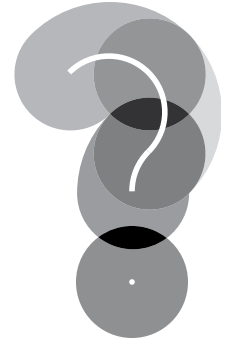




WHAT IS CELEBRATE COMMUNION ABOUT?

Most of us think of celebrating communion in the context of a Christian worship service. The ritual and sacrament in many denominations may be called by different names, be celebrated in different ways, and have different theological understandings, but the sharing of bread and wine is central to the identity of Christians everywhere.

The celebration of communion, however, is not limited to church buildings. It is a practice that extends beyond the Lord's Table to tables in homes and soup kitchens. Whenever we take bread, give thanks, break the bread, and give it to others, we carry the celebration of communion with us into our daily lives and the world. We remember Jesus and all the meals he shared and look forward to the great banquet where all are fed.



THANKS A MILLION

Supplies: Thanks a Million by Nikki Grimes (Greenwillow Books, 2006) or internet-connected device

Read together *Thanks a Million* by Nikki Grimes or watch the YouTube video “Thanks a Million” (bit.ly/FMThanksAMillion, 9:25). Notice together all the different types of expressions of gratitude that are in the story. There are riddles and poems and letters, and these are all good ways to practice giving thanks. After hearing the story, write your own thank-you poems and share them with each other.

GIVING THANKS TABLECLOTH

Supplies: plain white fabric or paper tablecloth, fabric pens or markers

Gather together around your kitchen table and place a plain white fabric or paper tablecloth on the table. Offer a blessing for your time together. Talk as a family about what it means to give thanks to God. Use markers or fabric pens to write words or draw pictures of things each member in your family is grateful for. Use this tablecloth to remember the gifts your family has received from God whenever you eat together. Pray together a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

ALPHABET OF THANKFULNESS

Sometimes, especially when family members are bored or in grumpy moods, it can be hard to remember all the things to be thankful to God for. This activity would be perfect during a daily commute, being stuck in traffic or in line, or while doing a chore together. Beginning with A, go through each letter of

the alphabet and take turns naming something each person is grateful for beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Practicing thankfulness and gratitude as a family will multiply your own gratitude!

YOUR LOCAL FOOD PANTRY

Supplies: internet-connected device

Research together as a family local feeding ministries in your community. Do an internet search using key phrases such as “food pantry near me,” “feeding America near me,” or “second harvest near me.” After finding a feeding ministry near you, find out how your family might be involved in helping people with food insecurity. Make a family commitment how you can support this ministry four times over the next year.

HAVE A FAMILY MEAL

Supplies: family dinner, internet-connected device (optional)

For many families, the days of eating a meal together every evening are few and far between because of jobs, homework, and after-school activities. Plan a family meal together at the table and without devices. Consider preparing the meal together (or getting take-out), setting the table, and planning some conversation starters. If you think you might need them, do an internet search for “family conversation starters” for some ideas. Enjoy your time together and see if you can make this a regular part of your family calendar.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



POUR FROM AN EMPTY CUP

Supplies: cup, sink

It seems like every day in the modern world is full of busyness. People talk often about how they are too busy to do important things to take care of their bodies such as exercising, eating healthy foods, or getting enough sleep. In the same way, finding time to be fed spiritually can also suffer. Do the following simulation with a cup of water representing our lives and how easy it is to become depleted and empty.

Stand at the sink and fill a cup with water. Ask your family for suggestions of what they are doing that day or the next. Some suggestions might be packing lunches, going to school or work, studying for a test, doing the laundry, and so forth. For each item mentioned, pour out a bit of the water into the sink. Then ask for suggestions for things that are emotionally draining, something that might have made them sad, defeated, or hurt. Notice how quickly the full cup of water begins to disappear. Wonder what happens when there is no water left.

Fill the cup again and continue to pour it out bit by bit with suggestions for things that require time and energy and those emotionally draining things, but ask your family for ways that God might fill them. Some ideas might be prayer, worship, a faith conversation, serving another, and being cared for by another. Each time God fills them, add some water to the cup. Notice what happens. Wonder how you might keep water in your cup, or even get your cup to overflowing.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Spiritual practices, or those activities we do to draw closer to God and be open to God's presence in our lives, feed us spiritually and help us grow in faith. Wonder together about some of the spiritual practices that help you draw closer to God. Look at the following list of some suggestions and try them as a family and as individuals: take a prayer walk, worship God, read the Bible, make art, use a labyrinth, spend time with family, go to a Bible study or Sunday school class, serve others, sing hymns and songs, work for justice, and so forth.



PRAYER

Holy God, thank you for the gift of communion: giving thanks, sharing meals, being fed and feeding others. Help us to use celebrating communion as a pattern for how you want us to love you and love all your creation. Amen.

BAKE AND SHARE

Supplies: a quick or yeast bread recipe and ingredients

The ritual that arose from Jesus' last supper with his disciples where he broke bread is our celebration of communion, the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist (thanksgiving). The term *breaking bread* has come to describe a time when a meal is shared. The word *companion* comes from two words, *com* and *panis*, which mean "with bread," or one who shares bread with another. Make a loaf of bread and invite some friends to share it with you.

FAMILY GRATITUDE WALK

Take a walk where you live. It doesn't matter where you live; your home and the area that surrounds it is special. As you walk together, notice the following prompts of things you are grateful for:

- Five things you can see
- Four things you can hear
- Three things you can touch
- Two things you can smell
- One thing you can taste

As you are finishing your walk, wonder together about how you can share some of these things you are grateful for with other people in your neighborhood. Some ideas might be picking up trash along your route, supporting a community business, learning people's names and greeting them, and so forth.

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

- ➔ What does it mean to you to celebrate communion?
- ➔ What piece of celebrating communion comes easiest to you?
- ➔ What piece of celebrating communion do you need more practice doing?
- ➔ How can we celebrate communion as a family each week?
- ➔ How is God asking you to give thanks, share meals, be fed, or feed others?