

THE CALL TO COMMUNION



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In Common Ground, we are committed to having communion together regularly. As a vital aspect of our corporate gathering, here are a few reasons why communion has held such an important role in the universal church since it began, and why we don't ever want to let go or minimize it:

1) It brings us back to the cross.

Communion takes us back to the cross and Christ's great sacrifice there. His blood being spilt, his body being broken - for us. The cross is the most climactic point of the Bible, it is the hope, anchor and axis of the Christian faith. When we move away from it, we are in danger of losing our way - of moving from faith toward religion, from living discipleship toward dead works. Communion should always bring us back to Jesus and the cross - every time.

2) It reminds us of our need for confession and repentance.

Closely linked to our return to the cross is a return to confession and repentance. These are the entry points of Christ-followership; to repent of sin, confess our need for a saviour and trust in Christ alone. Not only the entry point of our faith, these sacred disciplines are also meant to remain the very path we are to continue on in our Christian walk. Repenting of sin and confessing our ongoing need for God's mercy and grace should be a regular discipline in our lives. When we drift away from this, we begin to look to our own morality as our confidence and start to drift away from the very grace we so desperately need. Communion brings us back to confession and repentance, each and every time we take it.

3) It gives us a moment for much-needed reflection.

The bible says that we ought to take stock of our relationship with Christ, our discipleship and our followership. Are we really following Jesus and trusting him or are we just playing religion? What areas in our lives do we need to freshly surrender to God? Communion affords us this priceless moment; it asks us to consider our ways and walk before taking us by the hand and leading us back to the throne of grace.

4) It nourishes our faith.

Communion shouts to us about the faithfulness of God. So faithful is he that even when we were at our worst, he was at his best - dying on the cross on our behalf. If he did not abandon us when we were sworn enemies, why should he now? Communion is a reminder of God's unceasing faithfulness. And as we freshly appreciate his faithfulness at the communion table, our own faith is nourished.

5) It gives us hope.

Communion reminds us that Christ has overcome the grave. The penalty for sin has been paid, the power of sin is being broken and the presence of sin will one day be eradicated entirely. In this world, there is still lots of sin, pain and brokenness. But communion reminds us that this is not the final chapter. Our redeemer is coming.

6) It is the sign of the covenant that God has made with us.

Throughout the Scriptures, God made covenants with his people, which is similar to an unconditional promise or oath. In a covenant, two parties both agree to the relationship with each other, but a covenant does not become null and void when one party reneges on their side of the deal. In the bible, whenever God makes a covenant with his people, there is always a sign of the covenant as a demonstration that the covenant has taken place and is in effect. Communion is the sign of the New Covenant that God has made with those who are his. This Covenant declares that we are his, and because we have put our simple faith in him, he guarantees to be God and Saviour to us, not to abandon us nor to forsake us. Taking communion is like wearing a wedding ring – it is a sign that a covenantal relationship has been entered into. Communion reminds us that this relationship is based on a grace, not on our on-going good works or efforts. It preaches the gospel to us every time we take it.

HOW SHOULD WE CALL PEOPLE TO COMMUNION DURING A SUNDAY MEETING?

1) Make sure it is Christ-centred.

Communion is all about Jesus and what he did on the cross. A Christ-less communion is not only pointless and powerless, but is in danger of reinforcing the very anti-thesis of the gospel – a righteousness born not from Christ's immense sacrifice, but from our own rituals or works. Whatever you do, make sure you call people to Christ, to follow and trust him. It is all about Jesus.

2) As far as possible use Scripture, to call people to Communion.

Give people a Scriptural motivation for Communion: this suggests that it is not our idea and not just a good idea, but a biblical one that God is wanting us to partake in. Show people how the act of partaking in Communion, (confession and reliance on Christ) is a biblical imperative – show them by using the Bible.

3) Give people something to do / think about / meditate upon as they take communion.

Don't just call people to the communion table but ask them to engage with it. We don't want people to mindlessly just go through the motions but to engage with it, by praying some prayer, thinking some thought, confessing their reliance on God, or perhaps praying for someone else. We want to actively apply the death and resurrection of Christ as portrayed in communion to their lives. You may want to have a Scripture up on the screen, you may want to have a line you want them to think over, or a sentence or a question to ponder.

4) Ask them to take stock of their lives, thereby not taking communion in an 'unholy manner'.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul tells us 'A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.' Because this is such a sacred moment, doing so in an overly-relaxed manner is dangerous. Although our salvation is free, we must never treat Christ and his cross cheaply – lest we want to incur God's discipline.

Ask people to examine their lives; if there is unrepented-of sin, if there are issues that haven't been dealt with, ask them to do so before taking communion.

WHAT TONE SHOULD WE USE FOR COMMUNION?

1. Joy, celebration and victory: Jesus has conquered sin and death. We're celebrating his victory imputed to us.

2. Sobriety, humility and repentance:

Christ had to suffer for not just the sins of the world, but our sins included.

3. Thankfulness and dependence upon God: What would we have done without Jesus? He is our hope; our living hope, our hope of glory.

This is such a meaningful, and wonderful time in our Sunday Worship Service. Please prepare really well, and lead people to Christ when we call people to communion.