

MY JOURNEY TO LIFE

THE LORD'S SUPPER

What is "The Lord's Supper"?

STEP 26 OF 28



My Journey to Life, Step 26

Foreword

My Journey to Life will give you the keys for finding peace of mind, harmony of body, and success in relationships. Every step will transform your outlook as you unpack each lesson. We pray they will help you to fall in love with the greatest Teacher this world has ever known. So together, let's walk the pathway step-by-step to a new life in Jesus.

Preface

Jesus instituted one of the most beautiful and sacred Christian rites that we still celebrate today, shortly before His death and resurrection. This meaningful experience serves as a reminder of not only His sacrifice, but also His promise to return and take us home with Him.

Step Twenty-Six—The Lord's Supper

What is "The Lord's Supper"? "The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Savior. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The communion service is open to all believing Christians." — *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 231

Bible Discovery: Matthew 26:17-30; John 6:48-63; 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:23-30; Revelation 3:20

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 650.4-651.1

1. What is the history and meaning of "The Lord's Supper"? On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus gathered His disciples together to institute a service that was to replace the Passover celebration and memorialize His great sacrifice, as well as proclaim faith in His Second Coming. Before their supper of unleavened bread and unfermented grape juice, Jesus washed each of His disciples' feet. Together, the ordinances of foot washing and the Lord's Supper make up the "communion service," an opportunity to enter communion with Jesus.

As the Passover commemorates Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 11:1; 12:1-29), so the Lord's Supper celebrates our deliverance from spiritual Egypt and the bondage of sin (see Exodus 12:3-8). This deliverance is accomplished through the atoning blood of Christ on the cross of Calvary (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

The nourishment we gain from food becomes part of our cells and sustains our lives. Similarly, we not only enter fellowship with Jesus at His Supper, but His qualities of love and holiness are appropriated into our choices. Because we are also disciples of Christ, the meaning we derive

from the Lord's Supper today is the same as it was for Jesus' twelve disciples at the original Lord's Supper in the upper room. It has been an essential part of Seventh-day Adventist worship from the inception of our movement.

Bible Discovery: Matthew 26:27, 28; Luke 22:20; John 6:54; 1 Corinthians 11:24-26; 23:25

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 25, 1880, par. 8

2. Why is the ordinance of foot washing an essential part of the Lord's Supper service? As the disciples assembled in the upper room to participate in the celebration of Passover, no one initiated the customary pre-dinner foot washing. Instead, they were arguing about who was the greatest among them (Luke 22:24).

To demonstrate to His disciples that it is loving service that constitutes real greatness, Jesus Himself took on the servant's role by pouring water into a basin and washing His friends' dirty feet. Startled and humiliated, the disciples saw their attitudes in a new light. Through the act of foot washing, Jesus showed that He would do any service, no matter how lowly, to save people. In making this preparation ceremony an ordinance, Jesus intended to lead believers into a state of tenderness and love that would move them to serve others.

But the foot washing was not just to clean literal dirt from feet! It represented a cleansing of our hearts. Like the disciples, when we accept Christ and are baptized, we are cleansed by His blood. But over time, selfishness, pride, jealousy, and evil can flourish within us, and we must come to Christ again and let His cleansing grace wash us clean. Thus, the foot washing is a "mini-baptism," a reminder of our total dependence upon the blood of Christ. Those who desire continuing fellowship with Christ and renewal through His grace will participate in the ordinance of foot washing.

Bible Discovery: Matthew 20:27, 28; John 13:10, 14-17; Galatians 5:13; Philippians 2:7; 1 Timothy 5:10

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 14, 1898, par. 7, 8

3. What do the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper represent? As Jesus broke the Passover bread and served it to His disciples, He said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; Do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24), referencing His death on our behalf. The Passover bread was unleavened, since yeast or fermentation was considered a symbol of sin (1 Corinthians 5:7, 8). It was therefore unfit to represent the Lamb, "without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19).

The wine represents Jesus, the True Vine (John 15:1) and His blood shed vicariously for us on Calvary's cross. Eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood is symbolic language for assimilating the Word of God, through which we gain spiritual energy and life. When Jesus promised not to

drink of the “fruit of the vine” (Matthew 26:29) again until He drinks it with the redeemed in His kingdom, He gave the assurance that He would come again.

“Abiding in Christ” (John 15:4) and eating the flesh and drinking the blood are figurative, symbols of a greater reality—Christ’s actual broken body and spilt blood and the eternal life offered through that sacrifice. The cup of wine represents the “new covenant” (Luke 22:20) stemming from God’s pledge to bless His people and write His law on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). Christ’s death and substitutionary atonement was the guarantee for the new covenant.

Bible Discovery: Matthew 4:4; 26:26-28; John 6:51-58, 63; 1 Corinthians 10:16

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 25, 1880; par. 8

4. Why is it important for believers in Christ to participate in the communion service called the Lord's Supper? Jesus commanded it, for He wished to be remembered in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:24, 26). The communion service links Christ’s cross with His Second Coming—salvation provided, and salvation consummated. Its symbolism reminds us that Christ is present through the Spirit until He comes again visibly. At the communion service, God brings willing hearts into the strongest bond of unity we experience until Jesus comes the second time.

Jesus’ vow, “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29) directs our faith to a wonderful future celebration of the communion meal with our Savior in His kingdom. John the Revelator calls this festival “the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9). What a celebration that will be! Jesus Himself will invite His faithful friends to sit down at the great banqueting table as He serves those for whom He has waited so long.

In preparation for this event, we watch, wait, and pray that Christ will keep us unwaveringly loyal to Him until the extraordinary day of His second advent (see 1 Corinthians 1:7-9 NLT).

Bible Discovery: Song of Solomon 2:4; Luke 12:35-37; 22:29; John 6:53, 54; Revelation 3:20

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 656.4

5. How does the “Lord's Supper” relate to the Passover service described in Exodus 12:3-8?

Though there are close connections with the celebration of Passover, what Christ instituted the night before His crucifixion is a new ordinance altogether. The Passover pointed forward to the death of the Lamb of God. It also commemorated the death angel “passing over” the homes of those who had put lamb’s blood on their doorposts. While the Lord’s Supper points back to the death of Christ, keeping it fresh in our minds, it also points forward to His Second Coming.

The menu for both the Passover and the Lord’s Supper is the same—unleavened bread and unfermented grape (or raisin) juice. At both services, a blessing was pronounced over the bread and juice. By drinking the cup and eating the bread, believers become partakers of the very life of Christ.

Bible Discovery: Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22-25; John 6:32-35, 50-54

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 201.1

6. Are there other names for “The Lord’s Supper” used by Protestants? Although the Lord’s Supper is the most common name for the communion service, other names include the table of the Lord, the breaking of bread, and the Eucharist (the Greek word eucharistia translates to “thanksgiving”), references the thanksgiving and blessing aspect of the service. The Lord’s Supper is not a contemporary Passover festival from the old covenant era but rather the Lord’s Supper replaces The Passover, while retaining many of its roots. The Passover met its fulfillment when Christ, the Lamb, gave up His life on Calvary.

The name “The Lord’s Supper” denotes the origin of the service. The ordinance is of central importance to all of Christendom, though it may be understood and practiced in different ways by diverse Christians. At the Lord’s Supper, Seventh-day Adventists emphasize fellowship with Christ and other believers, as well as praise for all of God’s good gifts, especially His free gift of salvation.

Bible Discovery: Matthew 26:26, 27; John 6:54-57; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 21; 11:20, 24

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 660.4-661.2

7. What does it mean to participate in the Lord’s Supper in an “unworthy manner” (1 Corinthians 11:27)? That is without due reverence for the Lord, whose suffering and sacrifice are being commemorated. “Unworthy manner” in this verse refers to the behavior as described in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22 and 11:29-30. The Communion Supper is for believing Christians, those who have made a full commitment to Christ and are willing to serve one another in love, without partiality or bias. Those who participate forgive those who have wronged them, even as God has forgiven them. Paul counsels the believer to “examine himself” before participating in the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:28). Thus, before the service, believers should prayerfully review their Christian experience, confessing their sins and restoring severed relationships.

The Seventh-day Adventist church practices “open communion,” meaning all who have accepted Christ through faith in His sacrifice can take part in the Lord’s Supper. Since only God can read hearts, everyone must evaluate for themselves whether they should participate in the Lord’s Supper, while remembering that “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7, 9).

Bible Discovery: Matthew 6:12; 1 Corinthians 11:25-30, 33, 34; 5:11; Galatians 5:13

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 274.3

8. What is the relationship between baptism and the Lord's Supper? Both baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances that remind us of Jesus' grace shown in His life, death, and resurrection. Because we rejoice in His forgiveness and accept His salvation, we are eager to publicly demonstrate our commitment to Him in baptism by immersion (see Step #15, Baptism) as well as participation in the Lord's Supper. As baptism precedes church membership, so the foot washing precedes partaking of the symbols of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary.

Baptism binds us to Christ in His death; the Lord's Supper is the proclamation of our Lord's death and resurrection until His second advent. The believer is baptized into Christ and the fellowship of His church; believers experience strong ties of Christian confession, fellowship, and unity at the communion service. This ordinance is a God-given opportunity to reflect on one's baptismal vows.

Bible Discovery: Matthew 26:28; Acts 2:41, 42; Romans 6:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 11:26

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 273.2

9. Was the wine of the Lord's Supper fermented? The word "wine" (Greek, *oinos*) could mean fermented or unfermented juice. However, Christ avoided using *oinos*. Instead, he used the phrase "fruit of the vine" (Matthew 26:29), which always refers to a nonalcoholic "sweet wine." This unfermented juice was sometimes made from raisins, or from concentrating grape juice to a syrup, adding water at the time of consumption. When stored in a cool place, this syrup would not ferment.

The pure, unfermented juice would be a fitting symbol of the blood of Christ, who calls Himself the "True Vine" (John 15:1). Since alcohol is a product of decay and death, it could not symbolize the redeeming, life-giving blood of Jesus.

Bible Discovery: Leviticus 10:9; Proverbs 20:1; Isaiah 5:11, 22; 28:7; Luke 1:15; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 1:18, 19

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 148.4, 149.4; 653.2

10. Does the Bible specify how often the Lord's Supper should be celebrated? The Bible doesn't specify how frequently the Lord's Supper should be celebrated. Early Seventh-day Adventists were concerned that if the service were celebrated too frequently, there might be a tendency toward formalism or the rite becoming commonplace, with insufficient spiritual preparation. Following the practice of many Protestants, Adventists eventually chose to have this ordinance four times a year.

Bible Discovery: 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8; 11:25-29; Colossians 3:23; Hebrews 10:25

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 21, 1898, Art. A, par. 3

11. How should we prepare spiritually to celebrate the Lord's Supper? Our model for spiritual preparation can be found in the practice of the Jewish families preparing to celebrate Passover. Since leaven represented sin, they were to remove all leavening agents from their homes. In the same way, believers must confess and repent of all sin—including pride, rivalry, jealousy, resentful feelings, and selfishness—before they can have a healthy spiritual attitude to commune with Christ at this deepest level.

Paul points out certain individuals in the Corinthian church who showed a lack of compassion for the poorer among them. By this failure to care for those who had least, they dishonored their Lord (1 Corinthians 11:20, 22). In contrast, when believers ask God for a new heart and follow through on the impressions the Spirit gives to achieve true communion with Christ and one another, the benefits include a sweet spirit of unity, joy, peace, and a sense of oneness.

When we consider the depth of Christ's love for us and the new covenant that guarantees fellowship with Him, the Lord's Supper becomes a celebration of joy, not of mourning or sadness.

Bible Discovery: Exodus 12:15, 19, 20; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17 (RSV); 11:27-29

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 539.5

12. In what ways is the "Lord's Supper" more than a mere memorial meal? The Lord's Supper is so much more than just a celebration of a historical event, such as a birthday dinner or anniversary meal. The ordinance is an actual service of worship in which we appropriate the benefits of Christ's atoning sacrifice by faith! If we plan carefully, and participate with whole-hearted thanksgiving and gratitude, the communion service can revitalize our entire life, providing us with spiritual energy and joy.

When we participate with sincerity in the Lord's Supper, we proclaim our certain faith in the Second Coming of Jesus. This faith empowers our witness to the Christian's glorious hope of eternal life with God.

Bible Discovery: Matthew 26:27; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Titus 2:12, 13

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 656.4; 661.3

Reflection...

The Lord's Supper commemorates and personalizes Christ's sacrifice at Calvary, energizing His believers to proclaim the message of Jesus' Second Coming with power!

Next Step...

With so much suffering in our world today, we long for an end to sin and sadness. In our next lesson, we'll discover God's plan to rescue His children and completely bring an end to evil and its mastermind.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do Seventh-day Adventists provide an opportunity for foot washing before the Lord's Supper?
2. What is the significance of serving unfermented grape juice?
3. How can we prepare spiritually for God's blessing at the Lord's Supper?

Further Reading

Official Adventist Website: <https://www.adventist.org/the-lords-supper>

Contact Information

Ellen G. White Estate: mail@whiteestate.org

Request a personal Bible study: <https://www.bibleschools.com/en/personal-studies>

Visit your local Seventh-day Adventist Church: <https://www.adventistlocator.org>

Online prayer room: <https://www.wepray.mobi>