



The Free Presbyterian Church in Cloverdale Adult Sunday School Communion—Responsibilities of Communicants

No matter how clear and definite a person's profession of faith in Christ, the administration of the Lord's Supper is not the act of an individual Christian. It is a sacrament of the church to be received corporately by believers in Christ who have come together as a church to worship the Lord. Private communions are not in view in this ordinance.

By necessity from scriptural instructions and warnings, some people must be excluded from the Lord's Supper.

[1] **Children.** There must be a credible profession of faith and an ability to examine our own lives (1 Cor. 11:28). The inability of an infant or young child to make the necessary self judgment and the doctrinal distinctions within a proper celebrating of Christ's death rules out paedocommunion. "It is only after they have come to years of discretion, that they can be permitted to join in the celebration of the Lord's Supper." _ Louis Berkof

[2] **Unbelievers.** The requirement for personal saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ requires that participants accept the doctrines and grace of Christ as Lord and Saviour. This applies to people without and within the church.

[3] **Believers who lose testimony.** Where unbelief and ungodliness become evident communion is to be refused.

While the minister and elders of a church have the responsibility to guard the communion table from participants who misunderstand it, or misuse it for carnal purposes, each participant when receiving the cup and bread is responsible before God and before the congregation to participate to the hour of Christ.

Responsibilities to fellow believers participating in communion.

1. You are responsible to recognise the local church as biblically sound and Christ focused.

Communion is an ordinance to be dispensed by a true branch of the Christian church. A believer would be guilty by consent to receive communion at the hands of leadership that fails to proclaim the gospel of Christ and thereby is not representative of a true church. Fellow believers need from you a clear testimony of your conversion to Christ and to know of your delight in the saving work of Christ by His death.

2. You are responsible to attend communion on a regular basis, as often as the congregation meets to hold the Lord's Supper.

This meeting above all meetings in the church must have top priority in regard to attendance. To be absent without due reason declares a low degree of interest and little desire to enter into the blessings of this ordinance. By lack of attendance you are in danger of bringing your testimony into disrepute, discouraging your brethren and grieving the Holy Spirit.

3. You are responsible to give a clear testimony of salvation and personal trust in the death of Christ.

This may be asked of you by the eldership of the church in their work of shepherding the flock and guarding the Lord's Supper from abuse by those who may bring it into scandal.

4. You are responsible to seek baptism as the initiatory rite into the church.

It is strangely inconsistent for believers to wish to participate regularly in communion and yet show no interest in baptism. While there is no order of merit yet, in the light of the Lord's command to the church in Matthew 28:19-20, in practice baptism should be first in order.

5. You are responsible to consider membership in the local church where you participate in communion.

While membership applications take time to work through (allow one year from date of first attendance) and there are times that it may be on hold due to uncertain circumstances, each communicant should be seriously praying to know where he or she should hold membership to enjoy the shepherding of the local church. Think of your need for accountability to overseers in the Lord's church (Hebrews 13:17). Think about opportunities to serve (1 Timothy 3). Membership in the local church opens up opportunities within the life and ministries of the church.

6. You are responsible to maintain a Christian testimony in the church and in the community.

The Lord's Supper is to nourish the faith of God's people. Even the weakest believer is exhorted to participate. However, where sin is committed and public scandal is caused, it is necessary that a period of time is taken to repent and to re-establish a godly testimony. Submission to a period of suspension from the Lord's Supper enables the offender to regain his testimony as well as protect the testimony of the church.

7. You are responsible to correct any offence between you and a fellow communicant.

To participate together at the Lord's Supper requires proper personal relations in order to have God's blessing. Misunderstandings, hurts and divisions will arise among God's people, but when divisions are left to fester, the devil receives the advantage and harm is done to the body of Christ.

At communion, each believer should be particularly conscious that as members of the Lord's body personal divisions hurt the head, even Christ. There should be a high degree of willingness to put those things to rest. Follow the steps commanded in Matthew 18:15-20. First, go to that brother who is wronged, then to witnesses, and then to the church (this means church overseers) to have the matter answered/adjudicated, even taking wrong for Christ's sake and His church's sake. The goal is to ensure that by our harmonious fellowship with each other, we will have the gracious ministry of the Lord in the midst. Divisions grieve the Holy Spirit. The Lord, Himself, teaches us that reconciliation must precede worship. (Matthew 5:21).