
Take time and read the following article to help prepare your hearts & minds for communion on February 8, 2026:

When Not to Take Communion

by Anthony Carter

When I was growing up, I did not like going to church. For a young boy in a rural town, church was boring, long, and filled with old, stodgy people singing old, stodgy songs. I would have rather been playing and watching football. However, there was one Sunday out of every month in which I did look forward to church—the first Sunday.

The first Sunday was communion Sunday. The mothers (older women) of the church would dress in all white. The pastor would wear his white robe. The communion table, normally bare, would be draped in a white cloth under which was clearly the communion ware containing the bread and the wine.

I was impressed with the ceremony involved and the care taken in preparing the table. There was care in handling and distributing the elements. The deacons wore white gloves and the trays were passed between them with a deliberate orchestration of movements and reverence. I really enjoyed the anticipation and celebration of the Lord's Table. Unfortunately, for all the care taken with the elements of the table, similar care was not taken by the participants, those receiving the table.

Contrary to some assumptions, the Lord's Table is not for everyone. It is a blessed sacrament, like baptism, given to the church as a sign of God's faithfulness to His promises and an assurance in the heart of the one to whom the promises are given. With this in mind, we should understand that there are at least two groups of people who should be discouraged from partaking at the Lord's Table, namely, the unconverted and the unrepentant.

The Unconverted. The Lord's Table is for those who have professed true faith in the Lord. It is referred to variously in the church because it is referenced variously in the Scriptures. Besides being called the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20), it is also often referred to as communion. This is due to the fact that in 1 Corinthians 10:16, the bread and the cup are understood to be a "communion" or "sharing" in and with Christ.

Communion, or common union, is born out of union with Christ. Only those in union with Christ have fellowship with Him. They share in His body and His blood and are consequently united to Him (John 6:56). The unconverted has no fellowship with Christ. The unconverted has no union with Him. There is no promise of Christ's abiding with him. He has no portion in the body of Christ broken or the blood of Christ shed. Consequently, there can be no sharing in the elements that signify the person and work of Christ for the church (1 Cor. 11:24). The *converted*, on the other hand, discern that such are the blessings of being

united to Christ.

The converted understand that the bread and the cup are a proclamation of the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:26). The elements move the believer to reflect upon the sacrifice of Christ and the abiding blessedness of knowing that Christ is for us. The blood of Christ is the forgiveness of our sins (Matt. 26:28). The body is Christ broken, suffering in our place (1 Cor. 11:24). These are the blessings that belong to those united to Christ by grace alone through faith alone. Only the converted, the truly regenerate, can be assured of these truths communicated in and through the Lord's Table.

The Unrepentant. While the Lord's Table is only for the converted, it is also only for the convert who is living the examined and, consequently, repentant life. The sacrament is for believers. And yet, the admonition to believers is clear: "Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Cor. 11:28).

The Christian life is the examined life, the life that takes seriously the call to repentance and the promise of forgiveness (1 John. 1:8–9; 2:1). Unfortunately, there are those who deny the grace of repentance by hardening their hearts and refusing to forgive or be forgiven. Those who refuse to acknowledge their sin, but harbor bitterness, malice, and hatred in their hearts, and refuse godly counsel toward reconciliation with God and others, and thus neglect the grace of repentance—let them refrain from the Lord's

Table. Otherwise, to eat and to drink in such a state is to call forth the disciplining hand of God (1 Cor. 11:32).

Nevertheless, such a condition is not the desire of God for His people. Our God delights to forgive (Micah 7:18). Consequently, His people can be assured "of better things—things that belong to salvation" (Heb. 6:9), namely, the blessed union and communion with Christ. To you, Christ says, "Come!" (Isa. 55:1). To you, Christ says "Welcome!" To you, Christ says, "Enjoy!"

I have long come to appreciate that old rural church in which I was raised. Today, many of those old, stodgy saints have gone to be with the Lord. And many of those old, stodgy songs have become my favorites. One in particular reminds me that the Lord's Table is a blessed invitation to all those who hunger and thirst for righteousness:

*Come ye thirsty, come and welcome;
God's free bounty glorify.
True belief and true repentance;
Every grace that brings you nigh.*

And there is no more blessed grace than that of sweet communion with and in Christ.

From Ligonier Ministries and R.C. Sproul. © Tabletalk magazine. Website: www.ligonier.org/tabletalk. Email: tabletalk@ligonier.org. Toll free: 1-800-435-4343.
