

“Communion”

As Christians, we regularly partake in communion, also called the Lord’s supper, when we meet for fellowship. We do so, knowing that the purpose of communion is to symbolically demonstrate the Lord's death until He returns.

1 Corinthians 11:26 *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

Besides demonstrating that death to others, it is also a time to reflect on His death ourselves, and to become one with Him in that death. But how is this to be accomplished?

First of all, we can look at the word *communion*, which is quite an interesting one. If we investigate the roots, we see that it literally means, "union with." Are we in union with Him when we partake of the Lord’s supper? Well, yes. We recall that the Scriptures tell us that we are to be partakers of His suffering—we die with Him to be raised by Him.

2 Corinthians 1:7 *And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.*

Philippians 3:10-11 *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

Along this vein, I personally believe that during communion we should have this prayerful mind—the mind of Christ—a mind that operates under a willingness to suffer persecution for His name's sake and to die, if need be. In that mind of Christ, we do die to ourselves and submit our all to God. In that mind of Christ, we partake in His death. Therefore, we are in communion with the Lord—in union with each other. This is the real essence of communion.

The Lord Himself expands on this in John chapter 6, where He tells us that unless we eat His flesh and drink His blood, there is no life in us (in essence, we die to ourselves, and He raises us to new life).

John 6:53 *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*

We see that He also tells us earlier in this passage that if we come to Him, we shall never hunger, and if we believe on Him, we shall never thirst.

John 6:35 *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

Therefore, it becomes evident that the act of coming to Him is synonymous with eating His flesh, thereby causing us to never hunger again; and the act of believing on Him is synonymous with drinking His blood, thereby causing us to never thirst again. An echo of this idea is found in the accounting of His well-known conversation with a woman at a well.

John 4:13-14 *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

So then, how would coming to Him and believing on Him become synonymous with eating His flesh and drinking His blood?

Well, when we come to Him, we come to Him broken, as His body was broken for us, and in this way, our coming to Him **is** partaking in the broken flesh. We come to Him in that willingness to die to ourselves.

Believing on Him (in the Greek, this comes from words that literally mean “trusting into Him”) is truly trusting that His blood is more than sufficient to clean our ugly, filthy, sinful insides. In this way, our believing on Him **is** partaking in His blood, as we take it into our innermost parts, where that blood can be applied and clean them. The drinking of the fruit of the vine becomes a spiritual representation of His blood cleaning us where we need it the most—on the inside.

Of course, the real act of eating His flesh and drinking in His blood is a spiritual act, accomplished by God in us. We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. It is not a physical act of our own flesh. As the Lord said, it is the spirit that brings dead things to life; the flesh (any physical act of our own will) profits (gains us) nothing. His words are spirit, and His words are life.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

It becomes clear then that He is not speaking of a willful act involving our mouths. Because of this, we can find the teaching in John 6 to be one of the most profound of all Scripture, one that many who heard Him the day on which He first taught it could not grasp.

John 6:60-66 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

We can meditate on this teaching every time we partake of communion—union with the Lord.

However, we are also told that we must first examine ourselves, as Paul writes, and so (in that way) we may eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

1 Corinthians 11:27-28 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Note that we are warned against eating and drinking unworthily—in an unworthy manner. The use of an adverb here, rather than an adjective, indicates that it is the act that is being described and not we who believe.

Therefore, we do not examine ourselves to see if we have merit in ourselves or if we are worthy to partake in the Lord’s supper. After all, who among us **is** worthy? Instead, we examine ourselves to make sure that we are partaking of this communion in a manner worthy of His death—in submission to God and willing to die for His name's sake, giving all the glory to God alone.