



The Lord's Supper

— ◆ —
A Parents' Guide



“Do this in remembrance of me.”

— 1 Corinthians 11:24

◆ What is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper is a Covenant meal shared by Christians in a local church to remember Christ's death for us. The bread symbolises Jesus' body, broken for us; the wine symbolises his blood, shed for our sins. In sharing this meal we also affirm afresh our covenant privileges and responsibilities as Jesus' church, and we look forward with eager anticipation to his glorious return.

In the Lord's Supper Jesus is truly present amidst His gathered people by his Spirit. Therefore, the Lord's Supper is not a mere memorial or symbol; through it the Spirit truly imparts his blessing for building up our faith. This is because the Lord's Supper is a visible gospel word. It presents to our physical senses — what we can see, touch and taste — what God declares to us in His gospel: that through Jesus' death we have the assurance of God's forgiveness, welcome, and love.



◆ Should my child take the Lord's Supper?

Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ. Baptism is a one-time sacrament for the individual,¹ marking their entry into God's church. The Lord's Supper is a recurring sacrament for the community, assuring us of our continued fellowship with Christ.

Contrary to what many seem to believe, the biblical bar for baptism is low. In the NT people are baptised as soon as they profess faith in Christ. The bar for the Lord's Supper is higher; believers must continue in faith and obedience to Jesus. The Lord's Supper is off-limits to unbelievers and professing Christians who are unrepentant or undergoing church discipline.

It is therefore biblically and theologically consistent for recipients of the Lord's Supper to first be baptised. This applies to both adults and children.

In 1 Corinthians 11:27ff, Paul warns that taking the Lord's Supper unworthily leads to judgement. Some take this as a reason for children not to partake, as they will not fully discern the body of Christ.

It is true that a child's understanding will not be as complete as an adult's. However, a child's inability to comprehend through immaturity of age is very different to an adult sinfully & selfishly disregarding the corporate people of God, like in Corinth. Therefore, this passage does not automatically disqualify a child from the Lord's Supper.

Instead, parents should realise that children require our leading, guidance, and teaching as they receive the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a joyful event but also a solemn & serious sacrament, not to be taken flippantly.

Parents should focus on preparing their children to participate and actively teach them throughout. It would be inappropriate if our children participated in a manner that suggested it was funny, or a joke, to them. We want our children to be serious, clear about what they are doing, and able to follow our instructions obediently. This will enable them to receive the full blessings of sharing the bread & wine.

In view of all this, our guidance as a church leadership is that children should be at least seven years old before sharing in the Lord's Supper.²

✦ In Summary

We recommend that you allow your child to take the Lord's Supper if:

- ① *They have been baptised³*
- ② *They are at least seven years old*
- ③ *At a level of maturity whereby they are able to:*
 - (a) sit and be serious for the duration of the sacrament*
 - (b) understand your simple teaching about its meaning*
 - (c) follow instructions during the Lord's Supper obediently*

◆ How can I prepare my child?

- We recommend your child be baptised (as we recommend for adults).
- Teach them frequently about Christ's death and its significance.
- Teach them regularly to confess their sins to God, as the Lord's Supper is also a time of confession and seeking God's forgiveness.
- Help them observe the Lord's Supper on Sundays, and then invest time afterwards to explain what they have witnessed.
- Be confident they are at the age where they can focus and be serious for the duration of the Lord's Supper.
- In the week before, talk with them to prepare them to receive the Lord's Supper on Sunday.
- Help them to look forward to it with eagerness and excitement, as it truly benefits them as the Holy Spirit builds up their faith.
- During the Lord's Supper, help them by giving them clear instructions and guidance, coupled with an explanation of what they are doing.
- Rejoice with them afterward having taken the Lord's Supper together with God's people.
- Praise and encourage them for being serious and focused. Help them to see that the Holy Spirit is building them up in faith.
- Excite them about the next time we take the Lord's Supper.



Notes

¹ Moving forward, our guidance is that infant baptisms are conducted before a child turns two, so it is clear the parents are speaking on the child's behalf. In line with our guidance on the Lord's Supper, we will generally consider children for believer's baptism from seven years old onwards.

² This guidance is meant to assist your decision as parents. It is not meant to forbid slightly younger children who are nonetheless mature and able to express their personal faith in Christ. Nor is it meant to suggest that every child should start taking the Lord's Supper from 7 years old. They should still be baptised and have a clear faith in Christ.

³ This has nothing to do with our view of infant baptism. At The Crossing we have always left infant baptism to the conscience and understanding of individual families. But if a parent does not consider their child mature enough for the low bar (see above) of baptism it would be inconsistent to think they are mature enough for the high bar of the Lord's Supper. This is equally true for older children and adults who, for whatever reason, do not consider themselves ready for baptism. This is also the position, for example, of 9 Marks, a network of Baptist churches; it is not an exclusively infant-baptistic view.