

## **“The Mystery of Communion”**

### **Participating in the Mystery**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

As a Christian church, New Life regularly observes communion. Because it is so familiar to us, we may fail to recognize the significance, and the mystery of communion. Starting with the final Passover meal Christ shared while on earth, it now represents our “new covenant” agreement by which Christ’s body and blood became the atoning sacrifice to give us access to the Father. This study helps us to pause and give careful consideration to the meaning behind the practice of communion.

**Ice Breaker (Optional):** What are some of the significant events in your life that included a special meal?

#### **STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)**

##### **Thank. Look up**

**Q1. Read Luke 22:14-15; Exodus 12:11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24**

In Luke 22 we find that Jesus was sharing a Passover meal with his disciples. In Exodus 12:13, after the observance of the first Passover was detailed, what did God promise to spare the Israelites from if the blood of the lamb was over their doorposts? As we reflect on what God has spared us from by forgiving our sins, we should follow Jesus’ example by giving thanks as we approach the communion table. Take a moment to pray a prayer of thanksgiving, naming those great and small gifts of grace God has given you.

##### **Remember. Look back**

**Q2. Read 1 Corinthians 11:24-25; John 6:35, 51-57**

For generations the Passover meal was a remembrance of the unleavened bread prepared in haste and the blood of the unblemished lamb sacrificed when God’s judgment fell on Egypt. What astonishing statement did Jesus make about those elements as he shared this meal with the disciples? (see 1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

Jesus taught the Jews at Capernaum that he was the bread of life, but they failed to understand how they could eat his flesh and drink his blood. As you read John 6:35, what do you believe it means to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ? What practices help you to “feed upon” and “drink in” the life of Christ?

##### **Examine. Look in**

**Q3. Read 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 26-32;**

There is more than one way to interpret being “unworthy” to take communion (1 Corinthians 11: 27). Paul refers to what “un-Christian” practices of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:21? Certainly he admonished them as unworthy to consume the Lord’s supper in that manner. When we “examine ourselves” (v. 28) and “judge ourselves truly” (v.31) we should recognize that Christ’s sacrifice was not offered because we are worthy, but as a gift of grace. What then should we reflect on, when we examine ourselves, as a means of honoring the Lord’s body in communion?

##### **Anticipate. Look ahead**

**Q4. Read 1 Corinthians 11:26; Matthew 26:29**

The act of communion is not only a remembrance of the past, it is also an anticipation of our glorious future. When did Jesus expect to partake of communion again with his disciples? (see Matthew 26:29) Although Paul did not partake of communion with Jesus on earth, what event did he anticipate would conclude the celebration of our earthly communion? What are some other ways we can watch and prepare for Christ’s return and our celebration with him in God’s Kingdom? Is there any area of your life where you want to be more prepared for Christ’s return?

#### **WRAP-UP**

On his last day with his disciples Jesus shared the Passover and declared that the bread was *his* body and the wine was *his* blood. The remembrance of Passover had been pointing to the atonement of Christ for all mankind. When we partake of communion now we should look up to thank God, look back to remember what Christ sacrificed for us, look in to ourselves recognizing our need for redemption, and look ahead to Christ’s return and our celebration with him in his Father’s kingdom.

##### **Memory Verse**

*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."*

*1 Corinthians 11:24 ESV*

#### **PRAYER (20 MIN)**

*Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Pray for your group members’ needs: \_\_\_\_\_*

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*Challenge: At some time this week, set aside a time to thank God, remember what He did for you, examine yourself honestly, and anticipate his return!*

