

Communion

Recently, over a three-day Easter period, I partook of Communion firstly in a Pentecostal service and then secondly in an Anglican service. Both Communion services were deeply moving experiences for me, even though the settings were different. A Communion service must never become meaningless ritualism. The same thing however, repeated regularly, can lose its freshness and vitality and we must guard against that happening. I prefer using the word 'Communion' for this commemoration but some denominations like to use the word 'Eucharist' meaning thanksgiving.

Relationships

Wholesome relationships are the basis for Communion. We know that in the early church, Communion was not some ceremonial observance, but it was part of their everyday life.

'Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.' Acts 2:46,47.

Good relationships are still a basis for Communion - with God first and then sisters and brothers in the Lord. For this reason, it is important that self-examination occurs before Communion to see if our life is in order. Failing to do this may cause weakness, sickness and even death (1 Corinthians 11:27ff). Incidentally, Christians under church discipline should be excluded from taking Communion for a determined period until the repentance process is completed. Sometimes, this is hard to know so an interview may be necessary before there is full restoration to the fellowship of believers. This not only protects the disciplined person from infirmities, but it also prevents the church from becoming weak and powerless.

Reasons for Communion

The Communion meal was not an extension of the Passover feast. It was part of the New Covenant. Nowadays Communion is referred to as the 'Lord's Supper', 'The Eucharist', 'Holy Communion' and the 'Remembrance feast'. All these different titles endeavour to emphasise some aspect of the importance of the meal.

Symbolism

The bread and the juice were symbols of the body and blood of Jesus (just as a globe is for planet earth). These elements do not literally change into the body and blood of Jesus (transubstantiation), but when we eat and drink of these elements we remember the meaning behind it and what happened upon the cross.

Partakers of Grace

This understanding goes further than symbolism. It means that we appropriate *now* all that the body and blood of Jesus accomplished upon the Cross. For example, as we eat the bread and drink of the cup, by faith we may appropriate physical, spiritual and mental healing.

Ways to take Communion

Some of the following approaches may help.

- Have the pastor or the elders serve the people from the front.
- Serve the people where they are sitting.
- Arrange the people to serve one another in groups.
- Plan creative church services incorporating dance and drama.
- Have it at the end of a meal.
- Have it in a Home group.
- Have it during a wedding service.
- Serve the sick at home or in hospital.
- Have it at a camp.
- Use different people to serve.
- Have it in groups.

Points to note

1. Nowhere in Scripture are instructions given as to how often Communion is to be held, although we are encouraged to have it regularly.
2. Scripture never uses wine as an emblem for Communion. The cup however, refers to the 'fruit of the vine' (Matthew 26v29) and I have found that serving wine can create problems for some converted alcoholics, for obvious reasons.
3. Scripture never makes an age requirement, before people can receive Communion. The requirement was simply that they 'believe'.
4. Remember - *relationships* are of vital importance at Communion.
5. It is useful for children to get their parent's permission before they receive Communion.
6. There is no Scriptural basis for the opinion that only especially trained or recognised leadership can serve Communion. However, it is a privilege to serve it and the responsibility must be taken seriously.