"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:

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!

Qı

Luke 22:14-15 ESV - 14 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. 15 And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

Exodus 12:11-14 ESV - 11 In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. 12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. 13 The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. 14 "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.

1 Corinthians 11:23-24 ESV - 23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 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."

Q2

1 Corinthians 11:24-25 ESV - 24 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." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

John 6:35, 51-57 ESV - 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ... 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." 52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds

on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

Q3

Read 1 Corinthians 11: 20-22, 26-32 in your Bible-

Q4

Matthew 26:29 ESV - 29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

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

Prayers con't

