



REDEEMER

ORANGE COUNTY

FIRST COMMUNION
INFORMATION &
STUDY GUIDE

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

It is our joy to have children receive Communion as early as they are able to make an age-appropriate profession of faith in Jesus Christ and understand the basics of Baptism and Communion! For a child to receive the elements of bread and wine during Communion they must be baptized and able to articulate their faith to a pastor, elder, deacon, and/or deaconess.

Historically in Presbyterian and Reformed churches, children are baptized as infants. As they grow they undergo catechetical instruction from their parents and the church, followed by a personal public profession of faith before the congregation. This profession was deemed a ratification of the baptismal covenant made for the child by the parent(s) and would gain the child admission to the Communion table.

Rites of Passage

At Redeemer we believe it is helpful for children to participate in certain rites of passage as significant parts of their spiritual formation. A rite of passage is simply a ritual that marks a noteworthy shift in a child's life from one stage/group into another. When rites of passage are done well, they spiritually and psychologically help children increase feelings of affiliation and owning the beliefs of their community in new ways. At Redeemer we desire to intentionally mark the rites of Baptism, First Communion, and the commencement of students into our youth ministry and into their college experience.

Baptism – *An Entrance Rite into the Baptized Body*

Baptism is the entrance sacrament, sign and seal, given to Christians and their children. It joins us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, provides us with access to the washing and forgiveness of sins, and by the Holy Spirit gives us power to live faithful lives. A child who is baptized is visibly seen and identified as a church member.

First Communion – *A Ratification Rite of the Baptismal Covenant*

First Communion marks the point when a child is welcomed to receive the sacrament of Communion as a result of them professing their faith in Jesus Christ in an age-appropriate manner, and confirming the baptismal covenant and vows made by their parent(s) at their baptism.

Youth Ministry & College – *A Commencement Rite into New Life & Faith Stages*

The commencement into Jr. High School, High School, and College are major life changes for our children. At Redeemer we want to celebrate and intentionally support them through those transitions.

IS YOUR CHILD READY TO TAKE THEIR FIRST COMMUNION?

It has been said that timing is everything. This is definitely true when it comes to raising children. How many of us have bought toys for our children only to have them discard them almost immediately? The same can be true for First Communion. Understanding the appropriate age for your child to receive their First Communion is a difficult but important decision.

On one hand, receiving Communion too early can produce a missed milestone for the child. On the other hand, waiting too long can cause the child to be disinterested as the material becomes irrelevant to where they are in life. Understanding where your child is in the process of their spiritual formation is crucial to having a relevant, meaningful experience. Done at the right time, your child's relationship with Jesus will be comforted, strengthened, and owned in a new way.

How do you determine if your child is ready to take their First Communion? Below are a few questions to guide you through your decision.

1. Have you sought to raise your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

You may have recognized this phrase from the vows that you as a parent took at the time you presented your child before the church for infant baptism. The process of spiritual formation starts very early on in your child's life. We must look back to some of our vows to gain further understanding.

#3 Do you claim God's covenant promises on (his/her) behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for (his/her) salvation, as you do for your own?

#4 Do you unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and promise in humble reliance upon His grace, that you will endeavor to set before (him/her) a godly example, that you will pray with and for (him/her), that you will teach (him/her) the truths of the Christian faith, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring (him/her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

At infant baptism, you claimed God's covenant promises on your child's behalf, but now your child must claim these promises on their own. They are stepping out from the covenant that you made before God to pursue their own faith in God. They must claim these promises for themselves and also look to the Lord Jesus Christ as they work out their own salvation (Philippians 2:11-12).

2. Is the child initiating the desire to receive Communion?

In Romans 3:10-11 and John 6:44, we see that no one can seek God on his own unless God draws him. When one inquires about spiritual concerns it is God who is initiating towards him/her. As John Stott explains: First Communion is the process by which a child ratifies the covenant that their parent(s) promised years before and God's confirming His work in the child's life. This faith and desire for receiving

Communion must come from the child's heart and not from parental persuasion.

With all that said, waiting for your child to initiate doesn't mean that nothing happens as you wait. Your waiting is active. From birth, we at Redeemer want our children to participate in Communion with us. Children learn and desire things as they catch our rhythms and practices. Parents don't wait to have a conversation with their children until they can speak for themselves, parents teach their children to talk by speaking to them before they can ever properly respond. Thus, we encourage parents to have their children walk forward next to them week after to week. As parents receive the bread and the wine, our pastors love to say a blessing over the children.

3. Is your child displaying fruit in their life that stems from their faith in Christ?

Scripture clearly states that those who God draws near to Himself will exhibit fruit from the Spirit in their lives. (John 15:16, Romans 7:4, Galatians 5:22) Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

4. Can your child answer "I do" in an age-appropriate manner to the First Communion Vows?

On the next page you will see the six questions that the child will be asked during the interview with a pastor, elder, deacon, and/or deaconess, and then asked again publicly during the worship service when they receive their First Communion.

These six questions have been adapted from the normal six membership questions that we ask adults. We have sought to make them more understandable for our children. We also created a study guide so you as parents can have the opportunity to catechize your child at home. Review the guide, with scripture passages, and slowly start helping your child understand the general ideas of each of the six main questions. Don't try and ask all the questions in one sitting, but rather ask a few a day during a meal or during your child's bedtime routine over the course of several weeks/months. The questions and study guide reflect what must be believed, but you as parents know how best to ask your child the questions. During the interview, the pastor, elder, deacon, and/or deaconess will not be looking for perfect theological answers, but rather a genuine and age-appropriate love for Jesus and a basic understanding of the sacraments.

As you consider your child taking their First Communion, please be reminded of these two passages:

Moses in Exodus 12 described the celebration of the Passover meal (a Communion meal) to the people of God in the following way:

"You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and for your children. When you come to the land the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this observance. And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this observance?' You shall say..."

Jesus in Matthew 19 and Luke 18 is well known for saying, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

PROCESS

1. At Home Catechizing
2. Pastor, Elder, Deacon, and/or Deaconess Interview
3. Session Approval
4. Public Vows Taken During a Worship Service

When you feel like your child is ready to take their First Communion, after you have catechized them at home, please reach out to Pastor Adam Feichtmann (adamf@redeemeroc.org) and he will arrange an interview. If you need any help or suggestions for catechizing at home, please also reach out to Pastor Adam.

FIRST COMMUNION VOWS

1. Do you believe that you are made in the image of God, created to worship, serve, and enjoy him in all of life?
2. Do you believe that you are a sinner in the sight of God?
3. Do you believe in Jesus and trust in him alone for your salvation?
4. Do you want to follow Jesus, do what he says, and do you trust that the Holy Spirit will help you?
5. Do you promise to join with us in all the worship and work of the Church?
6. Do you promise to let the pastors and elders of the church teach you and guide you?

First Communion Vows and Related Questions

1. Do you believe that you are made in the image of God, created to worship, serve, and enjoy him in all of life?

- a. Beyond making you, what else did God make?
- b. Why did God make you and all things?
- c. How do you glorify God?
- d. When do you worship God?
- e. Is there more than one true God?
- f. In how many Persons does this one God exist?
- g. Can you name these three Persons?
- h. How does God speak to us?

2. Do you believe that you are a sinner in the sight of God?

- a. What is sin?
- b. In what ways do you sin?
- c. What does God think of sin?
- d. What does sin do to your relationship with God?
- e. What are you supposed to do after you sin?

3. Do you believe in Jesus and trust in him alone for your salvation?

- a. Who is Jesus?
- b. Did Jesus ever sin?
- c. What does it mean to forgive someone?

^{1a} All things (*Acts 17:25; John 1:3; Psalm 33:6-7*)

^{1b} For his only glory and to share his love with us (*Acts 17:26-27; Revelation 4:11; Psalm 19:1; Isaiah 43:7*)

^{1c} Love him & do what he commands. (*John 6:29; Matthew 5:16*)

^{1d} At church, AND whenever or wherever we can (*Ephesians 5:19-21, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Corinthians 10:31*)

^{1e} No, there is only one true God (*Deuteronomy 6:4; Ephesians 4:5-6*)

^{1f} In three Persons (*1 John 5:7*)

^{1g} God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit (*Matthew 28:19*)

^{1h} In the Bible (*2 Timothy 3:16*)

^{2a} Not doing what God commands and loving other things more than God (*1 John 3:4; James 4:17; Jeremiah 17:9*)

^{2b} Help your child be specific about their sin

^{2c} God does not like sin, it makes him very sad, and he has to punish those who sin (*Psalm 7:11-12; Eph. 4:18; Romans 1:18*)

^{2d} Sin breaks our relationship to God and it separates us from him, who is holy and perfect (*Isaiah 59:2, 1 John 1:5-10, Ephesians 4:18*)

^{2e} Say sorry (confession and repentance), ask for forgiveness, and believe in Jesus (*Psalm 51; Matthew 3:2, 4:7; Mark 1:15; Romans 10:10; 1 John 1:9*)

^{3a} God's Son, the second person in the Trinity, the Redeemer of the world (*1 John 4:7-10; John 3:16-18; John 1:1, 18; Col. 1:15, 19-20*)

^{3b} No, Jesus was perfect and holy. (*2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5*)

^{3c} To not stay mad at them for the sin they did and to show kindness to them. (*Matthew 6:12; Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 2:4-10*)

- d. What did Jesus do to forgive you of your sin?
 - e. Can you ever do enough good or nice things that will cause God to forgive you of your sin?
4. Do you want to follow Jesus, do what he says, and do you trust that the Holy Spirit will help you?
- a. What does it mean to live as a Christian?
 - b. Where do you get help to live as a Christian?
 - c. Do you forgive others when they sin against you?
 - d. Do you try to listen to and obey your parents?
5. Do you promise to join with us in all the worship and work of the Church?
- a. Why should you come to church every Sunday?
 - b. How are you supposed to act when you come to church?
 - c. How can you help other people worship God?
6. Do you promise to let the pastors and elders of the church teach you and guide you?
- a. What are the pastors & elders in the church supposed to do?
 - b. Do you promise to pray for the pastors, elders, and other teachers?

^{3d} Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave (*John 3:16-18, Romans 4:25, 5:8*)

^{3e} No, it is only Jesus' work (his death & resurrection) that forgives us (*Romans 6:1-10*)

^{4a} Follow Jesus and obey him. Love God and love others. Go to church. (*Colossians 3:3; 1 John 3:1; Romans 8:15-17; 1 Corinthians 3:23; Galatians 3:28-29*)

^{4b} The Holy Spirit inside us, the Bible, the church, Christian family & friends. (*John 16:26; Romans 8:26; Hebrews 4:6; Acts 2:42-47, Deuteronomy 6:7*)

^{5a} To worship God, be comforted and strengthened, to help other people worship God, and because the Bible commands us to gather to worship. (*Hebrews 10:24-25*)

^{5b} Thankful, ready to sing to God, pray to God, and learn from the Bible (*Hebrews 12:28*)

^{6a} Teach, pray, lead and care for people as they act like Jesus. (*1 Peter 5:1-15*)

Understanding the Sacraments Catechism Questions

1. Q: What is a sacrament? ¹

A: A practice that Jesus started for everyone to know and see who is a Christian, and for Christians to be comforted and strengthened by those practices.

2. Q: What are the two sacraments of the Church?

A: Baptism & Communion²

3. Q: What is baptism?³

A: The pouring of water over a baby or person that shows they are washed clean from sin by Jesus' blood.

4. Q: Who are to be baptized?⁴

A: Christians and their children.

5. Q: Do you know why you were baptized as a baby?⁵

6. Q: Do you have to be baptized before receiving Communion? If so, why?

A: Yes. It is similar to washing your hands before you sit down at the dinner table. You have to have clean hands before you eat... You have to have your sins washed away (Baptism) before you eat the bread and drink the wine by faith (Communion).

7. Q: When someone gives you the gifts of a food and drink at a table, what are you supposed to say?

A: Thank you.

8. Q: What are the two gifts on the Communion table that we say "Thank you" for every Sunday?

A: Bread and Wine

9. Q: What is the Communion bread a picture of?

A: Jesus' body.

10. Q: Why is it broken?

A: Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

11. Q: Why do we get to eat it?

A: Because we believe in him.

¹ (*Matthew 28:18-20; Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*)

² Communion is also known as "The Lord's Supper" or "The Eucharist"

³ (*Acts 2:38-39; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 1 Corinthians 6:11*)

⁴ (*Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-39; Mark 10:13-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 1 Corinthians 6:11*)

⁵ Most likely because their parent(s) are Christians, and God is their God too and Jesus's blood also washes away their sin and unites them to Christ. (*Acts 2:38-39; Mark 10:13-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 1 Corinthians 6:11*)

12. Q: What happens when we eat it?
A: We become more like him.
13. Q: What is the Communion wine a picture of?
A: Jesus' blood.
14. Q: Why is it poured out?
A: Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins.
15. Q: Why do we get to drink it?
A: Because we believe in him.
16. Q: What happens when we drink?
A: We become more like him.
17. Q: How can eating bread and drinking wine make us more like Jesus?⁶
A: Because it reminds us that we are united to him. He lives in us and we live in him.
18. Q: Why do you want to receive Communion (eat the bread & drink the wine) at church every Sunday?

⁶ (1 Corinthians 10:16-18; Colossians 3:3; Romans 6:3-11, Ephesians 1:3-14)

Additional Catechism Questions

1. Q: What is prayer?
A: Listening to God speak to us (primarily in the Bible) and then speaking back to him. It is just like having a conversation with someone else – Listening and answering.
2. Q: What are different types of prayer?
A: Praising God for who he is and he has done.
Saying sorry to God for things.
Thanking God for things.
Asking God for things.
3. Q: What two places in the Bible do we best learn how to pray?
A: The Psalms & The Lord's Prayer⁷
4. Q: Do you ever pray the Psalms? If so, can you pray one?
5. Q: Can you pray The Lord's Prayer?
6. Q: What does Jesus say are the two greatest commandments?
A: Love God and love others.⁸
7. Do you have a favorite Bible story?
8. Do you have a favorite song we sing at church?

⁷ Matthew 6:9-13 & Luke 11:2-4

⁸ Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; and Luke 10:27