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## Embracing The Symbolism Of Communion

**Intro:** We are a culture that loves symbols. Let me show you some and see if you can identify what these symbols mean? (Show slides)

Symbols are powerful tools to communicate. Before Jesus died, He left us with the symbol of communion so that we would remember important truths. Today we are going to share communion together, but before we do, I want us all to understand some of the symbolism behind this piece of bread and a cup of juice.

### I. Communion Is A Symbol Of The Price Paid

#### A. The symbol of the price paid was in the Old Testament

1. Explain the Passover lamb / feast – Moses and Egypt – Last plague
2. Explain the Day of Atonement – 2 goats – One would be sacrificed and the other would have the sins of the people placed upon it. Scapegoat.

*Matt. 5:17 “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the Law of Moses, or the writing of the prophets. No, I came to fulfill them.” (NLT)*

3. What the Old Testament foreshadowed, Jesus fulfilled.

#### B. Jesus became the price paid for our sin

*John 1:29 “The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, ‘Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (NLT)*

- John the Baptist understood Jesus’ role

*I Cor. 5:7 “... Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed for us...” (NLT)*

*Rom. 3:25 “For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God’s anger against us.” (NLT) Scapegoat.*

1. I talked briefly about this last week but want to emphasize this again. Because God’s character is Holy and Just, He has to punish sinful behavior for which we are all guilty of.
2. We all understand the need for justice. In fact, we are all angry when justice is not done. How do you feel when a criminal gets off because of some “technicality”? Everyone knows he’s guilty but he gets to go free!
3. We’re furious because we all know inherently that wrong should be punished. There are consequences for bad behavior.

4. We are all guilty of violating God's moral laws and this makes us all guilty. Some may say, "I didn't know what they were?" Try that excuse in our legal system. (For example: In the Molalla, all wild steelhead must be released – try explaining that to a State Trooper)
5. Jesus took the punishment for us that satisfied God's justice. Jesus became our Passover Lamb / He became our Scapegoat so we could be forgiven. This is what this table symbolizes.
6. It symbolizes Jesus took our place and we have put our faith and trust in Him. We have received His forgiveness by accepting Christ.

## II. Communion Is A Symbol Of A Relationship Established

*Luke 22:20 "...This wine is the token of God's new covenant to save you – an agreement sealed with the blood I will pour out for you." (NLT)*

- Jesus' sacrifice was all about re-establishing relationship. Because of what He accomplished on the cross...

A. We are adopted into the family of God

*John 1:12-13 "But to all who believed in Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth...this rebirth comes from God." (NLT)*

1. This table symbolizes that the sacrifice of Jesus gave us a new identity / a new family. I have become a child of the living God placed forever in His family.
2. Jesus paid this price not just so we could be forgiven. A price was paid in order to produce a family relationship. We become sons and daughters of the King. Our identity is no longer found in this world. Our identity is found in who our Father is.
3. What was lost in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve is now restored in Christ. God's original intent for creating us was for relationship. This answers one the greatest life questions mankind can have. Why do I exist?
4. The symbolism of Communion answers this question. Jesus took our place and paid a price so that relationship with God is possible. The meaning of life is about relationship with God.
5. This life is simply preparation for what we will experience in eternity. What will we experience? Relationship with God. If this isn't true then the sacrifice Jesus made makes no sense at all!
6. These elements remind me that my family of origin is heavenly not earthly...that I am a child of the KING.

B. We can now have fellowship with God

*I John 1:3 "...our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ." (NLT)*

1. In the Garden of Eden, there was incredible intimacy with God (explain) Through Jesus broken body and shed blood, intimacy with God and His Son is now restored.
2. We get to have a relationship with God that is experiential. Unfortunately, so many people relate to God as if He is “out there” somewhere or “up there”. All these terms represent a mindset that there is a distance between us and God.
3. This table represents the distance between mankind and God has been removed. God can be experienced up close and personal. We can experience His presence / His Power / His resources / His peace / His joy / His direction / His life being poured into us.
  - When Jesus died, something very significant took place in the Temple – Temple veil: According to Jewish descriptions of the temple, this curtain was truly massive—measuring some 30 feet wide, 60 feet high and three inches thick. Explain the curtain being ripped from top to bottom and the significance of this.
4. Fellowship with God is NOT about religious rituals or religious activities. It is actually experiencing the Living God each and every day of my life. It is a foretaste of eternity. God is real and I get to talk to Him and He talks to me. It is reciprocal = it goes both ways!
5. We are not only celebrating Christ’s work on the cross with these elements, we are celebrating the intimacy that we can now experience with God

### **III. Communion Is A Symbol Of Unity Maintained**

*Gal. 3:26, 28 “So you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus...There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all Christians – you are one in Christ Jesus.” (NLT)*

#### **A. Our relationship with Christ is the great unifier**

1. We all have the same Savior / the same faith / same Holy Spirit // baptized in the same name / going to the same place / serving the same Lord / embraced the same forgiveness / serving the same purpose / in the same family
2. Communion reminds us of the unity we have with each other in Christ. I can be anywhere in the world with other believers and celebrate communion with them and experience unity because what Jesus did.
3. We may have different opinions on issues / different practices / traditions / music / styles of worship / different dress codes / BUT these are not the things that unify us. It is Christ!
4. This table represents our common union with each other in Christ. Not just the common union of those who go to Foothills, but with every believer in every part of the world!

B. Our relationship with Christ removes divisiveness

1. In Christ, there are no distinctions. Nationalities - race no longer matters / gender no longer matters / social standing no longer matters / political party no longer matters / We are all simply children of God through faith in Christ.
2. When we come together as believers in Christ, all the titles are left at the door. We come before this table as equals. Social standing means nothing...only Christ matters!
3. Unfortunately, Churches have more of a reputation for divisiveness rather than unity. They tend to embrace their differences more than what unifies them with other believers.
  - I can remember being told that certain churches were of the devil because they believed something different OR they had practices in their churches that were different than ours. WHAT?
  - Churches have a tendency to create an “us and them” mentality. This kind of thinking will always polarize the Christian community rather than unify it. AND it grieves the heart of God!
  - This is why our relationship with the other churches in our area is so important. God has called us to be a unifier of His people. This has been Jesus’ heart from the beginning.

*John 17:23 “ I in them and You in Me, all being perfected into one. Then the world will know that You sent Me and will understand that You love them as much as You love Me.” (NLT)*

4. Did you catch the significance of unity? THEN, the world will know that God loves them! Unity of believers enables unchurched people to Understand / believe that God loves them.
5. Can you see the significance of our unity? Can you see the devastation if it is not maintained? This table removes all our reasons for separating from other Christians who are different from us.
6. This table represents the transforming power that genuine unity in Christ can have on a community. Communion brings us back to what it’s really all about.
7. It’s not about our differences or opinions or preferences, it’s all about Jesus.

So as we celebrate communion today, may we not practice some ritual or routine. May we be in awe of the symbolism behind what we do? Let’s remember a price was paid / A relationship was established / Unity can be maintained.