

Timely topics; timeless truths

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Close communion



Introduction

Put a "C" if the statement describes close communion.¹

Put an "O" if the statement describes open communion.²

1. ____ Has been practiced for the vast majority of the Christian church's history.
2. ____ Is practiced by the majority of Christian churches today.
3. ____ Is practiced by churches that are serious about reaching the lost.
4. ____ Hinders a church's ability to reach the lost.

What are we trying to accomplish?

1 Corinthians 11:28,29

Instead, let a person examine himself and after doing so, let him eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For if anyone eats and drinks in an unworthy way because he does not recognize the Lord's body, he eats and drinks judgment on himself.

1 Corinthians 10:16,17

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

1. According to these passages, what are the two scriptural reasons we practice close communion?
 - a.
 - b.
2. Is one a greater priority over the other?

¹ Close communion is restricting reception of Holy Communion to those who belong to a specific congregation or denomination.

² Open communion is admitting to Holy Communion any Christian who desires it.

Ephesians 4:11-16

He himself gave the apostles, as well as the prophets, as well as the evangelists, as well as the pastors and teachers, ¹² for the purpose of training the saints for the work of serving, in order to build up the body of Christ. ¹³ This is to continue until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, resulting in a mature man with a stature reaching to the measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ The goal is that we would no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, when people use tricks and invent clever ways to lead us astray. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we would in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, being joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows in accordance with Christ's activity when he measured out each individual part. He causes the growth of the body so that it builds itself up in love.

3. What is God's ultimate desire for guests who would join us in worship?
4. What tool does God give us to accomplish this?
5. In what manner does he call us to use it?

How do we best accomplish it?

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, after the meal, he also took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1. What purpose for receiving Holy Communion does Paul mention in his account of Jesus' institution of it? (Note: The Greek preposition translated "in" would better be translated "for." The reason for celebrating Holy Communion is not *because* we remember Jesus, but *so that* we would remember (in faith) Jesus more and more.)

2. In verse 26, Paul offers an explanation (“For . . .”) of that prepositional phrase. Explain what Paul says we do whenever we celebrate Holy Communion.

3. Name some practical benefits to our efforts to reach the lost that come from celebrating Communion regularly and publicly.

4. Evaluate the implications of the following practices, sometimes adopted in order to avoid upsetting guests:
 - a. Deciding to celebrate Communion less frequently.

 - b. Deciding to remove the celebration of Communion from the main weekly service(s).

5. Evaluate our Communion announcements in church. What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses?

“We invited communicant members of Emmanuel Lutheran Church and any guests who have spoken with a pastor prior to the service about receiving Communion to come forward at the direction of the ushers.”

6. Wikipedia offers the following definition of open Communion: “Churches which practice open Communion allow all Christians to partake in the Lord's Supper, with membership in a particular Christian community not required to receive bread and wine, in contrast to pre-Reformation churches, which hold that what is received in their celebrations ceases to be bread and wine.” What two things does even Wikipedia recognize go hand in hand when it comes to Holy Communion?