





## **Theme: What Christians Believe and Why Communion**

*This study guide is designed to allow you to dig deeper into the themes of the sermon. Study these passages with a friend, a Bible study group or on your own. This week we will give you the opportunity to study the sacraments on your own – both the Jewish pre-cursors to Holy Communion and Baptism, as well as the New Testament descriptions of these two sacraments.*

### **Weekly Memory Verse:**


***<sup>10</sup> The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.*** – John 10:10


**Monday, March 4** – Read **Luke 22:7-20**. Remember that God prescribed certain acts that the Israelites were to do which would serve as signs of his saving work and covenant with them. These acts served as visible reminders of both God's saving work and the Israelites promises to follow God. Two of these have a direct relationship to our sacraments: The Passover Seder and Circumcision.

-  Today, we focus on the Passover Meal. Remember that the Last Supper where Jesus instituted Holy Communion was his celebration of the Passover Seder with his disciples. Note in our text today the connection to Passover. What do you think the disciples were feeling when they took this meal that night?
-  Let's look at the origins of Passover. Read **Exodus 12**. The continued celebration of this meal every year is a way for the Jewish people to relive the events of the first Passover, when God delivered his people Israel from slavery in Egypt and saved their children through the blood of a lamb. What are the parallels between this meal and the Lord's Supper? This is the defining story for Jewish people, as it represents freedom from slavery and a physical reminder that they belong to God. Does Communion remind you that you are free from things that hold you in bondage? Why or why not?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help me to feel what you have done for me as I eat my meals today, reminding me I belong to you, and I am free. Amen.


**Tuesday, March 5** – Read **1 Corinthians 11:17-33**. The earliest account of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, written around 55 A.D. The gospels were written beginning in the 60's, about 25 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.


 Note here that Paul is chastising the Corinthians because their celebration of the Lord's Supper had degraded into a party at which some actually got drunk! What were the problems with the Corinthians celebration of Communion?

 This helps us understand that for at least two decades Holy Communion was an actual meal, like the Passover Seder, in which believers ate together. Jesus' focus in Communion was on "remembrance" saying, "Do this and remember me." The Greek word has the connotation of making Christ and his death on the cross present. Notice that Paul commands them to "recognize the body of the Lord" in this act – this verse, coupled with John 6:53-59, causes some Christian groups, most notably Roman Catholics, to believe that the bread and wine become transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus during this meal. Others believe that in both scriptures we are to understand that the bread and wine stand for and represent the body and blood but not that they actually become the body and blood. What do you think?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help me to remember you as I eat every meal, especially when I receive the bread and the cup in worship. Amen.

**Wednesday, March 6** – Read **Genesis 17**. We turn now to the sacrament of baptism, which we will look at in more detail in next week's sermon. The rest of the study guide will prepare you for that sermon.


 To this day circumcision is the sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people. It is an outward and visible sign of God's promises to Israel and an Israelites pledge to God. Notice the covenant and the instructions God gives regarding circumcision. As it relates to infant baptism note that God commanded the Israelites to circumcise their children on the 8<sup>th</sup> day after they were born – the children were a part of the covenant and God's promises even before they could respond for themselves. Then, when they were thirteen, they underwent the "bar mitzvah" or "bat mitzvah" in which they confirmed their covenant with God. Have you ever been to a bar or bat mitzvah? What rites of passage have you experienced in your life?


 In Christianity these same two ideas are expressed in baptism (circumcision) and confirmation (bar mitzvah) which we will celebrate this coming weekend at Summit with our students. In the New Testament, Paul offers these words linking baptism and circumcision: Read *Colossians 2:9-12*. For Christians baptism is the primary and initial sign of God's covenant

with us through Jesus Christ, and our covenant with God. What is the significance of the fact that you have been baptized? If you or your children have not been baptized and you are interested in becoming a part of God's family through this sacrament, please contact visit our page on baptism [www.summitdurango.org/baptism](http://www.summitdurango.org/baptism) or reach out to Pastor Jeff, [jeff@summitdurango.org](mailto:jeff@summitdurango.org).

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, help me to remember that I am part of your family. Thank you for that gift and that you made me to love me. Amen.


**Thursday, March 7** – Read **Mark 1:1-11**. Today we will examine Jesus' own baptism and the early accounts of baptism in the Book of Acts.


 The story of Jesus in Mark's gospel begins with his baptism, which marked the start of Jesus' public ministry. What two things happened to Jesus as he came out of the water in the reading from Mark? We still claim these are a part of baptism for all who follow Jesus – that in baptism God claims us as his children (in a way different from Jesus, and yet still his children) and we believe the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us at baptism.

 **Read Acts 2:36-39.** Notice that repentance is tied to and precedes baptism for adult converts – one must turn away from sin and brokenness, asking for God's grace, and accept Christ – and then baptism follows. Note that here too the Holy Spirit is associated with baptism. Read **Acts 16:11-15 and 16-34**. In both cases upon the profession of faith of a parent, the entire household was baptized, and the word for household used in the Greek meant there were young children or infants baptized. We do not know how old the children were in these homes, but whatever their ages, these stories illustrate that the faith of a parent plays a key role in baptizing children (see verse 31). What adults have played a role in your faith?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for those who poured into me. Help to do the same for future generations so they also will know your love. Amen.

**Friday, March 8** – Read **Romans 6:3-11, I Corinthians 12:12-13, Galatians 3:26-29, and Colossians 2:9-14**. Today we will examine the various writings of the apostles regarding baptism.

 Take notes on what each says and then ask, "What does this mean for me as I consider the meaning of my own baptism as a sign of my covenant with God and God's covenant with me?"

 What have you learned about the sacraments this week? How do you see the sacraments as "signs of the covenant" in your life?

**Prayer:** O God, may I always remember you have made a covenant with me, longing for me to carry that with me in my heart forever. May that knowledge change me and shape me so I become more like you, being a part of your family first. Amen

**Saturday, May 13** - Read Luke 22:19-32. As they listened to Jesus words about giving his body, and a new covenant in his blood, the disciples were still human. So "a dispute also arose among them as to which of them was ... greatest." Jesus repeated that "great" has a different meaning in his kingdom. Then he warned Peter that he would fall, but gave him hope and a crucial role in the community: "When you have returned, strengthen your brothers and sisters." (Common English Bible)

 Jesus didn't just give his followers a "rule sheet" and say, "Use these policies for a new sacrament I want you to keep." For what reasons do you believe he instead gathered them together for the first Lord's Supper? In what ways can our Communion times draw us together and bolster our belonging with one another as members of Christ's body? When has Jesus touched your heart at communion, making forgiveness real to you or convicting you of a way God can empower you to heal a broken relationship?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, the next time a gather with others for a meal, help to look at each person and give thanks. May I remember you at that meal, knowing you gave it all so I might remember your grace and forgiveness. Amen.*