

St. Paul 2017 Faith Focus: The Small Catechism
Week 6: Holy Communion
Host guide

Warm Up

If there are new people, you can introduce yourself; then have each person in the group share:

- How important is weekly Holy Communion to you? Would you prefer we offered Holy Communion less frequently?

Teaching: Audio

These audio segments will be available online

Segment 1 of audio content (4 minutes): Holy Communion in Bible

- New Testament context: Betrayal and forgiveness
- Old Testament context: Passover and celebration

Some discussion questions:

- During Holy Communion do you think of the original setting when Jesus ate a meal with his original disciples? During Holy Communion do you think of the fact that it is a Passover meal?
- When you think about Holy Communion, do you see it more in terms of forgiveness or in terms of celebration? Or both?

Segment 2 of audio content (3 minutes): Holy Communion in Luther

- For Luther it is really Jesus
- Luther emphasizes "For you."

Some discussion questions:

- How do you sense Jesus presence when you take Holy Communion?
- Do you struggle to believe that Holy Communion is REALLY Jesus body and bloody?
- Do you believe that the bread and wine of Holy Communion after the worship service is still Holy Communion?
- Luther emphasizes that Holy Communion is our way of knowing that God is for us. Do you think that people (like Luther) sometimes doubt whether God is for us? In what way has Holy Communion offered you assurance of God's forgiveness and presence in your life?
- What impact does Holy Communion have on you? Your relationship with God?

Application: How to confess – from the Catechism

Who, then, receives such Sacrament worthily?

Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but the one is truly worthy and well prepared is the one who has faith in these words: Given, and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins.

But the one that does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words “For you” require altogether believing hearts.

Some discussion questions:

- What does Luther identify as criteria for receiving Holy Communion?
- Do you think worship should include Holy Communion if it does not include Confession?
- Have you ever thought that Holy Communion demands something from you? What do you think it demands of you? (Faith, confession, humility, perhaps also joy?)
- At what age do you think people are ready to receive Holy Communion? How should we train young people to receive Holy Communion?
- Some churches have started giving Holy Communion to non-Christians (and by this I don't mean someone who believes but has not yet been baptized; I mean Buddhists, atheists, etc). Do think this is appropriate?

Prayer:

Luther emphasizes praying through the parts of the catechism. It is probably easiest to pray through Commandments or petitions of the Lord's Prayer. I recommend this day you try praying through the words of institution:

On the night in which he was betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ, took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take, eat; this is My body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in My blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.

+ Meditate -- Ask God what is the meaning of these words for you this day?

+ Thank -- Thank God for the ways in which he forgives and saves you.

+ Confess – Confess to God the parts of your life that need to be drowned and repented from.

+ Pray for binding – Ask God that you would be a sacrament – a vessel of God's love – in this world.

Some groups are having success playing music while people pray or even pray in color. I have some possible audio clips on the website (YouTube videos).