

Thoughts on Children and the Lord's Supper

(by Bill Myers with portions of this paper coming from David Michael)

Sooner or later, a child who is regularly sitting through a Sunday morning worship service is bound to ask something like, "Why can't I take communion like everyone else?" Perhaps your child has asked such a question.

Our communion services at Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church are open in the sense that we welcome participation by those who believe the gospel and are members of a church that preaches the gospel. This openness includes children who are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of their sins and the fulfillment of all his promises to us (including eternal life); and therefore, children are welcome to participate in the Lord's Supper when they are able to give a credible profession of faith in Christ to the elders.

There is no test they take or class they attend to help establish their readiness. We simply leave it up to parents to decide when their young disciples are ready, and we ask the parents and children to submit to the wisdom and discernment of the elders in helping to determine their readiness.

There are a number of reasons to have a season of "**waiting**" as children are prepared for and anticipate the moment when they will begin participating fully as communicant members of the church.

Here are six reasons for **waiting**:

1. Wait for Understanding

Probably the most compelling reason comes out of 1 Corinthians 11:27ff

where Paul warns us of the perils of eating and drinking in an "unworthy manner."

It is important that our covenant children have a thorough understanding of the gospel, and of the meaning of the sacrament and also have enough maturity to do the self-examination that Paul calls for in verse 28.

2. Wait for More Independent Thinking

It is desirable that children not come to the table **only** because they see their family and friends participating, although seeing the people they love and care about can be an impetus for them to desire participation for themselves. It is good to allow them a season of observation as they develop their own thoughts and ability to think independently as to why they should participate.

3. Wait for Significance

We believe that the significance of the sacrament can be achieved in a number of ways in the natural course of life: participation in worship, hearing the Word of God preached, observing communion, learning at the feet of their parents in home worship.

4. Wait for Anticipation

Each time the elements pass, children can look forward to the day when they will participate, even as they prepare for this day.

5. Wait for Memories

It is good for children to be able to remember the day when they first participated. Many of our early memories are fuzzy at best. A child who is a bit older will remember clearly their first participation in this important sacrament.

6. Wait for Maturity

I don't believe establishing an age requirement is wise. It's best to leave this up to the parents, in partnership with the elders of the church, in determining the readiness of a child to participate in the sacrament.

For parents, waiting does not mean passivity. The head of the household should take seriously their responsibility in bringing up their children in "the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) Normally this falls to the father in the home in partnership with his wife. But if you are a single parent, you are the head of the household and need to take seriously your responsibility in this area.

The church is here to assist you in this all important task in several ways:

- a. By providing materials to help you and your child more completely understand and embrace the gospel and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
- b. By assisting in the examination of the child as he/she prepares to come to the Table. This is done by a pastor and elders meeting with the child.
- c. By praying with and for you and your child as you approach this important step.

Parents, I encourage you to take seriously your responsibility in this area and to make it the highest priority in your parenting goals.

In His Service,

Bill Myers
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