we can just sit and watch.
10. **True or False?** Holy Communion is a special meal because it connects us to God's promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation in a miraculous and personal way.

Part 5: Preparing for Communion

Fourth: Who, then, is properly prepared to receive this sacrament?

Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words: “Given” and “poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them is not prepared, because the words “for you” require nothing by hearts that believe.

Imagine your mom makes a massive feast, with all kinds of awesome foods—all your favorites. She lays it all out on the table, gets everything looking just right. All the food is hot, ready to go onto your plate. But there’s just one problem: you aren’t hungry. You’ve spent the last two hours playing on your phone while eating Oreos and cheese puffs and chugging Mountain Dew. If you tried to eat anything now, you’d just be sick.

If you had wanted to be ready to enjoy your mom’s awesome meal, what would you have done? How would you have prepared so that you could get the most out of it?



Honoring Jesus

God's Word tells us we should be prepared when we receive Holy Communion. Let's look at Scripture to find the answer to the question: Why is it important that we are properly prepared to receive the Lord's Supper?

1 Corinthians 11:27-28 – 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. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

This passage says we receive something special in Communion, something that makes it so important, and is the reason we don't want to dishonor it by being unprepared. Look back at the passage. Circle or underline the phrase that identifies the special thing in this meal.

How would taking Communion without proper preparation dishonor Jesus?

Properly Prepared

What does it mean to be properly prepared to receive the Lord's Supper?

Luther's words say, "He is properly prepared who believes these words, 'Given' and 'Poured out for you.'"

Read again Luke 22:19-20 - He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Try to fill in the blanks in the following statements:

In Holy Communion, Jesus gives me his true _____ and _____ to eat and drink.

Through his true body and blood, Jesus gives me _____ of _____.

I know I need forgiveness because I am a _____.

I am ready to take Communion when I confess that I am a _____, when I am _____ for my sins and want to be _____, and when I believe that I receive _____ through Christ's true _____ and _____ to eat and to drink in Communion.

If you struggled to find answers for all those blanks, that's okay. Here are those statements, filled in for you:

In Holy Communion, Jesus gives me his true **body** and **blood** to eat and drink.

Through his true body and blood, Jesus gives me **forgiveness** of **sins**.

I know I need forgiveness because I am a **sinner**.

I am ready to take Communion when I confess that I am a **sinner**, when I am **sorry** for my sins and want to be **forgiven**, and when I believe that I receive **forgiveness** through Christ's true **body** and **blood** to eat and to drink in Communion.

Two questions to consider:

Do I need to be totally free of all sins to take Communion?

If I am not willing to let go of (repent of) a sin, should I take Communion?

Parents, talk about how you would answer these two questions. After doing so, turn the page to see how we answer those questions.

Do I need to be totally free of all sins to take Communion?

That's actually impossible, isn't it? We can't be completely free of sin until we die and go to be with Jesus. But Communion isn't for perfect people anyway. It is for people who are not totally free of their sins, who need forgiveness again and again.

If I am not willing to let go of (repent of) a sin, should I take Communion?

Communion is for repentant Christians. It is for people who want to receive forgiveness and be set free from their sins. While we'll always struggle with sin, if we refuse to let go of our sin, or don't think we need to repent, then we are not in a place where Communion is good for us. It's like asking God to give us a free pass – that disrespects him and hurts our relationship with him.

Family discussion: Imagine you are about to walk up to take Communion. What would be a good prayer to pray to help your heart be prepared to receive the Sacrament? Talk about it as a family and write down a prayer that you can remember that would help you prepare yourself.

Close Communion

We invite people to Communion who are partners of St. Mark or a congregation in our Synod, and we urge you to only take Communion at churches in our Synod. Why? For two reasons, and they come right from the Bible.

- Reason 1: To protect people who don't understand.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. Notice two things in particular Paul says:

"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... "For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves."

These are serious warnings. Someone who does not know enough to examine themselves, or who does not understand that Jesus' body and blood are present, are doing spiritual harm to themselves when they take Communion. We don't want that! If someone comes from another church body or doctrinal tradition, we ask them to wait and learn before coming to Communion. This is for their own good.

- Reason 2: Communion expresses unity.

Communion = "Common - Union" - things we share in common that unite us.

Communion unites us with Christ, but it also unites us with each other. Look again at 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. Notice another thing Paul says:

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Communion expresses our faith and hope in Christ's saving work. That is something we all are saying together.

Now look at **1 Corinthians 10:17** – "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf." Communion unites us. It is a common declaration of what we believe.

If you go to a church that teaches something you don't believe and take Communion there, are you telling them that you agree with their teaching? They might think so. Actions speak louder than words. Best not take Communion there, so that it is not confusing to anyone.

We also don't invite people from other church bodies to join in Communion with us. We don't want to put words in their mouths. They might not agree with us. We want them to know what we teach first.

Key Concept: Close Communion

We keep Communion close, that is, near and dear to us, and only join in Communion with those we agree with in doctrine. We do this for their good and God's glory.

Often

How often should you take Communion?

One day, a man asked Jesus to help his son, who had been possessed by a demon. He wanted Jesus to drive the demon out. But the man said an interesting thing. He said, "If you can do anything, please take pity and help us." Jesus latched onto that phrase, "If you can," and pressed the man about his faith. After all, this is Jesus! Can't he do anything? How could this man doubt it? This dad responded with an honest expression of his humility and faith: "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

True or False? Even if a person is a Christian, they might still have doubts.

How would taking Communion often help us deal with our doubts? How would it strengthen our faith?

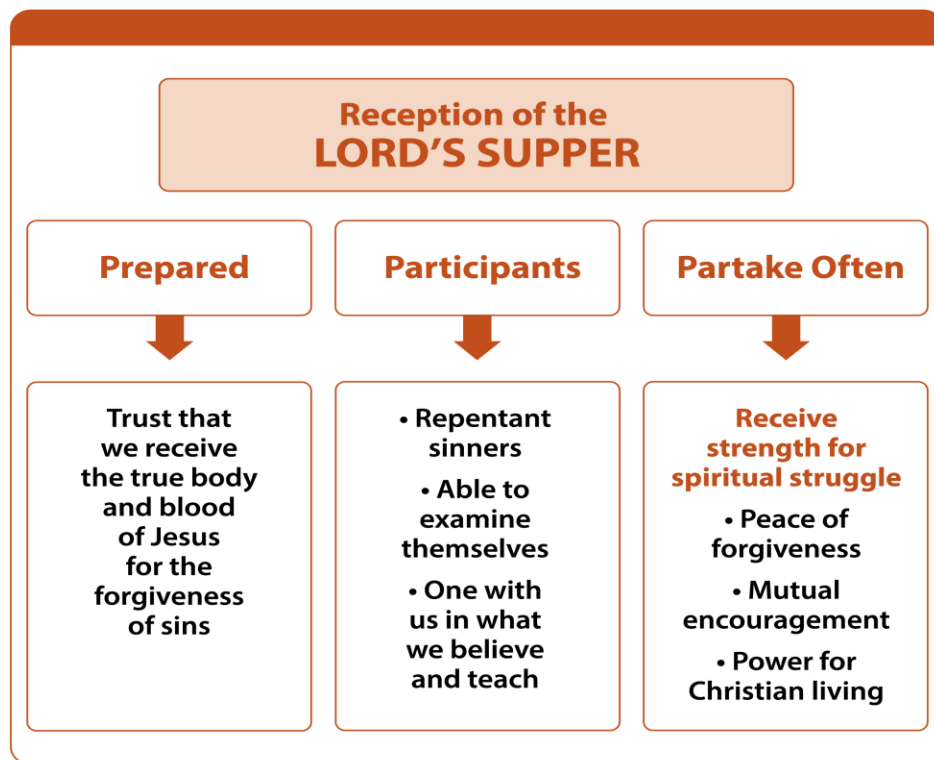
Matthew 11:28 - Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Fighting temptation can be tough. Saying no to sin day in and day out can be tiring. Falling into sin can be depressing. What is Jesus inviting us to do, according to this passage?

How would going to Communion help us find rest for our souls?

1 Corinthians 11:26 - Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Finish this sentence in your own words: "When I take Communion, I am making a public statement that Jesus has..._____."



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How might taking Communion be an encouragement to your family, and to the people around you?

So how often is “often”? Imagine someone invented a cookie that tastes amazing, melts in your mouth, cheers you up, is good for your body, has no calories or fats, no allergens, gluten free, and never makes you feel full. No downsides, only tastes good and makes you feel good. That would be pretty awesome to eat, wouldn’t it? How often would you want to eat one? Would you ever say no if it was offered?

Think of Communion the same way. It’s always good. So come often - as often as it is offered!

Memory Treasure: 1 Corinthians 11:28 & Luke 22:19-20

As a family, work to memorize the following passages:

1 Corinthians 11:28 - Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

Luke 22:19-20 - And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Knowledge Check #4

1. We should be properly prepared to take Holy Communion because...
 - b. in this way we honor Jesus, who is giving us his true body and blood.
 - c. if we're not, we might not have an appetite and might not be able to eat it.
 - d. if we're not prepared, we don't actually get Christ's body and blood, only bread and wine.
 2. Being properly prepared for Communion means...
 - a. I have examined my heart, I'm repentant of my sins, and I believe I receive forgiveness through Christ's true body and blood.
 - b. I have repented of all my sins, barely sin anymore, and do lots of good works.
 - c. I am content with myself and have accepted my flaws and don't see a need to change.
 3. We practice Close Communion for two reasons. The first is...
 - a. we are a little like a cult and don't want outsiders involved in our rituals.
 - b. we don't want people who don't understand us to think we're weird.
 - c. taking Communion without understanding is spiritual harmful.
 4. We practice Close Communion for two reasons. The second is...
 - a. Communion expresses unity, and we don't want to imply that people agree with us when they might not.
 - b. we're kind of stuck up and aren't willing to let other people share.
 - c. we're afraid that it might taint the sacredness of our ritual.
 5. Jesus said we should take Communion often. That means we should...
 - a. take it once or twice a year.
 - b. take it every three months exactly.
 - c. take it as often as we are invited to.
-
2. **True or False?** It doesn't really matter if I take Communion or not, as long as I believe in Jesus.
 3. **True or False?** I can invite my Catholic aunt to Communion with me since we're both Christians and that's all that matters.
 4. **True or False?** The only thing I need to be prepared for Communion is a repentant heart and faith in Jesus' promises.
 5. **True or False?** Anyone who comes to church should be able to take Communion, since God welcomes everyone.
 6. **True or False?** Holy Communion is a special gift that I should prepare my heart to receive, because Jesus is giving me himself.

How to prepare for Communion and other questions.

Preparing Your Heart

The last lesson talked about the importance of being properly prepared to take Communion. Take a look back at that lesson. What does it take to be properly prepared?

Martin Luther recommended four basic questions to prepare yourself to take Communion:

1. Do I believe that I am a sinner and am I repentant of my sins?
2. Do I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose to life for my assurance?
3. Do I believe that in the Sacrament I receive Christ's true body and blood?
4. Do I intend, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live a life that is pleasing to God?

If you can answer yes to all those questions, then you are ready to take Communion.

Family Discussion: How can you remember those four questions? As a family, try to come up with a mnemonic device (aid to memory) to help you remember them. Feel free to get creative. (Note: There is no Memory Treasure in this lesson, so feel free to devote your memorization time to these four questions)

Planning for Communion

In the Early Christian Church, Communion was part of every worship gathering. For a long, long time that was true in all Christian churches. When Christians came to America, that began to change, and for a while Communion was only offered a couple times a year, then a little later that increased to a whopping four times a year!

Most Lutheran churches now offer it twice a month. At St. Mark, it is offered on the 1st Sunday of every month at our Green Bay site, and the 3rd Sunday of every month at our De Pere site.

How will your family make sure you are attending Communion regularly? How will you plan to make sure you get there? What happens if you miss a month? What if something major is happening in your family and you would really like Communion, but won't have the chance for a few weeks?

As a family, talk through these questions. If you aren't sure of your answers, be sure to talk with your pastors/staff ministers about it!

Visiting other churches

You might be traveling, visiting family, going to a wedding or a funeral, or some other event at a church, and Communion is offered. Should you go up for Communion? Hold on! Some questions we might want to answer.

First, is this a WELS/ELS church? If not, the answer is no, you should not take Communion. If you're not sure about that, go review Lesson 5, Part 3.

If it is a WELS/ELS church, there may still be concerns. Does the pastor know you? Does he know your kids have been prepared to take Communion? Will he be concerned if your kids are younger than traditional Confirmation age?

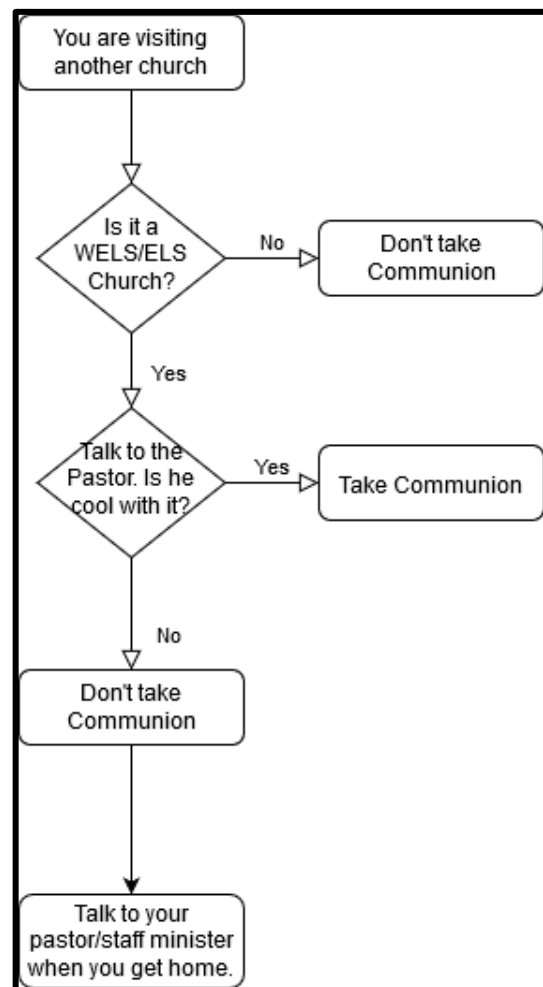
You don't want to cause offense, and you don't want to end up in a confusing or awkward situation where the pastor doesn't know what to do with you when you get up to the front of church. So, here's a great basic rule of thumb: **Always talk to the pastor before taking Communion at his church.** The pastor's job, as a shepherd, is to try and make sure that people taking Communion are not doing so to their own harm. He will appreciate you talking to him.

What if the pastor says, "I'm fine with your family taking Communion, as long as your kids are Confirmed"?

What if the pastor says, "I'm fine with the parents taking Communion, but not the kids, because they are too young to be Confirmed"?

What if the pastor says, "I'd prefer none of you take Communion today"?

Talk through those different scenarios as a family. Come up with a game plan. Make sure you all understand and are in agreement.



What about...?

What if I drop the wafer / spill the wine?

These things happen sometimes. Old superstitions used to think that such accidents led to God being angry. He's not. He knows you're human. Whoever is serving will help you. Nothing to worry about.

What if I don't like how the wine tastes or am allergic to alcohol?

Some people don't care for the taste. The nice thing is, the effectiveness of Communion isn't based on whether or not you like the wine, so don't worry about that. If the taste really is a problem, you can take non-alcoholic wine (offered at St. Mark – the white colored wine in the middle of the tray), which is much sweeter. If you are allergic, definitely take one of the non-alcoholic ones.

What if I like the taste of the wine too much / concerned about addiction to alcohol?

Jesus didn't give us Communion to tempt us to sin. If drinking wine is a problem, taking the non-alcoholic cup is a great solution. Some people find that the small amount of wine they take in Communion isn't a problem. Others just avoid it entirely. This is a personal choice, and one you should make after talking with your parents or a counselor.

What if I'm allergic to gluten?

At St. Mark we have gluten free wafers available for anyone who needs them, so it is not hard. They are in a separate dish and handled separately. If you are visiting another church, just ask the pastor before the service what you should do.

Should I cross myself / genuflect when I come up to take Communion?

Some people will do this, and it usually comes from having some background in a church that does it regularly (such as the Roman Catholic church). It can be helpful; Luther was in favor making the sign of the cross on yourself as a way of reminding yourself that Christ has made you his own. Pausing and bowing the head slightly (genuflecting) before taking the bread and wine is a way to show reverence to Christ. You should feel welcome to do these things, but remember that they are not required, so you don't need to feel guilty if you don't.

Should I take Communion if I'm feeling guilty about something I've done?

Absolutely! Communion is for your forgiveness, to reassure you that Jesus loves you and has given himself for you. There is no better time to take Communion than when you feel the weight of your sin.

Should I take Communion if I don't feel guilty about anything?

Absolutely! But you should also examine your heart. Is it that you don't think you've sinned and don't feel a need for forgiveness? Spend some time asking God to help you see your need for him. Or is it simply that God has been working through you and you are confident in his love? That's not bad, and Communion will only strengthen that.

Should I take Communion if I'm sick?

It's okay to be concerned with sharing germs, but generally it's okay as long as you're not severely ill. If you're not sure, just wait and talk to the pastor about getting it privately.

Your family may still have questions. That's okay! Write them down. When we meet together to talk about your child being ready to take Communion, we can try and answer these questions.

Examination

Parents, take your kids through the following questions. The next page has the kinds of answers we're hoping your child will give. If your child can honestly answer these questions well, then we think they might be ready to take Communion. Once you've completed this step, please contact us to set up a meeting.

1. The Bible tells us that all humans have the same problem. It is a problem that separates us from God. What is that problem?
2. The Bible tells us that God has a solution to this problem. How did God solve our problem?
3. When Jesus died on the cross, whose sins did he pay for?
4. How do you personally gain the benefit of the forgiveness Jesus earned on the cross?
5. Can you do anything to contribute to the work of salvation that Jesus has done? Do your good works do anything to help save you?
6. If good works don't help to save you, then why do you do good works?
7. The Bible tells us that when we eat and drink the bread and wine in Communion, we also receive something special in a miraculous way. What else do we receive, besides bread and wine?
8. The Bible tells us that when we receive Christ's body and blood in Communion, it grants us spiritual blessings. What are the spiritual blessings we receive in Communion?
9. Eating bread and drinking wine can't do powerful things on their own. What is the power behind Holy Communion?
10. The Bible tells us that we need to examine ourselves before we take Communion. What questions should I ask myself before I take Communion?
11. Do you believe that you are a sinner in need of salvation?
12. Do you believe that Jesus' death on the cross paid for your sins?
13. Do you believe that in Holy Communion Jesus gives you his own true body and blood for your forgiveness, life, and salvation?
14. Do you want to follow God's will and use God's power to live for him?

Examination

Parents, the answers in red are the general idea we want your kids to have when they answer the question. The exact wording doesn't matter as much as the concept. It's okay to help them get to the answer once in a while, but remember that this isn't about passing a test, this is about seeing if your child is really ready. So let them answer honestly and fully.

The Bible tells us that all humans have the same problem. It is a problem that separates us from God. What is that problem?

All humans are sinful – born with original sin, and we sin daily.

The Bible tells us that God has a solution to this problem. How did God solve our problem?

God's solution was to send Jesus, the Son of God, to live a perfect life in our place, and die the death we deserved, and then rise from the dead to assure us that his sacrifice was complete.

When Jesus died on the cross, whose sins did he pay for?

Jesus paid for the sins of all people of all time.

How do you personally gain the benefit of the forgiveness Jesus earned on the cross?

Faith is the gift God gives us that takes hold of Christ's forgiveness. "It is by faith you have been saved."

Can you do anything to contribute to the work of salvation that Jesus has done? Do your good works do anything to help save you?

No, there is nothing we do to contribute to salvation. Our good works do nothing. Even our faith is a gift, so even that is not something we contribute, rather, something God gives us.

If good works don't help to save you, then why do you do good works?

We do good works to show our love and thanks to God for what he has done for us.

The Bible tells us that when we eat and drink the bread and wine in Communion, we also receive something special in a miraculous way. What else do we receive, besides bread and wine?

We also receive Christ's true body and blood in, with, and under the bread and the wine.

The Bible tells us that when we receive Christ's body and blood in Communion, it grants us spiritual blessings. What are the spiritual blessings we receive in Communion?

Communion gives us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Eating bread and drinking wine can't do powerful things on their own. What is the power behind Holy Communion?

The power behind Holy Communion is the Word of God, especially the words and promises of Jesus attached to Communion.

The Bible tells us that we need to examine ourselves before we take Communion. What questions should I ask myself before I take Communion?

Do I know that I am a sinner and that I need forgiveness, and am I sorry for my sins?

Do I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead?

Do I believe that Jesus gives me his true body and blood for my forgiveness in Communion?

Do I want to live a more God-pleasing life by the help of the Holy Spirit?

Do you believe that you are a sinner in need of salvation?

Yes.

Do you believe that Jesus' death on the cross paid for your sins?

Yes.

Do you believe that in Holy Communion Jesus gives you his own true body and blood for your forgiveness, life, and salvation?

Yes.

Do you want to follow God's will and use God's power to live for him?

Yes.

Knowledge Check Answer Keys

#1:

1. B
2. A
3. C
4. A
5. B
6. True
7. False
8. False
9. True
10. True

#2:

1. B
2. A
3. C
4. B
5. C
6. False
7. True
8. True
9. False
10. True

#3:

1. A
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. B
6. False
7. False
8. True
9. False
10. True

#4:

1. A
2. A
3. C
4. A
5. C
6. False
7. False
8. True
9. False
10. True