

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Lesson Guide
September 7, 2014
"The Lord's Supper"

Memory Verse:

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. "

1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV)

The Lord's Supper: What is it?

Kickoff: Ask some folks to volunteer to tell what they know about the Lord's Supper. Ask them to be as basic as possible about the reasons for it and the methods they've seen used in the past.

Start with the Scriptures that detail the Last Supper. Luke tends to be more descriptive, but Matthew and Mark, while very similar, also include the scene.

- Luke 22:14-20
- Matt 26:26-30
- Mark 14:22-26

From Article VII of the Baptist Faith and Message (2000)

"The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming."

Why do we do it?

1. Jesus **commanded** us to. (Luke 22:19, Mat. 28:19-20)

The Lord's Supper is one of the two ordinances that we practice as followers of Christ. (The second is Baptism). The definition of an ordinance is "an authoritative order or decree." It is not a general commandment about life such as the commandments against murder and theft; it is an instruction for a specific observance, ritual or ceremony, an instruction to take a certain action.

In our case, After sharing the Last Supper with His disciples, Jesus instructed them to "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Jesus' intent is for the disciples to remember him by eating the bread and drinking the wine as He showed them. This ritual of remembrance is not simply to reminisce about the good and bad memories they shared, but to recall the critical importance of Jesus' sacrifice of His body and blood and the saving work that it accomplished. Jesus confirms this His command to observe this ordinance in His last words to His disciples before ascending to Heaven: the Great Commission.

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mat. 28:19-20).*

2. To **remember** and **proclaim** Jesus' sacrifice for us. (1 Cor 11:26)

Jesus' death on the cross was the most heinous crime that's ever been committed by men, and yet His submission to that treatment is the greatest work of love and power that was ever wrought by God.

For both of these reasons, we observe the Lord's Supper. We remember what it cost Christ: the torture, the shame and punishment He endured, unjustly, being the only truly righteous man that ever walked the earth and yet treated like the basest criminal. And we also remember that we did it to Him. We might shrink away from that thought, but every sin we commit from the tiniest omission to the worst violation only serves to show why Jesus Christ had to die in order for us to be reconciled with God: We have ALL sinned, and could never pay the debt for those sins with anything but our very lives, in eternal death! Thankfully, Christ came down to pay that debt for us all. The ultimate and infinite importance this has in each of our lives is what we proclaim each time we take the Lord's Supper.

3. To fellowship and identify with each other as Christians (1 Cor 11:33)

The third reason we observe the Lord's Supper is to draw us closer together as believers, brothers and sisters in Christ! Christ's sacrifice unifies in a way that no other race, creed, family, nationalism or bond could. All such distinctions dissolve in comparison to our adoption into the family of Christ. This is the greatest, holiest fellowship we can have with our fellow man, to be a part of the Body of Christ, and by taking part in this meal of remembrance; we celebrate our unity and our Head, Christ Himself! If for any reason, we divide the church along lines of rich/poor, black/white, old/young, popular/unpopular, then we have no business observing the Lord's Supper until we repent and unite together again as the one Body of Christ. (Read 1 Cor 11:17-22 for what Paul has to say about elitism in the church and the Lord's Supper).

How do we do it?

Brainstorm with the group: How do we know how to observe the Lord's Supper? How do we know we're doing it right? (The answer is always to check it against scripture. Tradition may dominate the particulars: some use wine and baked bread, some use juice and crackers; but the Bible alone gives us the reason and significance of what we do.)

1. As Jesus demonstrated. (1 Cor 11:23-25)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

2. With reverence and respect, and a clean heart. (1 Cor 11:27-29)

27 So then, 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. 28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

We need to be certain that we are in the right frame of mind and that our hearts are right with God. This requires introspection, looking inward, "discerning the body of Christ" as Paul says. To do this, we should be reverent and serious about what we're about to enter into, so that we will not be guilty of belittling Christ's love and sacrifice for us. If, to us, the Lord's Supper is just another church service with juice and crackers, then we're doing it wrong, terribly wrong, and we will most certainly be offensive to God.

Purposes:

1. **Past Focus:** Remembrance and Reverence: Jesus' suffering and sacrifice (completed)
2. **Present Focus:** Worship, Thanksgiving, Praise: The difference it has made/is making now
3. **Future Focus:** Proclamation, Preparation and Anticipation: The effect it will have in the future and in eternity

Assurances:

Ask: What assurances can we get from the covenant that the Lord's Supper symbolizes?

- God's plan accounts for the past, present and future. Nothing is left to chance.

Jesus led His disciples at the Last Supper (the First "Lord's Supper," the one we emulate). The ordinance was carried out in the early church, all the way up to current times, where we as modern Christians may contribute and take part. The Lord's Supper will continue to be observed as long as there are Christians and then Final Lord's Supper will be the prophesied Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-9) where the Church (as the Bride of Christ) will join together with Him in an eternal feast and celebration as all the Christians of all the ages will be present with God for eternity and all prophecy and time will be fulfilled.

The Lord's Supper is not just a remembrance of Jesus' death, or just a reminder of what He does for us presently, but a sweet assurance that we WILL sit around His table, reunited with ALL our Christian loved ones, Resurrected: never to be parted again. This has been God's plan from the start, since "before the foundations of the world" were laid by Him; He prepared for and made allowance for every contingency before the first Word of creation was spoken. Knowing this, we can trust that all that He has planned for us, as His children, is good and perfect.

- We are all invited!!! (1 Cor 11:20-21)

The Lord's Supper is not just for the clergy, or the Apostles or the deacons, or some small elite group, but for ALL of His children to participate in. The invitation is extended to whosoever will accept the new covenant of His blood as the payment for the penalty of their sins, and join the family at His table.