6th-8th Small Group Time

**May 26th, 2021 @7:15-8 pm**

**Lord’s Supper**

**Instructions**

*Be sure to start on a positive note. Welcome each learner by name. Let them know you're glad they're here! If anyone is absent, mention you'll be praying for that person together. Small Group Time is for give-and-take discussion. Your main job is to draw learners out and get them talking about the theme. Ask open-ended questions that will provoke responses. Once the conversation begins, intervene only to bring it back on track or to stimulate more talk.*

Bible Text: John 6:48-51; Exodus 12:1-36; Matthew 26:17-29; Luke 22:19-20

Lesson Focus: Word, wine, and bread together give us salvation, forgiveness, and new life.

Big Question: What really happens during communion?

Key Words: BREAD AND WINE, BODY AND BLOOD, SACRAMENT, PASSOVER, LAST SUPPER, EUCHARIST, COMMUNION

• Jesus’ last supper was a Passover meal.

• Holy Communion is a sacrament—ordinary bread and wine together with the word of God.

• The Lord’s Supper is a meal of liberation, freeing us from sin, death, and evil. God’s forgiveness reconciles us to God and to one another.

• In the bread and wine, we receive Christ’s body and blood. By this “real presence” of Jesus, Christians are sustained and nourished as one body.

• With Jesus, there is always enough for all, and the table fellowship is gracious and inclusive.

• Lutherans teach that the bread and wine become, by God’s word, the body and blood of Christ, and are at the same time ordinary bread and wine. This is an example of the idea that the finite is capable of bearing the infinite (*finitum capax infiniti*).

• Christian practice includes sending believers to serve the world, to feed the hungry in particular. As people who know the bounty of God’s grace and who share Jesus’ body and blood, given for all people, we are empowered to help see that hunger is eradicated.

Discussion Time

1. Help students dive into the Key Words by asking for definitions and/or providing these definitions:

-BREAD AND WINE: the earthly elements that, in the Lord’s Supper, are Jesus’ body and blood. When combined with God’s word, they bring forgiveness, salvation, and life.

-BODY AND BLOOD: the physical presence of Jesus Christ that he gives us in the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is also known as holy communion.

-SACRAMENT: something that 1) Jesus Christ commands us to do; 2) involves an earthly element, like water or bread and wine; and 3) combines with God’s spoken word to bring salvation, forgiveness of sins, and the promise of everlasting life.

-PASSOVER: the Jewish celebration of the night God passed over Egypt, killing the firstborn in every Egyptian household. God spared the Hebrews, who were protected by the blood of the lamb.

-LAST SUPPER: the Passover celebration Jesus shared with his best friends on the night he was betrayed.

-EUCHARIST: the communion meal Christians share that remembers Jesus’ Last Supper, bestowing on them Jesus’ forgiveness and grace.

-COMMUNION: the Lord’s Supper. Also refers to what happens when followers of Jesus Christ come together to worship, learn, or pray.

2. What does it mean to be both “holy” and “ordinary”? To hold both the “finite” and the “infinite”?

3. Why do some people in the world have so much and others so little? Tell about the longest period of time you’ve ever gone without eating.

4. What are some things you could do to help feed the hungry?

5. Do Lutherans believe something different about holy communion than other churches believe? How are they different?

6. At some churches, you are not allowed to go to communion unless you are a member of that church. Why do you suppose that might be? Is that true for Lutherans? Why or why not?

7. Do you think Jesus knew it was his last meal before he would die?

8. How would you finish this sentence? After I receive Holy Communion, I feel . . .

9. Some churches have Holy Communion every Sunday. Others have it once a month or less. Is there a right way and a wrong way?

10. What is a sacrament? What makes Holy Communion a sacrament?

11. Some churches use bread and others use wafers. Some use grape juice and others use wine. Does it matter which is used?

12. How old does a person need to be in order to receive communion? Why?

**Open the Bible**

1. Invite students to open their Bibles to John 6:48-51, and read the passage to them in your deepest, most dramatic voice. In these verses, Jesus refers to himself as the bread of life. Have the students write the words “bread of life” in the margin.

-The story of manna comes from Exodus 16. The people of Israel were starving—and complaining bitterly about it! So God provided them with manna. Jesus said that the bread of life gives himself in order to save people from death. Have the students write “God feeds the hungry” in the margin of their Bibles. In what ways does the gathering for Communion reminds us that we will gather in the next life with Jesus?

2. Invite students to open their Bibles to 1 Corinthians 10:17, and call on a volunteer to read it aloud. Discuss what it means for us that all people who partake in holy communion are part of the one body of Christ.

3. Invite students to open their Bibles to Exodus 12:1-36. Ask for a volunteer to read the passage aloud. Explain that these verses tell the story of Passover, a story that is celebrated and retold every year in Jewish households. In verse 13 we see that the blood of the lamb saves the people from death. Students can write “blood of the lamb” in the margin or sketch a lamb. Verse 15 mentions unleavened bread. Students can write “unleavened bread” in the margin or sketch some bread.

4. Have students turn in their Bibles to Luke 2:41. Ask the youngest person in the group to read the verse aloud. Point out that this is the only story that refers to Jesus’ childhood. We see that Passover was important to Jesus and his family. Have students write “Passover became Holy Communion” in the margin.

5. Have students turn in their Bibles to Matthew 26:17-29, and invite all the girls in the group to read the passage aloud together. Here in the story of the Last Supper, we see that Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples. Jesus tells his disciples that the bread and wine are his very own body and blood. Have students underline these words or write “bread and wine” and “body and blood” in the margin of their Bibles.

6. Have students turn in their Bibles to 1 Corinthians 5:7, and invite everyone to read it aloud together. Here Paul draws a direct parallel between Passover and Jesus calling himself the Paschal Lamb. Have students write “Lamb of God” in the margin.

7. Have students turn in their Bibles to Matthew 26:26-28. In these verses Jesus tells the disciples that the bread and wine are his body and blood and that they bring forgiveness of sins. Have students write “forgiveness of sins” in the margin. God’s forgiveness of sins in Holy Communion reconciles believers to God and to one another so that we are one body (1 Corinthians 10:17). Ask the students how they think mere bread and wine can do such amazing things!

8. Have students turn in their Bibles to Luke 22:19-20 and ask for a volunteer to read the passage aloud. These verses talk about a special covenant between Jesus and his followers that is solidified in the eating and drinking of his body and blood. Explain that the word *covenant* means “big promise.” Have them write “covenant = promise” in the margin.

**Open the Catechism**

1. Read p. 28 from Luther’s Small Catechism. What connection do you see between the blood of the Passover lamb and the body and blood of Jesus? What does it mean to talk about Jesus as the Passover Lamb?

-Recall that, for Luther, a sacrament is commanded by God, involves common elements connected with God’s word, and is a way that God comes to us through grace. The common elements in Holy Communion—bread and wine—were daily parts of a meal for the Israelites. If Jesus were here today, what might be the common elements for communion?

-As you read the words of institution, what is familiar? How many times do you think you’ve heard these words? Ponder as a group the meaning of the phrases “given for you” and “remembrance of me” as they relate to what is happening in Holy Communion.

2. Read p. 29 from the Small Catechism. Word, bread, and wine connected together in the sacrament give us salvation, forgiveness, and life.

-Begin to ponder how this common meal of bread and wine gets mixed together with God’s word and the body and blood of Jesus. Some Christians believe the bread and wine transform into the body and blood. Others believe the bread and wine represent the body and blood. In the Lutheran tradition Christ is truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine when combined with the words and promises of God. The bread and wine IS the body and blood of Jesus Christ during the event of the Lord’s Supper.

3. Luther also addressed what makes one worthy of receiving communion. At one point in his life, Luther thought a person must confess every sin to be worthy of taking communion. Give this a try: on a piece of paper, write all the times you sinned during the last day or the last week, making sure you get everything. Luther came to a different understanding later in life. This is presented on p. 30 in the Small Catechism. What is Luther’s new insight into being worthy for communion? What does this say about God? About human beings?

4. Eating is an important part of many family celebrations and festivals. We can identify many holidays by the kind of food served. Divide the group into teams. Challenge each team to communicate a holiday or celebration to the others by giving just one food clue. Once the holiday has been identified, discuss foods that are unique or identified with a particular family or ethnic background.

-Unleavened bread and wine were symbolic elements of the Passover feast. Review the symbolic meaning of bread by looking at the fourth petition and explanation of The Lord’s Prayer in the Small Catechism (p. 19-20). How does this relate to Holy Communion?

-Read about the benefits of holy communion in the section on Holy Communion (p, 29). What are the benefits according to Luther? Compare these to the benefits of Holy Baptism (p. 23). What conclusions do you draw about the benefits of the sacraments?