

# Why We Do It - Juice & Crackers

As I was studying for this sermon I ran across this story:

A little girl asked her mother, "Mommy, why do you cut the ends off the meat before you cook it?"

The girl's mother told her that she thought it added to the flavor by allowing the meat to better absorb the spices, but perhaps she should ask her grandmother since she always did it that way.

So the little girl found her grandmother and asked, "Grandma, why do you and Mommy cut the ends of the meat off before you cook it?"

Her grandmother thought a moment and answered, "I think it allows the meat to stay tender because it soaks up the juices better, but why don't you ask your Nana? After all, I learned from her, and she always did it that way."

The little girl was getting a little frustrated, but climbed up in her great-grandmother's lap and asked, "Nana, why do you cut the ends off the meat before you cook it?"

Nana answered, "I had to; my cooking pot wasn't big enough."

Lots of people do lots of things in life without ever asking why. The failure to ask why creates traditions and habits without meaning and without depth.

Our desire is to glorify Jesus with all that we do in this church and hopefully with all that you do in your life. Today we continue the series "Why We Do It" answering the questions of why we do what we do in church. Today's focus is the "Juice and Crackers" Otherwise known as "communion" or "The Lord's Supper"

When it comes to communion, most people know that we are taking a moment to remember what Jesus did for us. In this church we use juice and crackers. It certainly would be ok to use other forms of bread or wine, but we stick with juice and crackers.

Most people in church know that the cracker represents Christ's body and the juice represents Christ's shed blood. But WHY do we remember this in church, it's more than just a part of the service and it's more than just a religious habit.....

We need to make sure we are not taking communion for the wrong reasons. It can't just be a habit or tradition that we do just because we have always done it. WHY do we eat these miniature crackers and drink these tiny cups of juice....my desire is that every person here know WHY today.

Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, we see here in this passage, Paul telling of when Jesus first established communion with the disciples.....

### **1 Corinthians 11:23-25**

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

So Jesus started what we today call communion. It was an ordinance that Jesus put in place and then man gave it the name of communion.

Communion means the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level.

For those who have taken communion many times, you know that is what we do.....intimate thought about Jesus giving His life for ours, but it's not only a mental thought it's a very powerful spiritual connection!

Shouldn't this be something that followers of Christ think about and remember all of the time? YES! But we don't.....

God created us and He knows how our minds work. He knows the power of sin and distraction and forgetfulness.....you see in the bible where God set up memorials or reminders for His people so they would not forget the mighty things that He has done!

- The rainbow is one such reminder, a reminder of the promise that God will never again send a flood to destroy all life.
- Many times in the OT when a significant event would happen, the leaders of God's people would build an altar in honor of God and as a reminder of what He did
- One instance was when the people of Israel crossed the Jordan River they set 12 stones by the river bank to serve as a memorial to that event. Whenever their children walked by and saw the stones the parents could tell them about God's miraculous entrance for them into the Promise Land.
- Another significant memorial for the Israelites was Passover. Passover was a meal celebrated to remember their escape from Egypt.

Communion is a symbolic reminder of Christ's death. In v24 and again in v25 Jesus said "do this in remembrance of me"

How often do we forget things? We run into someone we have known for years and can't think of their name. We can't remember something we said. We walk around the house looking for something that in in your hand or glasses on top of your head....We need reminders!

The Lord's Supper is the most meaningful reminder ever established! It's more than religious tradition....it's a time to remember Christ's sacrifice and to focus our hearts and minds on Jesus.

Every time we eat the Lord's Supper, it is a sermon without words about the cross. Jesus left us with a picture so we would never forget

Why do we observe communion?

## 1. To Remember

### 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

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First and foremost, we observe communion to remember. Not to remember Jesus, hopefully you realize that Jesus is not someone who died that you have to have a reminder of His life....HE'S ALIVE. You can have a real relationship with Him today! You can know Him today!

I'm with my wife daily, I don't need to "remember" her as though she is in the past. I better have constant communication with her! But sometimes I need to remember things that she has done for me.

- On our anniversary, I remember that she's crazy....she married ME
- On her birthday I remember her promise to grow old with me....although she doesn't look any older
- On our kids' birthdays I remember her giving me the best gifts I could ask for.....children are certainly a blessing from the Lord.....but she birthed them....THANK YOU!
- On National Doughnut Day, I remember how much she loves me in spite of my weaknesses....

When we observe communion.....we remember that Jesus loves us! THAT'S IT.....everything else is birthed out of that love.

Jesus was beaten, spit upon, mocked, hair ripped from His beard, brutally whipped, a crown of thorns pressed upon His head.....after all of this, He was forced to carry the cross that He would be nailed to, one that He would hang on.... suffocating as His lungs filled with blood, one that He would die on.

The point of sharing this and the point of reflection upon Jesus' death during communion is not to make you feel bad. It's not to provoke guilt or shame. It's to relay the severity of sin.....the payment is death.....

**Hebrews 9:22 (NIV)**

22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

**Romans 6:23 (NKJV)**

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But like the Passover lamb that would be sacrificed so that the blood could be applied to the door post causing the destroyer to pass over each household.....Christ's blood applied to your life causes God's judgement to pass over and makes the sinner a saint!

We remember this at communion as a reminder you that Jesus loves you SO MUCH that He endured all of that suffering so that you could be forgiven and redeemed! IN HIM you can have LIFE!

**2. To Rejoice**

**1 Corinthians 11:26 (NKJV)**

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

Communion is a time to rejoice.....not because of what Jesus had to endure, it's hard to rejoice over suffering....BUT we rejoice because Jesus' suffering and death was done for you and me, because Jesus was doing something that NO ONE else could do!

Jesus defeated hell, death, and the grave when He died in our place and rose again. But first He had to die....we rejoice because it brought forth VICTORY!

**1 Corinthians 15:57 (NKJV)**

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are to proclaim His death until He comes. This is the gospel (The good news), that Jesus died for you to save your life. It's the central message of the Christian faith! We proclaim this death, this substitution of the sinless, spotless Lamb of God, the Son of God, Jesus Christ.....in the place of the sinner. It's a reason to rejoice!

We proclaim it until He comes.....HE IS COMING BACK FOR US! Rejoice!

**3. To Repent**

**1 Corinthians 11:27-28 (NKJV)**

27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Communion gives us the opportunity to repent. Repentance is a change of mind, godly sorrow, giving up any practice that has offended God.

**1 John 1:9 (NKJV)**

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I do want to say that communion is for sinners, which we all are, hopefully most of us are sinners saved by grace.....But you don't have to be sinless to participate in communion, if that were the case, no one would be doing it!

Yes, we should take this time to repent of sin, but it's not because we have to be perfect to observe communion, it's because we are remembering Jesus dying for our sins so that we may be forgiven....the GOODNESS OF GOD!

**Romans 2:4 (NKJV)**

4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

There are lots of ways that people can take communion in an "unworthy manner". We are remembering Jesus, what He did for us, it's a time of reflection of His goodness and a time of honoring Him.

An unworthy manner would be any way that is not honoring Jesus, spitting in the face of the exact reason for communion. It could be a ritualistic approach, participating without your heart and mind on Jesus. It could be treating it as common, a part of the service, or treating it lightly with little importance. It could be coming to the table with a spirit of bitterness or hatred toward another believer. Or coming with a sin of which you refuse to repent of.

We must come to the table with our thoughts set on Jesus, love for Him and love for our brothers and sisters. We come as HIS body.....believers united in love, not divided in hate or bitterness.

We examine ourselves, not so that we can determine if we are qualified to receive communion, but to see what we may give over to Him today. Communion is a place of purifying the church!

**4. To Reconcile**

**1 Corinthians 11:29 (NKJV)**

29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Paul has a twofold meaning here. To eat and drink in an unworthy manner again is NOT saying if you are a sinner you can't take communion, hopefully you are going to repent! But if we eat and drink with no sense of the importance of communion, if we are simply doing it because of what mom or dad or neighbor, or pastor will think if we don't....that is unworthily.

You must understand that there is a spiritual significance to observing communion. No we don't believe the cracker literally becomes the body of Christ, no we don't believe that the juice literally becomes the blood of Christ.....that's weird....I probably wouldn't do it!

It's not a magical cracker, it's not magical juice....but this is a spiritual thing we are doing. God IS Spirit.....we remember, we rejoice, we repent, we reconcile because of what this cracker and juice represent.

So we must understand there is a spiritual significance. You don't have to have a Phd in communion theology, but you must know the significance. That is the test for kids, do you know what the cracker and juice represent? Do you know why Jesus died for you? Do you accept Him as Lord and Savior? Then participate in communion.....ask your kids....don't assume they know!

Secondly Paul says not discerning the Lord's body, if you don't understand why we observe communion, and you take it just to take it, you will receive discipline from the Lord. Not condemnation, not eternal damnation.....but discipline....correction.

Because you don't understand the Lord's body. Notice no blood? It's the church....Communion represents reconciliation....sinful you being made right with a holy God, becoming part of HIS body....the church!

Every believer is part of THE CHURCH....If you take communion and you have hate for your brother or sister in Christ, you are missing the point, it's a reminder to forgive because of what Jesus has done for you! It's a reminder that the church is HIS body, how can you take communion in honor of Jesus and yet hate a part of Him....communion is a time to reconcile....make things right!

CALL JASON

Communion is brings us all to common ground. No one person is greater than another and no one person is worse than another.....the blood of the Lamb erases all of that.

Today as we receive communion together, remember it represents LOVE.....the love that the Father has for you, that He would send His Son, to die in your place. But not only to die, but to give you LIFE!

- We remember Jesus' work on the cross and we remember it's a finished work, accept Him as Lord and Savior and let the Holy Spirit lead and guide you.
- We rejoice because He did something that only He could do giving us life now but also that He is coming back for us!
- We repent, changing our mind, correcting our course or path to the narrow path, the path of righteousness!
- We reconcile with one another and with God. You are part of His body, whom He loves. Let that love overflow toward others.