

Week FIVE: Communion
Matthew 26:17-30

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Take a quick inventory of your current life situation. What is the most important meal you share annually? Is it Thanksgiving, an annual reunion-potluck with extended family, Christmas-eve at grandma's house, Mother's Day? What makes that meal so special?
2. In a bedside drawer, I have a pocket knife my father always carried (I own much nicer ones). I also have his UAW shop steward jacket from International Harvester (which doesn't even fit me). Why do we keep mementos of those we loved who died years ago?
3. What is the ultimate point of remembering people, events and experiences?
4. Jesus told us to celebrate Holy Communion in remembrance of Him. What do you suppose Jesus meant by that?
5. Read Matthew 26:17-30. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He was gathered with His disciples for a specific reason. What was it? Why did they do it?
6. Jesus never opposed tradition; He only opposed traditions that were no longer meaningful in the lives of people. Read Matthew 15:8-9. What was Jesus so upset about?
7. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, pray a prayer of thanksgiving for those memories that still serve a good purpose in your life.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. How much do you know about the Jewish celebration of the Passover? Read Exodus 12. What did that special meal commemorate?
9. Certain foods were required for the celebration of the Passover: unleavened bread, wine, a boiled egg, salt water, bitter greens & herbs and lamb. What is the significance of each item in this annual celebration?
10. What comparisons can you make between the Passover and the celebration of the Lord's Supper?
11. A traditional Jewish celebration of the Passover involves a young child who asks specific questions to an older family member during the course of the meal. Do you know any of those questions? What is the value of that tradition?

12. In your church's celebration of the Lord's Supper, what is done to prepare the people for participation? Why?
13. Does your church require instruction of participants before receiving the Lord's Supper? Why would that be a good idea based on the celebration of the Passover?
14. Conclude your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray a prayer of gratitude for the wisdom of God who provided and then commanded the regular celebration of this special remembrance.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Read Matthew 26:17-30. What verse seemed most meaningful to you? Why?
16. Look again at verse 18. Do you think that man felt that it was an imposition for Jesus to request a place to celebrate the Passover? Explain the concept of blessing people by asking them to provide assistance for an important cause. Why are we often so hesitant to ask people to make a sacrifice for an important cause?
17. Read verses 20-25 regarding Jesus' predication of betrayal. Why do you think Jesus spoke of it in advance? How did it benefit the other disciples? What purpose did it serve in the mind of Judas?
18. Do you think Judas was just an opportunist who never believed Jesus' enemies could do Him any harm, or do you think he expected Jesus' ultimate trial and crucifixion? Guards and mobs had previously tried to harm Jesus, to no avail. How might that have affected Judas' thinking?
19. Read Matthew 27:1-10. What does this suggest about Judas' act of betrayal?
20. Was Jesus arrested against His will? If He knew in advance how this night would end, why did He not resist His captors?
21. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for peace of heart for all the times you have betrayed your faith in Jesus. Pray for those who are overcome with guilt and shame for something they have done which still haunts them to this day.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. Judas betrayed Jesus the night he was arrested. Peter also denied Jesus, not once, but three times. What's the difference between what became of Judas and what became of Peter?
23. Read John 21:15-22. Why is this story an important follow-up to the story of Peter's betrayal the night of Jesus' arrest?

24. Read the closing verses of our assigned lesson, Matthew 26:26-30.

25. What did Jesus call the unleavened bread? What did He call the cup of wine?

26. Read 1 Corinthians 10:16. If it were not for this verse, we might assume Jesus meant the bread and wine only represent His body and His blood. In Matthew 26:28, what reason does Jesus give for sharing in the Lord's Supper. Martin Luther once said, "And where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation." What are the benefits of sharing in the Lord's supper?

27. Read John 6:47-69. Did Jesus try to make it easier for people to accept his body and blood as true food by saying it was only symbolic? What final reason does Peter provide for taking Jesus at His word (without a need to understand or even agree)? See John 6:68,69. Is that enough for you?

28. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, pray for faith to trust the teachings of Scripture without a need to always understand or make the truth of God reasonable, as humans define reason.

Spend FIFTEEN: Day Five

29. Lutherans like to describe the "real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper," through the phrase, "in, with and under." In other words, they don't define how or when the real presence occurs, but just accept that it is present and through participation in the sacrament it is received by the participant. In your opinion, what makes the wine and bread into the sacrament and not simple bread and wine? Is it the prayer of the pastor? How close he stands to the elements? Is it the words of institution he recites from the Bible? Is it the faith of the participant?

30. Do the elements of bread and wine transform forever into the body and blood or do they remain present? Read 1 Corinthians 11:26-27 for insight. What does Paul say we eat?

31. On the other hand, what does Paul say we abuse (in those same two verses) if we participate without faith? So, is the Lord's Supper only bread and wine as symbolic of the Lord's body and blood? Is it only body and blood transformed? Or is it all four elements miraculously given and miraculously received?

32. Read that explanation of Paul's in 1 Corinthians 11:23-31. What is required to receive the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner?

33. Why do most churches require a period of instruction before participating in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?

34. Why do you think the Lord in His wisdom provided a physical act of worship like the Lord's Supper for His followers to use throughout their lives? Aren't the Bible and prayer enough?

35. Conclude your FITEEN in prayer. Pray for greater faith and a deeper appreciation of all the ways God has provided for us to renew and grow our faith until we meet Him again in heaven.