

## Children & The Lord's Supper

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Some Things Have No Bearing On A Person's Readiness To Receive The Lord's Supper.

1. **Gender**... before God, one gender is just as important as the other.
2. **Intelligence**... smart people aren't preferred by God.
3. **Social Standing**... you don't have to have own or wear designer clothes to be welcomed at the Lord's Table.
4. **Age**... getting older doesn't make a person worthy nor unworthy.
5. **Church Membership**... hypocrites are sometimes found even in Christian Churches. Membership isn't the issue.
6. **Confirmation**... Just because a person understood and affirmed the truth of God's teaching at age thirteen doesn't mean they still understand and believe those truths today.
7. **Religious Behavior**... (sometimes called piety) Luther correctly said, "Fasting and other bodily preparations are a wonderful outward training... but they don't automatically make you worthy and well prepared to receive the sacrament."

What Prepares A Christian To Receive The Lord's Supper As God Intends?

1. God's grace and favor. His mercy, forgiveness and loving-kindness.
2. A willingness to acknowledge my sinful condition and a humble reliance on the grace and mercy of God. 1 John 1:8,9
3. A personal faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as a sufficient sacrifice for my sins. Isaiah 53:4-6, Philippians 3:7-9
4. A personal belief that, together with the forms of bread and wine, those who commune miraculously and unexplainably receive the body and blood of Jesus as clearly taught in the Bible. 1 Corinthians 10:16, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-27.
5. Christians who have repented of their sins, and those with weak faith are especially encouraged to receive the Lord's Supper. It is expressly given for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith. Isaiah 42:3, John 6:37, Luke 5:31,32.
6. Christians who have been instructed in the Scriptures that teach about the Lord's Supper. This sacrament is different from baptism in two ways. 1.) Jesus said "Do this in remembrance of Me." Which requires that we would know who Jesus is and what He has done for us by His death and resurrection. 2.) Those who commune must first examine their beliefs and heart before receiving the Lord's Supper. Taken lightly, in disbelief, or without proper understanding, the Bible says such participation in the Sacrament is detrimental to saving faith. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.
7. Finally, it should be said that the Lord's Supper is God's gift to Christians, and not something Christians do to earn forgiveness from God.

## How Old Should A Christian Be To Receive The Lord's Supper?

1. It is not a question of age, but rather the Biblical standards listed above. A communicant must be old enough to be instructed in the Biblical teaching. Old enough to examine the claims of Christ, and the Bible's teaching on this matter so that it is a blessing and not a detriment to their faith.
2. Historically, even in Jesus' life, a child was welcomed to full participation in the covenant activities of the Church at age twelve. Luke 2:41,42.
3. Our custom is a preparation for first communion at age twelve or thirteen. We recognize that other Christian Churches provide instruction and permit reception of the Lord's Supper at an earlier age. We do not consider those churches in violation of any Biblical command. They have freedom to establish procedures that they believe best honor the Biblical directives.
4. The practice at St. John's is for a child to receive two years of instruction during the seventh and eighth grade years of school. First Communion is offered on Ash Wednesday of a student's eighth grade year. It is not right or wrong. It is just our custom and practice based on ancient tradition and a belief that, developmentally, children of this age are able to appropriate abstract thoughts required by this teaching, i.e. "That a communicant literally eats bread and wine but miraculously (with it) receives the body and blood of Jesus."
5. We realize that children who have been instructed in other congregations may wish to continue their past communion practice at St. John's. We are not inclined to legalistically deny the sacrament to these children. At the same time would like worshippers at St. John's to honor our local practice just as we honor and accept the practice of other congregations.
6. If a family feels strongly that their instructed child should not discontinue a former practice of receiving the Lord's Supper, we ask those families to make an appointment with one of our pastors to discuss this matter. We want to preserve the unity of our congregation while not causing offense either to new members or old members over this issue. Our pastors would want to examine the beliefs of such children and to discuss what would be best in each individual situation.

## What Conditions Would Prohibit Christians From Receiving The Lord's Supper?

1. Disbelief. John 10:25-27, Hebrews 11:6
2. A heart unwilling to forgive another person. Matthew 6:14,15
3. Hatred. 1 John 4:19-21
4. A refusal to recognize the Body and Blood of Jesus together with the bread and wine in the sacrament. 1 Corinthians 11:28,29
5. A persistent disruption of the true faith by a refusal to accept the chief doctrines of the Bible and the Christian Church. Romans 16:17,18.

The Lord's Supper is a wonderful gift of God. In Baptism He miraculously claims us as His children, washing away our sins and granting us the gift of His Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38) In the Sacrament of The Altar, the Lord maintains His intimacy with us and in a tangible way reminds us of His great love. The sacrament is a gift He intends for Christians to receive often in remembrance

of Him and in proclamation of the salvation that comes by grace through faith in Jesus alone.

God bless your faithful adherence to all that He has done to help you in your walk towards heaven.