

50 Commands of Christ - 13 - (#44-45)

44. Celebrate the Lord's Supper—*Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20*

The central element of the Passover meal was the sacrificial lamb; where did Jesus place his emphasis?

How does the old covenant God made with Israel compare to or differ from the new covenant he made through the blood of Jesus Christ? *Exodus 12:25-27, Deut 16:1-8*

What did Jesus mean when he said, “Do this in remembrance of me?”
1 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 8:8-13, 9:25-28

Paul adds a requirement before partaking of Communion in 1 Corinthians 11: 27-28. What does it mean to partake of the bread and the cup “in an unworthy manner?”

What can we learn about the practice of Communion through this passage?

How often should communion be observed?

Why is Communion (or the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist) so important?

45. Watch and pray—*Matthew 26:41, Mark 14:38*

What was one reason Jesus said to Peter that he should watch and pray? What is the specific temptation that will face Peter?

The phrase, “the spirit is willing” is one with which the disciples (and Jews) would be familiar. Why? *Psalm 51:10-12* What did David ask for in his prayer after committing adultery with Bathsheba?

Of the more than 300 specific references to prayer in the Bible, one recurring theme is that God hears and answers prayer. Has this been true in your life? *Genesis 24:12-15, Psalm 6:9, 17:6, 34:17, Isaiah 30:19, 65:24, Jeremiah 33:3, Matthew 21:22, Mark 11:24, John 14:13-14, 15:7, 16:23-24, Eph 3:12*. What is needed in our prayers for us to be confident that God will hear and answer them?

50 Commands of Christ - 13 - (#44-45) - Leader's Guide

44. Celebrate the Lord's Supper—*Matthew 26:26-28* - ²⁶ As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take this and eat it, for this is my body.”

²⁷ And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, “Each of you drink from it, ²⁸ for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many.

The Passover as described in the OT emphasizes that it was a *sacrifice* to the Lord and it also was to remind the Jews of two things, first that the Lord spared (passed over) their first born, while killing all of the first born people and animals of the Egyptians and second, that the departure from Egypt was made in great haste.

Exodus 12:25-27 - ²⁵ When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. ²⁶ And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ ²⁷ then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’ ” Then the people bowed down and worshiped.

Deuteronomy 16:1-8 - ¹ Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover of the LORD your God, because in the month of Abib he brought you out of Egypt by night. ² Sacrifice as the Passover to the LORD your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his Name. ³ Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. ⁴ Let no yeast be found in your possession in all your land for seven days. Do not let any of the meat you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain until morning.

⁵ You must not sacrifice the Passover in any town the LORD your God gives you ⁶ except in the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name. There you must sacrifice the Passover in the evening, when the sun goes down, on the anniversary of your departure from Egypt. ⁷ Roast it and eat it at the place the LORD your God will choose. Then in the morning return to your tents. ⁸ For six days eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day hold an assembly to the LORD your God and do no work.

What did Jesus mean when he said, “Do this in remembrance of me?”

By saying, “Do this in remembrance of me,” Jesus indicated this was a ceremony that must be continued in the future. It indicated also that the Passover,

which required the death of a lamb and looked forward to the coming of the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world, was fulfilled in the Lord's Supper. The New Covenant replaced the Old Covenant when Christ, the Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), was sacrificed (Hebrews 8:8-13). The sacrificial system was no longer needed (Hebrews 9:25-28). The Lord's Supper or Communion is a remembrance of what Christ did for us and a celebration of what we receive as a result of His sacrifice.

1 Corinthians 5:7 - Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Paul's added requirement for one to receive communion.

We may ask what it means to partake of the bread and the cup “in an unworthy manner?” It may mean to disregard the true meaning of the bread and cup and to forget the tremendous price our Savior paid for our salvation. Or it may mean to allow the ceremony to become a dead and formal ritual. Or it may mean to come to the Lord's Supper with unconfessed sin. In keeping with Paul's instruction, we should examine ourselves before eating the bread and drinking the cup.

How often should communion be observed?

It would seem that since we observe the Lord's Supper to remember Christ's death and shed blood, we should observe it fairly often. Some churches have a monthly Lord's Supper service, others do it bi-monthly, others weekly. Since the Bible does not give us specific instruction as to frequency, there is some latitude in how often a church should observe the Lord's Supper. It should be often enough to renew focus on Christ, without being so often that it becomes routine. In any case, it's not the frequency that matters, but the heart and attitude of those who participate. We should partake with reverence, love, and a deep sense of gratitude for the Lord Jesus, who was willing to die on the cross to take our sins upon Himself.

Leaders: If you really want to get into this, ask the members of your group what they think about 5-year-old children receiving communion.

Also, if you have people with different church backgrounds, you might want to get into the history of communion and, if you are very brave, into the beliefs of different churches. Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Radical, and Anglican theologians differed considerably over the Holy Communion during the era of reform, and many of these differences still persist. There are literally millions of references on the Internet. Here's just one of many that I found helpful:

http://demo.lutherproductions.com/historytutor/basic/reformation/genknow/lords_supper.htm

45. Watch and pray—*Matthew 26:41* - “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” The command here to “watch” is different than #43 (watch for Jesus’ return); here it means to watch out for temptation, which can strike at any time.

The temptation facing Peter (and all of us) is to be unfaithful in the face of threatening circumstances that confront him (and us).

Psalm 51:10-12 - ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

In this psalm written after Nathan confronted David after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba, David was praying for a pure heart, a steadfast spirit or faithfulness, and a willing spirit of service. He was essentially asking God to give him a new heart and spirit that would be controlled and directed by God. When one’s spirit is under God’s control, it strives against human weakness.

In a sense, Jesus was telling Peter to pray for very much the same, although of course he knew that Peter was about to face (and give into) the temptation to disavow that he was a follower of Jesus. Had Peter given his spirit to God’s direction and control, the outcome would have been quite different. And isn’t that the same for us today?

God answers prayer (a few examples and related scripture verses):

Genesis 24:12-15 - ¹² Then he prayed, “O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. ¹³ See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ May it be that when I say to a girl, ‘Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too’—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.”

¹⁵ Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor.

Psalm 6:9 - The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer.

Psalm 17:6 - I call on you, O God, for you will answer me; give ear to me and hear my prayer.

Psalm 34:17 - The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

Isaiah 30:19 - O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you.

Isaiah 65:24 - Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

Jeremiah 33:3 - 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'

Matthew 21:22 - If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

John 14:13-14 - ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

John 16:23-24 - ²³ In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

Ephesians 3:12 - In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

What is needed in our prayers for us to be confident that God will hear and answer them?

1) We must remember that it is in the authority of Jesus' name that we can expect answers to our prayers. "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."—John 14:14

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."—John 15:7

2) We must believe and have faith. (Matthew 21:22)

3) Our prayers must be followed by anticipation and gratitude. "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."—Mark 11:24

4) We must pray with a pure heart. "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."—Psalm 66:18

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."—James 5:16

5) It must be the Lord's will for the prayer to be answered in the way you ask or expect. (Matthew 6:10, Luke 22:42)

Early in his letter to the Colossians, Paul has some excellent advice about praying to God to reveal his will: “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and *asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will* through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.”—Colossians 1:9-12

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