

May I Participate in the Lord's Supper?

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Who should participate in Lord's Supper when it is offered in the church meeting? Though there are some differences between churches on this question, many leaders agree on the following statements as requirements from the Bible on this important practice.

Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.
(1 Corinthians 10:16-17, NASB)



1. The Lord's Supper is only for those who are regenerate (born again).

The Lord's Supper is not merely a symbol, but also an act of the unique fellowship believers share with each other and with Christ in the new covenant (1 Cor. 10:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:14-18). Therefore, it is the members of the new covenant (Heb. 8:10-11; cf. John 17:3) who may participate.

2. The Lord's Supper is only for those who have been baptized.

Throughout the book of Acts, baptism is *always* the first act that follows conversion. The three-thousand at Pentecost, the eunuch in chapter 8, Saul in chapter 9, Cornelius in chapter 10, Lydia and the Philippian jailer in chapter 16—all of these were baptized following conversion. And there is no indication is ever given in the New Testament that a person may share in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper with other Christians, prior to being baptized.

We see this same order in Jesus' final instructions to His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). First, we are to make disciples, *then* baptize the disciples, *then* teach them to

obey Christ in all things, including the regular observance of the Lord's Supper. Peter's strong and direct command in Acts 2:38 ("Repent, and let every one of you be baptized . . .") indicates this same order by *not* mentioning the Lord's Supper, but rather baptism as the *first* priority for these new converts (also see Acts 10:47-48).

3. The Lord's Supper is only for those who are members of a true church.

The New Testament does not require that church membership be formal or written down on paper. Every congregation may approach membership, within biblical parameters, as seems best to them. But if a person is to be considered a member of a particular group of Christians who form a true local church, there must be a mutual understanding that the person is committed to the other members, and they to him, in a meaningful and faithful relationship of edification, submission, and accountability. Simply put, a member of a local church is anyone who is considered *inside* in a way that he could be put *outside* if necessary (e.g., because of a single notorious or heinous sin, a lack of repentance regarding any particular sin, or a habitual pattern of unrepentant sin; cf. Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13). A Christian who is not in this sort of accountable relationship with a local church should not take the Lord's Supper. The ordinance is a corporate act of Christian fellowship, not an individual right of practice. The essential purity of this act of fellowship can only be adequately guarded through committed accountability to a local church.

4. The Lord's Supper is only for "members in good standing" (meaning those who are faithful in attendance and neither under, nor deserving of church discipline).

Christians are forbidden to have fellowship with anyone who professes to know Christ, yet who lives like an unbeliever (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:11). Through biblical church discipline, such a person must be excluded from all forms of Christian fellowship, *especially* the fellowship of the Lord's Supper.