

Pastor Jack Roeda uses this memorable format to challenge children as they come to the Lord's Table:

- * look around—at the people of God who promise to love each other and serve the world,
- * look back—over the long history of God's faithfulness, especially in the life of Jesus,
- * look forward—to the feast we will share in the kingdom of heaven,
- * look "up"—to think about how the ascended Jesus in heaven prays for us and how we trust in him
- * look within—to see both our own sin and need for a Saviour, and to remember that we are loved by God and are members of God's family

For older kids, the Baptist Union of Great Britain names these dimensions of meaning in communion:

- ♥ *It is a remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ for sin.*
- ♥ *It is an encounter with the Risen Lord.*
- ♥ *It is a feeding on Him in faith.*
- ♥ *It is a communion with one another in His Body, the Church.*
- ♥ *It is a looking forward to the Day when He will come again.*

A useful paraphrase:

The night before he died Jesus and his friends were having a special Passover meal together. Jesus picked up some bread and broke it. He gave it to his friends and said "My body is like this bread. It will break." Then Jesus took the cup of wine and said "this wine is like my blood. It will pour out. This is how God is going to rescue the whole world. My life will break and God's broken world will mend. My heart will tear apart and your hearts will heal. So whenever you eat and drink, remember me," said Jesus. Jesus knew it was nearly time for him to leave the world. "I won't be with you for much longer," he said, "but after I have gone God will send you a helper, so do not be afraid." (Jesus Storybook Bible pg 286)



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Teaching Children about Communion



Getting Started:

Set up the room in a welcoming way with chairs in a circle around coffee tables. You could offer drinks and a snack on a side table. A party atmosphere could be suggested with some balloons or bunting. Write "Welcome" on the white board. *Cushions or bean bags would be useful. You could have a breadmaker going, to create an aroma.*

Optional - show the Ratatouille clip about food memories

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5m7SGjJo7c4>

Together: Talk about special meals and memories. See if everyone can name one, and ask why that memory is special. You could give out a starter page with room for a drawing.

Lesson compiled by Vivian Coleman, Rev Viv Services, Auckland NZ.
www.godshapedlife.com

Starter continued:

Find out what ideas the children have about special meals. Write them up on the whiteboard. Have these possibilities in mind and suggest them if no one says them:

- Friendship
- Remembering
- Celebrating
- Commitment
- New beginnings
- Saying Thanks



Into the Bible

Leader: Jesus attended a lot of special meals, and his friends had good memories of their time with him. Our story is about a special meal that happens nowadays, when Christians share bread and wine (or grape juice) and remember Jesus. We do this by recalling the last meal that Jesus had with his friends before he died, when he took some bread and some wine and shared it with them. He asked his friends to remember him by sharing bread and drinking wine together. “Communion” is the word we use to describe followers of Jesus doing this together today (*write word up*). So we are going to start with the Bible story.

Together: Check the Scripture Union or other timeline on the wall; find “Jesus teaches and heals.”

Leader: The special meal we are thinking about happened just before Jesus died on the cross.

Does anyone have an idea where in the actual Bible we would find this story? - its in more than one place.

Together: Give out Bibles, (eg CEV or NLT) or share Big Bible Storybook for younger children. Discuss where the story might be and use pictures or indexes to narrow it down.

Extra Activities:

- If time, the children could make poster invitations to put around the church walls at the time of your next communion.
- Scripture Union UK’s resources section has some worksheets (eg maze, word find) under the lessons called **Jesus’ Last Meal**. You will need a login to download but its free.

<https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/light-free-resources>

- This action verse for younger children is based on John 3: 16

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTc8Lv6SdJg>

- If you were using this lesson with more time available, eg at a family camp, extension options include introducing and perhaps celebrating Seder/Passover, making your own bread or grape juice, or parents/ seniors sharing memories of communion which might include some interesting traditions.



Leader 2: (*extempore prayer of thankful remembrance*) OR

It is our delight God our Father to give you thanks and praise for all you have done for the world. Our hearts are full of gratitude to you because you loved the world so much that you gave your only Son Jesus, so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life.

We thank you that Jesus was born among us, that he lived our human life on earth and that like us he experienced both joys and sorrows. In time he even suffered and died for us, but we thank you most of all that he rose again and is present with us now through the Holy Spirit.

Remembering these things we celebrate this special meal. Holy Spirit come, and bless our thoughts and actions together, so that as we eat the bread and drink the wine we may share with you and each other the joy of Jesus Christ, Amen.



Leader 1: We break bread together

Together: to remind us of Jesus

Leader 2: We share a cup of wine

Together: to remind us of Jesus.

Leader 1: So we follow the example and command of our Lord Jesus Christ, who on the night he was betrayed took bread, and after giving thanks to God, broke it and said, “my body is like this bread. It will break. My life I give for you”. (*Break bread*)

In the same way we remember how he took the cup saying “This cup of wine is like my blood. It will pour out. My love I give to you. (*Lift cup*)

The gifts of God are for the people of God

The bread and wine are shared. Follow your church’s own practice as to whether to “hold the cup and drink together”.

Leader OR All: May the peace of Christ be with you and the hope of Christ be in you, Amen.

Leader: Before we read this out loud, let me show you this picture from a shared meal in Jesus’ day. Notice that they didn’t have tables and chairs like we do. The table is long and low, and the guests are at ground level, sitting on cushions. They point their legs out at an angle and lean on one elbow, leaving the other hand free to eat. So you will notice everyone had to lean on the same arm, so it wasn’t set up for lefties; maybe like some older folk they were taught to use their non-preferred hand so as to fit in with everyone else.



Would you like to try this with the coffee tables we have here? It is gets too uncomfortable you can go back to your chair. Then later we’ll all sit here. (*Allow kids to sit and settle*)

Leader: Does anyone already know what was on the table? Draw out short answers.

The reason why this meal is special is not just about the table and the food, but about what Jesus said and did. Lets read and notice those things. Think about how the guests would be feeling; you probably know this story but they didn’t. They were expecting a Passover ceremony. Does anyone know what that involves? (*discuss*) So when Jesus said and did something new, they were surprised, and perhaps a bit confused.

Together: Leader read or kids take turns reading, from Matthew 26: 17 onwards.

Pause at the end of verse 24, 26, 29, 32.

Matthew 26: 19 - 32 CEV

¹⁷ On the first day of the Festival of Thin Bread, Jesus' disciples came to him and asked, "Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal?"

¹⁸ Jesus told them to go to a certain man in the city and tell him, "Our teacher says, 'My time has come! I want to eat the Passover meal with my disciples in your home.'" ¹⁹ They did as Jesus told them and prepared the meal.

²⁰⁻²¹ When Jesus was eating with his twelve disciples that evening, he said, "One of you will surely hand me over to my enemies."

²² The disciples were very sad, and each one said to Jesus, "Lord, you can't mean me!" ²³ He answered, "One of you men who has eaten with me from this dish will betray me." ²⁴ The Son of Man will die, as the Scriptures say. But it's going to be terrible for the one who betrays me! That man would be better off if he had never been born." **PAUSE**

²⁵ Judas said, "Teacher, you surely don't mean me!"

"That's what you say!" Jesus replied. But later, Judas did betray him.

²⁶ During the meal Jesus took some bread in his hands. He blessed the bread and broke it. Then he gave it to his disciples and said, "Take this and eat it. This is my body." **PAUSE**

²⁷ Jesus picked up a cup of wine and gave thanks to God. He then gave it to his disciples and said, "Take this and drink it." ²⁸ This is my blood, and with it God makes his agreement with you. It will be poured out, so that many people will have their sins forgiven. ²⁹

PAUSE

From now on I am not going to drink any wine, until I drink new wine with you in my Father's kingdom." ³⁰ Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

³¹ Jesus said to his disciples, "During this very night, all of you will reject me, as the Scriptures say, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'" (from Zec 13:7)

³² But **after I am raised to life**, I will go to Galilee ahead of you."

PAUSE

Living the Life:

This section includes below a plan for actually celebrating communion. Decide beforehand if and how you will do this. Options include (1) returning to main church and sharing communion with parents overseeing kids' participation, (2) sharing bread and grapes with simple prayers around the low table in class, or (3) following the liturgy below. There are also some activities offered, and these could be done before the sharing of communion. However placing the sharing at this point will ensure you do not run out of time for this important enactment of the children's learning. You can use the checklist.



Leader: This is the table of the Lord. He invites all who love him, and would like to follow him, to join in his meal. It is both a remembrance of Jesus' death and a celebration of his rising again.

Let us hear the story of how this special meal began.

Reader 1: Tell me again how this meal began?

Reader 2: On the night that he was betrayed, Jesus had supper with his disciples. While they were eating he took some bread, said a blessing, broke it and gave it to them saying:

Reader 3: Take this and eat it. This is my Body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

Reader 4: Later on he took a cup of wine and said:

Reader 5: This cup is the new relationship made possible by the shedding of blood. Go on doing this whenever you drink it, to remember me.

Reader 1: So Jesus told us to use bread and wine to remind us of his death – and his resurrection?

Leader: Yes. As we follow Jesus' example in words and actions, we announce that God is with us, and among us, and we give him thanks.

resurrection. They take a piece of the bread and say *This the body of Christ broken for you*, and then lift the cup and say *This cup reminds you of Gods promises shown by Christ's blood*. Then they often say the verse *These are the gifts of God for the people of God*.

Share Bread and Wine/Juice

The bread and wine are ordinary food that has been blessed and given to us as spiritual food. We believe that when we eat and drink it God's Spirit draws us closer to God. One service puts it this way:

In the communion service we remember that Jesus died on the cross so we can be forgiven the wrong things we do. By taking communion we show our acceptance of the forgiveness he offers.

The bread and wine may be passed around in trays, or the people may come to the big table and receive the bread and wine. Both ways have deep meaning. As we wait our turn, we quietly thank God for his love and ask him to help us love others too

Pray for Others

This ancient tradition seems a natural response to receiving God's grace in communion, but in some churches it is replaced by singing.

The Peace/Blessing

Some churches have a time to greet the people sitting near you, perhaps using the words *"the Peace of Christ be with you"* which has been the custom for centuries. It may come earlier in the service.

Together:

Show the children the communion vessels you have brought, eg a silver chalice, a Passover cup, a pottery wine goblet or tiny plastic/glass cups in trays, as well as bread plates, baskets or gold/silver platters. Elicit kids' responses and experiences.



(If the children ask questions during the Pause, deal with them simply. The paraphrase in the Children's Storybook Bible is child-friendly and theologically orthodox - see back page).

Together: read again and make a list of action words (*older children do in pairs, younger as a group*). Try and ensure they come up with all of these.

Took Prayed Broke Gave Handed Said Drank Sang Departed

Make Magnet Words. These could be pre-prepared, or if time, done by individual children in large print with Sharpie on 25cm magnet strips. Attach to whiteboard and put in order. *(If you made them in advance, add in some rogue answers eg baked, cut)*

Leader: When Jesus shared this special meal with his friends, he knew he was going to die the next day. He told them to keep on sharing bread and wine after he had gone, to help them remember him. The first church leaders like Paul made sure that every week when Christians met they re-enacted this meal. They did this whether they were Jews or Greeks, men or women, slaves or masters, and in whatever language they spoke. You can read about it in 1 Corinthians 11.

The tradition Paul passed on is still being followed today. Whether we are in Baptists in Auckland or Anglicans in England or secret Christians in China or people just starting to follow Jesus, we re-enact this meal regularly. Who has been to Holy Communion somewhere else in the world? (Hawaii, Sudan, Nepal, South Africa, Fiji)

In the communion service we "remember by repeating".

Together: Look at the Communion Checklist and compare it with the magnet words.

COMMUNION CHECKLIST



As we go through communion, you can tick each part you recognise.

This pattern has been used around the world since the second century but today every church will be slightly different.

Invitation

Story (Institution)

Saying Sorry (Confession)

Thanks to God

Call on Holy Spirit

Break Bread/Lift Cup

Share Bread and Wine/Juice

Pray for Others

The Peace/Blessing

Leader: Let's look at these sections one by one. Not every church has every section, but most of us have at least seven out of the ten.

Invitation

The pastor or church leader explains that all are welcome at the Lord's Table, not because of what we have done but because of how much God loves us.

Story (Institution)

The story is found in three of the gospels and in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Services often use one of these, or they may tell the story in their own words.

Saying Sorry (Confession)

In some churches there is a time to say sorry to God for things we have done wrong, like being selfish or unkind. We are reminded that nothing is too bad for God to forgive.

Thanks to God (Eucharistic Prayer)

This is like "Saying Grace" - a time to remember all the things we are thankful for and to praise God for them. In some churches this always begins the same way:

(L) The Lord be with you (R) And also with you.....

Call on Holy Spirit

We ask God to send his Holy Spirit so that this experience will truly give us his love and power. Often these words are used:

Lord Jesus Christ as we do in this place what you did in an upstairs room, send your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine, so that they may become your risen life in us and through us, healing, forgiving and making us new, and sending us out as your body in the world.

Break Bread/Lift Cup

The bread and wine are symbols of Jesus body and blood. A symbol is something that represents something else. The leader repeats Jesus' words to remind us of the cross - and the