

Feed My Lambs

BIBLICAL GUIDELINES FOR
PARENTS TO DETERMINE IF
THEIR CHILDREN ARE READY
FOR COMMUNION

by PHILLIP KAYSER, Ph.D.



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are Ready for Communion

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for Parents to Determine if their
Children are Ready for Communion

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Five Criteria for Admission to the Table

1. They have been baptized into the covenant (Exodus 12:48; Acts 2:41-42; etc.) by believing parents (Josh 5).

It is primarily the covenant that admits to the feast. We should expect that our children will have faith from an early age (cf. Psalm 22:9-10) and will never know a time when they did not love and follow God (Luke 1:44; 2 Tim. 3:15). We should be more fearful of keeping children away from the feast than of bringing them too early. They are called to come to fellowship with Jesus (Luke 18:16) and we are warned, “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea” (Mark 9:42). Young children coming to the feast is the norm in Scripture, and barring them from the feast always has one of the following criteria as a reason. (See the appendix attached which outlines numerous Scriptures showing young children coming to all the sacramental meals.)

2. Minimum age of three years old

Keep in mind that the scripture does not permit children younger than three years old to partake. (See Appendix B). 2 Chronicles 31:16 says the sacrament was distributed to those “three years old and up” who were believers (see below). Not all three year olds are ready. This is simply a minimum.

3. Faith in the finished work of Christ

God desires his people to come to the Lord’s Supper in faith (Rev. 3:20; Psalm 51:17-19). And it is possible for young children to do so. Christ quoted Jeremiah 31 as the basis for the Lord’s Supper and said that this should be the expectation in the New Covenant - that “*all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*” God does not require strong faith. Even his disciples were “weak” in faith and had “little faith,” and yet He admitted them to the feast. We tend to impose adult criteria on the children, and Christ does the opposite. He says, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are *converted and become like little children*, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever *humbles himself as this little child is the*

greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.” (Matt. 18:3-5).

4. Minimal understanding of salvation and what the Sacrament portrays

This logically comes next for “by faith we understand” (Heb. 11:3). The Larger Catechism calls for understanding and bars the ignorant. This is not calling for a mature understanding of the faith since “one who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation” and one who is “weak” may partake of the Lord’s Supper if there is a desire to cleave to Christ (Larger Catechism 174). It is ignorance of the simplicity of the Gospel. The Old Testament also calls for a degree of knowledge for those who partake.

Though in Appendix A we cited several verses that admitted “little ones” to the sacrament, Nehemiah 8 defines the “little ones” of Deuteronomy 31:9-13 as being “*all who could hear with understanding*” (Neh. 8:2) and “*those who could understand*” (Neh. 8:3).¹

The just weaned Samuel (three years? 1 Sam. 1:22-28) partook of a communion meal. It is interesting to note however that he immediately “served the LORD before Eli the priest” (1Sam. 2:11). Commentators suggest that he may have only lit candles and banged the cymbals and other interesting work, but the fact that it is service before the Lord (vs. 2,18) suggests at least some understanding. Certainly Samuel may have been an unusually young example. But the kind of knowledge Scripture requires is obviously not extensive.

The youngest participant of Passover asks questions concerning the meaning of the sacrament. Though there is growth in understanding (like Samuel’s growth in 1 Samuel 2:26), the phrasing of the question assumes at least an ability to understand the sacrament as the parent gives instruction.

¹It is obviously possible to translate Isaiah 28 in a way differently than Young’s literal has. But notice the parallels with Hebrews 5:13-14. “whom will He *teach knowledge?* and whom *will He make to understand the message?* Those just weaned from milk...” Hebrews 5:13-14 makes the same contrast between a babe and one mature enough to eat solid food and says that the mature one has gotten off of milk and can “discern both good and evil.”

“I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” (Hos. 6:6)

Clarification: Does God require *great* knowledge? No. Repeatedly Christ called His disciples fools because they were slow to grasp doctrine. Yet He admitted them to the table because they were able to understand that He was the Christ, and they clung to Him in their weakness. They didn’t understand what He meant when He told them they needed to eat His flesh and drink His blood (do you?). But Christ accepted them to the Lord’s Table because they had a basic understanding of their salvation. In the same chapter (John 6) they said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and *know* that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (John 6:68-69)

5. Obedience to God’s Word and a desire to please God

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more when he brings it with a wicked mind?” (Psalm 21:3)

“Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates...Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil...” (Isa. 1:14,16,17. See whole context).

“But on this one I will look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.”(Isa. 66:2 - the context is the rejection of the sacrament of those who fail to do so [vs. 3-4]).

See also such passages as Isaiah 1:10-20; Amos 5:18-27; Jer. 7:1-29; Micah 6:6-8; Zechariah 7:5-7; Malachi 1:6-14; 2:13-17.

Clarifications: What kind of self-examination does God require? And how holy does He expect us to become? He wants us to confess all known sin and to confess that we are weak on our own. As He told His disciples, “without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Against the Roman Catholics whose doctrine of "self-examination" led them to finally admit only priests to the sacrament, Calvin insisted that we subvert the meaning of grace pictured in the Lord's Supper if we make

the quality of faith/repentance and self-examination the issue. Parker, in his classic book on Calvin, sums up Calvin's argument as follows:²

The medieval teaching on confession demanded a puritanical standard impossible of attainment, with worthy reception of the Holy Communion dependant on ethical purity and an adequate contrition and confession. But we come worthily to the Lord's Supper when we offer God our unworthiness that he may forgive us and thus make us worthy by his mercy. We should not even ask about the quality of our repentance, faith, and love. Only their existence is relevant.

Samuel is a good example of this. He didn't have his full act together when he partook of communion in 1 Samuel 1 at the age of 3. "Samuel grew in stature, and *in favor both with the LORD and men.*" (1 Sam. 2:26). We may not favor everything the children do when they first partake, but we should ask, "Is there growth?" Without self-examination & repentance (all of which shows a desire to grow in holiness), there can be no growth in favor with God and man. This requirement is what the Old Testament repeatedly referred to when it called upon people to "sanctify themselves to the Lord in holiness." 2 Chronicles 31:16 mentions that at least some three year olds partook of sacramental meals, but verse 18 clarifies by saying, "their little ones and their wives, their sons and daughters, the whole company of them - *for in their faithfulness they sanctified themselves in holiness.*" If a three year old had not been sanctified in holiness, the implication is that he could not have partaken. And there are many other examples.

Herbert S. Bird (an Orthodox Presbyterian Minister who argued against paedocommunion) said, "The youngest child present at the Passover would be of an age with numerous children who have been baptized and admitted to full communicant membership in Baptist churches."³ In a footnote he says, "Several reports from Southern Baptist churches indicate that children as young as four or five years of age have been received as candidates for baptism and full church membership." He was skeptical that all of these candidates were ready, but he showed that the Baptists could not charge Presbyterians with inconsistency when we admit infants to baptism but not to the Lord's Supper. Against the

²T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 46.

³Bird, p. 161.

Baptists we maintain that (whatever the age) faith, repentance and a basic understanding of the Gospel is always required for admission to an Old Covenant meal.

Parents should not use this book to overstep the elders' authority over the Lord's Table

Though the checklists and sample questions below are an aid to help parents to discern the presence of God's grace at work in their children, it should be kept in mind that the elders of the church alone have the authority to admit people to the sacrament or to bar people from the sacrament.⁴ However, we recognize that it is often the parents who are first to recognize this faith in their children, and they can help the elders to know that a child is ready. It is interesting that John the Baptist was excommunicating Israel and requiring proselyte baptism before people could be considered members of the new covenant community. Thus, he was exercising the "keys of the kingdom." But his work was also sensitive to the family structure, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children in order "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). Also, the implications of Numb. 30; Deut. 21:18-21; Josh 4:21-24; Ezek. 34, and 2 John call for elders to communicate well with the parents in examining the spiritual state of the children.

Likewise, once children are admitted to the Lord's Table by the parents it is important to realize that parents may not withhold the table from

⁴ Just as the right to baptize is an authority issue vested in the officers of the church (Matt 21:23-27; John 1:25; 3:25-27) the "right to eat" (Heb. 13:10) from the table is also within the exclusive jurisdiction of church officers (Gen. 14:18; Numb 3:8-13; Deut. 12:18; 2 Chron. 30:21-22; 2 Chron. 31:14,15,16,19; 35:10-15; Neh. 13:13; Matt. 16:19; cf Luke 22:15-30; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

1. In the Old Testament, it was the Levites who "divided them [the sacramental elements] quickly among all the lay people" (2 Chron. 35:13; etc.)
2. In the New Testament, the "keys of the kingdom" that open and close access to the church via baptism and communion were given to the church officers (Matt. 16:19; cf Luke 22:15-30; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

their children. To do so is to overstep the family's jurisdiction.⁵ If parents believe that their children should be barred from the Lord's Table because they are evidencing unrepentant rebellion or are giving other evidence of lack of faith, they should bring their case to the elders,⁶ and the elders can bar the child temporarily or permanently from the table according to Biblical principles of justice found in the Bible. Nor may individuals bar themselves from the Lord's Table because of sin.⁷ The jurisdiction of opening and closing of the Table is the exclusive jurisdiction of the church elders, who are themselves accountable to God for their flock.

⁵ The three governments that God established are family (Acts 3:25), church (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1), and state (Rom. 13:1-17). The jurisdictional limits of each is jealously guarded by God (2 Chronicles 26:18-19; 2 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Corinthians 9:18; 1 Kings 21; Numbers 1; Matthew 8:9) and clearly articulated in His Word. See footnote 34.

⁶ In the same way that Paul applied Deuteronomy 17:7 to church discipline in 1 Cor. 5:13 and Jesus applied Deuteronomy 19:15 to church discipline in Matt 18:16, Deuteronomy 21:18-21 also applies to the church with regard to a rebellious son, though of course the church must use the keys of the kingdom (discipline) rather than the sword. On the relationship of even a single mother and an elder, see 2 John. Elder John respected her jurisdiction as the head of her household, but she also submitted to his authority with respect to church.

⁷ Exodus 12:16 says, "everyone must eat." It is not an option. Leviticus 23:6 says, "you must eat." Deuteronomy 12:18 says, "you must eat." 1 Corinthians 11:17 gives only two options: eating for the better or eating for the worse. The partaking of communion was intended to be when "you come together" (v. 17), "whenever you come together" (v. 18), "when you come together in one place" (v. 20) and "whenever you come together" (v. 33). And at the last supper that Jesus celebrated with his disciples He said, "drink from it all of you" (Matt 26:27). Even Judas had to partake (unto judgment) because he had not been excommunicated.

A Checklist to Discern Whether Children are Ready

1. Has my child demonstrated a sincere faith in Christ? What fruit have I seen in his life to show me this?
2. Are there evidences that my child has a personal relationship with the Lord, and not just a formal relationship?
3. Is my child able to examine himself? Does he do so already as he comes to worship? What are the results of this examination? Does he ever seek to reconcile with those he has offended, confess sin, or in other ways prepare for worship?
4. Has my child had conviction of sin without being confronted about his sin?
5. Does my child understand that the Lord's Supper is not just a snack? Does he realize that there are greater reasons for partaking than just that his friends are doing so?
6. Does my child understand the basics of the Gospel?
7. Does my child understand the meaning of the Lord's Table?
8. Does my child persist in rebellion or willful sin? (a disqualification for child or adult)

Sample Questions to Ask

Keep in mind that children may have just as profound a grasp of grace as an adult, but may phrase it in different ways. Children (or adults for that matter) who are ready for communion may not be able to answer all (or even most) of these questions. A misunderstanding of one word could lead a person to give a wrong answer. Thus, it is important to discern the thrust of the answers to the various questions. Is there a pattern of trust in Christ? The questions under each heading are different ways of ascertaining the same thing. We want to know if the child understands something of the following three questions: “What has God done for you?” (God’s plan of salvation), “What has God done in you?” (evidence of regeneration and sanctification), and “What has gone done through you?” (evidence of loving service). Parents can use the following questions as ways of informally and formally interacting with the child to increase his/her understanding.

Questions probing understanding of the Gospel and the meaning of the Lord’s Supper.

(See #4-6 of section 1 of this booklet) - This corresponds to “What has God done for you?”

Note: It’s not enough for people to say “I invited Jesus into my heart,” or “Jesus died for me.” Rome says the same. We need to ask questions that show that they understand justification by faith, even if they don’t know the word justification. They must understand a) that Christ died bearing our sins, b) that Christ gives us His righteousness when we ask Him to and c) we are treated “just as if we had never sinned and just as if we were perfect” when we trust Jesus. It may take several questions to get adults or children to communicate this to us. The following are some sample questions. Even if they get some of these wrong, phrased a different way they may understand what we are asking and give the right answer.

1. How do you know that you are a Christian?

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2. Two Evangelism Explosion questions: 1) Do you know for sure that you are going to be with God in Heaven? 2) If God were to ask you, "Why should I let you into My Heaven?" what would you say?
 3. Are you a sinner? Do you still sin even though you are a Christian? (They better say yes. Many times this is a point of misunderstanding that needs to be discussed.)
 4. If you are a sinner, how can God save you?
 5. What did God do about your sin?
 6. Why is it important that Jesus lived a perfect life?
 7. Why is it important that Jesus died for us?
 8. What does it mean to believe/trust/have faith in Jesus?
 9. A sign is a symbol or a picture of something. What does the bread symbolize/illustrate/picture? What does the wine/juice in the communion symbolize/illustrate/picture? Does it really become blood and bread?
 10. A seal is an assurance or promise. What is promised in the Lord's Supper to those who put their trust in Jesus?
 11. What does it mean to partake of the Lord's Supper unworthily?
 12. Why do you want to take communion?

Questions probing whether there is a regenerate heart.

(See #1-5 of section 1 of this booklet) - This corresponds to the question "What has God done in you?"

Note: Questions asking about a change from unregenerate to regenerate are misleading and even confusing since a person may have been regenerate in the womb.

1. Does God ever convict you of sin?
2. Do you repent of your sins even when no one has caught you but God?
3. How do you get right with God when this happens?
4. Do you pray? When?
5. Do you read the Bible? How often?
6. Does the Bible ever make you want to change your behavior?

7. Do you love God?
8. How do you worship in church? Do you like to worship God?

Questions probing whether there is concern for others or love.

(See #1-3,5 of section 1 of this booklet) - This corresponds to the question “What is God doing through you?”

1. What are some of your favorite ways of serving other people?
2. How do you serve Mom & Dad? Does it ever please you to do so? How do you serve your brothers and sisters? Others?
3. Why would you want to serve someone else?
4. Are you respectful to elders? To your parents?
5. Have you ever paid someone back for breaking what is theirs, or in other ways tried to correct a problem you have created?
6. What are your favorite ways of serving God?

Appendix A

Believing Children Have Always Partaken Of All Sacramental Meals

General Scriptures mandating participation in all the feasts.

Scripture	Feast	Relevant portion of the passage
Deut. 12:1-19	Prescription for <i>all feasts</i> once Israel had a central sanctuary. (According to Coppes, children did not eat of these once they entered into the land permanently.) ⁸	“There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks. And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, <i>you and your households</i> ” (vs. 6-7) “...all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, <i>you and your sons and your daughters..</i> ” (vs. 11-12) “the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstlings of your herd of your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offerings of your hand... <i>you and your son and your daughter...</i> ” (vs. 17-18)
Deut. 14:22-29	What to do if the distance is too great - buy the sacrament with money.	“then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or strong drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, <i>you and your household...and the fatherless...and widow.</i> ”

Listing of several Scriptures (in order) showing participation in all the feasts (not an exhaustive list).

Scripture	Feast	Relevant portion of the passage
Ex.10:9-	Unspecified	“We will go with <i>our young</i> and our old; with <i>our</i>

⁸Kellogg comments: “In the two verses last named, we have a regulation which covers, not only the peace offerings, but with them all other sacrificial eatings.” (*The Book of Leviticus*, p. 88). Matthew Henry applies this to the Lord’s Supper and says, “Those that sacrifice to God are welcome to eat before him, and to feast upon their sacrifices; he sups with us, and we with him, Rev. iii.20”

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Scripture	Feast	Relevant portion of the passage
10,24-26 with 5:1 & 7:16	(probably a peace offering)	<i>sons and our daughters...for we must hold a feast to the LORD</i> " (v. 9) "when I let your <i>little ones</i> go!" (v. 10) "let your little ones also go with you" (v. 24)
Ex. 12-13	Passover	" <i>all</i> the congregation of Israel...a lamb for a household...and if the <i>household</i> is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it <i>according to the number of persons</i> " (12:3-4) "the <i>whole assembly</i> of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight" (12:6) "that which <i>everyone must eat</i> " (12:16) "whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land." (12:19) ⁹ "you and your <i>sons</i> " (12:24) " <i>your children</i> " (12:26) " <i>your son</i> " (13:8) "when your <i>son</i> asks" (13:14)
Lev. 23:33-44	offering made by fire/burnt/grain/sacrifice/drink/freewill offerings vows on the feast of Tabernacles	"you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days ... you shall rejoice before the LORD for seven days...it shall be a statute forever in your generations... <i>all who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths</i> " The significance of this passage is to show the types of offerings given on the feast of Tabernacles. See the later passages for specifics of who partook.
Deut. 12:1-19	all feasts	"eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice ... <i>you and your households</i> " (vs. 6-7) "...all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, <i>you and your sons and your daughters..</i> " (vs. 11-12) " <i>you and your son and your daughter...</i> " (vs. 17-18)
Deut. 14:22-29	(peace offerings?) in connection with tithe	"eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, <i>you and your household...and the fatherless...and widow.</i> " (vs. 26,29)
Deut.	Pentecost	"rejoice before the LORD your God, <i>you and your</i>

⁹It should be pointed out that Coppes tries to say that Tabernacles, etc. was all inclusive - even unbelievers could eat of the feast. But note the language of this verse. The stranger (i.e. convert from paganism - see 12:48) was treated as being part of the congregation of Israel even though a Hittite like Uriah, David's friend. All the feasts were spiritual sacraments that excluded the unclean and heathen. The word "stranger" does not prove anything to the contrary.

Scripture	Feast	Relevant portion of the passage
16:9-12		<i>son and your daughter...and the fatherless</i> " (v.11)
Deut. 16:13-17	Tabernacles	NB that <i>Coppes conveniently quotes only verse 16</i> : "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God." Since women having a menstrual period were unclean and unfit for any feast, God makes special mention of men being mandated. But notice verse 14 that Coppes ignores. "and you shall rejoice in your feast, <i>you and your son and your daughter ... and the fatherless</i> "
Deut. 26:1-15	firstfruits/tithe	"So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the LORD your God has given you <i>and your house...the fatherless</i> , and the widow, so that they may eat... <i>the fatherless</i> " (vv. 11-12,13)
Deut. 27:1-30:20	Covenant renewal ceremony burnt offerings peace offerings	NB that this was before an altar (27:4-6), accompanied with burnt offerings and peace offerings (27:6-7) and all took both the blessings and the cursings of the covenant (28 - i.e. God didn't "protect" children from the curses) "All of you stand today before the LORD your God; your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, <i>your little ones</i> and your wives...that you may enter into covenant...and into His oath" (vv. 9-14)
Deut. 31:9-13	Tabernacles	"when <i>all Israel</i> comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses...Gather the people together, men and women <i>and little ones</i> " (vv. 11-12)
Joshua 8:30-35	Covenant renewal burnt and peace offerings	NB that this is before an altar (30) with burnt offerings and peace offerings to ratify covenant (v. 31) and that this covenant is made with: " <i>all Israel</i> " (v. 33) "all the congregation, the women, <i>the little ones</i> , and the strangers who were living among them" (v. 35 see footnote 2 on stranger being counted as part of Israel)
1 Samuel 1	fellowship offerings? (cf. 2:12-25)	"Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty ... he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to <i>all her sons and daughters</i> ...once when <i>they</i> had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh" (vv. 3,9)
1 Kings 8:1-66	peace offerings grain offerings burnt offerings fat of peace offerings	Notice that this feast was before the ark of the Lord (v. 5) and before the altar (v. 22) " <i>all the congregation of Israel</i> who were assembled to him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude" (v. 5)

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Scripture	Feast	Relevant portion of the passage
		<p>“then the king and <i>all Israel with him</i> offered sacrifices before the LORD “(v. 62) “At that time Solomon held a feast, and <i>all Israel with him</i>” (v. 65)</p>
2 Chron. 30:	Passover	<p>Note that those who were not clean were not supposed to eat (v. 17-20) and in this case, apart from God’s graciousness, they would have been eating judgment to themselves (v. 20) “the <i>whole assembly</i>” (v. 23), “the <i>whole congregation</i>” (v. 25)</p>
2 Chron. 31:16 (with vv. 10-15)	“most holy things” (to male priests) and offerings, tithes and dedicated things (to all priest’s family)	<p>The priests distributed to “males <i>from three years old and up</i> who were written in the genealogy...” (v. 16) “and to all who were written in the genealogy - <i>their little ones</i> and their wives, <i>their sons and daughters</i> - for in their faithfulness they sanctified themselves in holiness” (v. 18) “distribute portions to <i>all the males</i> among the priests and to <i>all who were listed by genealogies among the Levites</i>” (v. 19)</p>
Neh. 8	Tabernacles	<p>“<i>all the people</i> gathered together as one man ...which the LORD had commanded Israel” (v. 1) “before the congregation, of men and women and <i>all who could hear with understanding</i>” (v. 2) “before the men and women <i>and those who could understand</i>” (v. 3) “for <i>all the people</i> wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to <i>them</i> ‘Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared...and <i>all the people</i> went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly” (vv. 9-12)</p>
Isa. 28:7-10	sacrifices of altar	<p>Compare the rebukes against drunkenness in 1 Corinthians 11 and note that such unworthy partaking did not bar children: “But they also erred through wine, and through intoxicating drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink...all tables are full of vomit and filthiness...whom will He teach knowledge? and whom will He make to understand the message? <i>Those just weaned from milk. Those just drawn from the breasts.</i> See KJV, Young’s Literal.</p>
Isa. 40:11	New covenant eating -	<p>“He will <i>feed His flock</i> like a shepherd; He will gather the <i>lambs</i> with His arm, and carry them in</p>

Scripture	Feast	Relevant portion of the passage
	symbolical?	His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.”
Ezek. 34	contrast of Shepherds who bar sheep & Christ’s meal - symbolical?	“Woe to the shepherds who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat...you slaughter the fatlings, <i>but you do not feed the flock</i> ” (vv. 2-3) “ <i>I will feed My flock</i> , and I will make them lie down,’ says the LORD GOD.” (v. 15) “therefore I will establish one shepherd over them, and <i>he shall feed them</i> - My servant David. <i>He shall feed them</i> and be their shepherd.” (v. 23)
Zech. 14:16-20	The Tabernacles celebration in the new covenant	Celebration by “ <i>families</i> of the earth” (v. 17), “ <i>family</i> of Egypt” (v. 18). Note that in verses 20-21 there is not a greater alienation from the altar but “The pots in the LORD’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. <i>Yes every pot</i> in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. <i>Everyone who sacrifices</i> shall come and thank them and cook in them.”
Luke 2:41-50	Passover	“His parents went to Jerusalem <i>every year at the Feast of Passover</i> . And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem <i>according to the custom of the feast</i> .” (vv. 41-42) See notes under point C. below.
John 21:15f	symbolical?	“Feed My <i>lambs</i> ...Feed My sheep.”

Note that in the references to the Lord’s Supper in the New Testament, there is always a context that refers us back to celebrations that the children partook of. (See middle column for which feast was in the context.)

Scripture	Feasts which included children	Relevant portion of the passage
John 6	Manna	“Our fathers ate the manna in the desert” (v. 31), “Lord, give us this bread always. And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life.’” (vv. 34-35) See verses 46-59.
Matt. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 13-17	Passover (the proto-type sacrifice/ feast out of which all other	Coppes tries to downplay that this was a Passover, and rather than seeing the Passover as the proto-type and summary of everything that the other feasts and sacrifices portrayed, he makes the Passover as one feast among many, and then proceeds to dismiss the Passover as regulative by making Atonement (a fast day) and the Sinai feast the overarching paradigm. But language could not be clearer that Christ

Scripture	Feasts which included children	Relevant portion of the passage
	sacrifices and all other feasts logically grew.)	<p>was celebrating the Passover: “I will <i>keep the Passover</i> at your house with My disciples” (Matt. 26:18). Note that this proves that more than the disciples were present at the house. Even if that man’s family was eating Passover in a different room (which is probable), the Passover was being celebrated under one roof by more than the 12. See also Luke 22:8 where Jesus says, “Go and <i>prepare the Passover</i> for us, that we may eat.” and verse 13 “and <i>they prepared the Passover.</i>” Coppes may be right that the twelve were initiating the covenant as “princes” or “federal heads” like the 70 elders at Sinai, but it should be noted that we have shown the people eating at the foot of the mountain, and it is clear that there were others under the same roof who were eating here as well. Federal heads do not replace the people. They represent the people. Notice too, Christ’s reference to the “new covenant.” This is clearly a quote from Jeremiah 31’s New Covenant that was made with the <i>house</i> of Israel so that “<i>all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD.</i>” (Jer. 31:34). The covenant explicitly includes the “<i>seed of Israel</i>” (v. 36, 37).</p>
Acts 2	Pentecost	<p>“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (v. 42) “breaking bread from house to house” (v. 46)</p>
1Cor. 5:6-8	Passover	<p>“Do you not know that a little leaven leavens <i>the whole lump</i>? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed, Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. Therefore <i>let us</i> keep the feast...” As we saw in the O.T. , the Passover included all believing children.</p>
1 Cor. 10:1-6	Manna - but possibly other sacrifices too	<p>“all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”</p>
1 Cor. 10:7	Peace Offerings and burnt offerings in Exodus 32:5-6	<p>“The people sat down to eat and drink” (cf. Ex. 32:5-6 where this incident is explicitly tied to the altar: “So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.’ Then they arose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”)</p>

Scripture	Feasts which included children	Relevant portion of the passage
1 Cor. 10:8	unspecified “sacrifices” (Numb. 25-26)	cf. Paul’s application of temple sacrifices of both pagans and Jews in 10:14-22. These sacrifices were very relevant for Paul’s audience.
1 Cor. 10:9	manna (Numb. 21:4-8)	Notice manna bringing the same judgment as bread and wine today.
1 Cor. 10:10	Tabernacle meals (Numb. 16:1-49)	Notice that the same “destroyer” mentioned in connection with the Passover (Ex. 12:23) kills Israelites for eating manna unworthily. “nor murmur as some of them also murmured and were destroyed by the destroyer.” (v. 10)
1 Cor. 10:16-17	Lord’s Supper	Note the connection of the Lord’s Supper to Old Testament ceremonies.
1 Cor. 10:18	temple meals	Notice that he says precisely what Coppes denies: that all who eat the sacrificial meal are “partakers of the altar” It wasn’t just adults who shared in the altar. All who ate did, and as we have seen, children ate.
1 Cor. 10:19-33	Pagan sacrificial meals	This section emphasizes the fact that even with pagan sacrifices, when a person partakes of the food, he has “fellowship with demons” (v. 20) whether he realizes it or not. In the Lord’s Supper, there is a communion that transcends our understanding (whether adult or child).
1 Cor 11	Lord’s Supper	Note the phrase “new covenant” (v. 25). See note on Luke
Rev. 3:20	Lord’s Supper	Context - Christ has deserted the church because of their wickedness. His offer however goes to all: “Behold I stand at the door and knock. If <i>anyone</i> hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

It is clear that Christ partook of Passover before he was twelve.

We have already seen that the Old Testament allowed children (and even commanded children) to partake in all of the sacramental feasts. This appendix has not dealt with the necessary pre-requisites of faith/repentance, discernment, and love to God. Appendix C deals with that subject and shows that no child who rejects Christ may come to the feast. However, the point of this Appendix is to make it undeniably clear that children as young as three years old were admitted even to “the most holy things” (cf. 2 Chron. 31:16; cf. Isa. 28:7-10). We have seen that Nehemiah admitted “all who could understand.” It is clear that Samuel

ate of the holy things in the tabernacle as soon as he was weaned (three years - cf. 1 Sam. 2-3). The Scripture chart makes it clear that it was not just the wilderness meals that children partook of (as Coppes maintains). Thus, note that in Luke 2:41-42, neither verse says anything about *Jesus* going up. That is implied. It says, “His parents went...they went.” The only difference between verses 41 and 42 is the mention of Christ’s age because it is pivotal in showing what an unusual child Christ was to have such wisdom at such an early age.

Coppes says that this verse is a reference to bar mitzvah and that Christ was catechized before He partook of the Passover. Even if it is bar mitzvah (which is unlikely - see below), it has no relevance to whether Christ partook. Bar Mitzvah has never been an initiating rite into Passover as any Jew will tell you (and as you can read in the Talmud for yourself). Very young children partake of Passover in unbelieving Jewish circles even to this day. But what is astonishing to me is that Coppes is willing to base the age of admission on bar mitzvah (a Pharisaical addition to God’s Word) and ignore the clear Biblical statements of the Old Testament.

However, it is doubtful that this was bar mitzvah for two reasons. 1) Christ never submitted to even the most (apparently) innocent of Pharisaical additions to God’s law (cf. the innocent rites He condemns in Mark 7). It is clear that bar mitzvah was a tradition of the fathers, not a tradition of Scripture and would have received His condemnation. 2) It is likely that the modern custom of Bar Mitzvah was not invented until well after the time of Christ. The Talmud began to be recorded in 166 A.D., but did not take its final form until much later. The Talmud is Coppes’ only ancient source of information on bar mitzvah. But in any case, it is clear that bar mitzvah has nothing to do with admission to the feasts.

Did children partake of wine in the sacramental meals?

Coppes says no (based on the Talmud) and concludes from this that children never partook fully of the meals. Scripture affirms that they did partake of wine.

Coppes boldly asserts that “children did not fully consume any meal - the rabbis forbid children to drink wine” (p. 22) This careless mistake could have been corrected if he had talked to a rabbi. Children do

partake of wine today in Jewish homes. In fact, the custom of having the eight-day-old boy suck on a rag soaked in wine is common at the time of circumcision. But that is beside the point. Why is Coppes basing his theology on the Talmud? That is a compendium of the demonic teachings of the Pharisees whom Christ vigorously resisted. It is a collection of opposing opinions (dialectic) that can prove just about anything. The Bible is our only source of doctrine, and it is clear in the Bible that children partook of wine at all the sacramental meals. As the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says, “Throughout the OT, wine is regarded as a *necessity* of life and in no way as a mere luxury. It was a *necessary* part of even the simplest meal (Gen. 14:18; Judges 19:19; 1 Sam. 16:20; Isa. 55:1)...and *was drunk by all classes and all ages, even by the very young* (Lam. 2:12; Zech. 9:17).”¹⁰ Generally there was no meal without wine, and it was certainly true that there was no sacramental meal without wine. Note the following examples of children partaking of wine at the sacrament:

Scripture	Feast	Relevant portion of the passage
Deut. 12:1-19	all feasts	“You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain <i>or your new wine</i> or your oil, of the firstlings of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God chooses, you <i>and your son and your daughter</i> ” (vv. 17-18)l
Deut. 14:22-29	Instructions on centralized feast days when the distance was too great.	“the tithe of your grain <i>and your new wine</i> ...then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, <i>for wine or strong drink</i> , ...and you shall rejoice, <i>you and your household...and the fatherless...and widow.</i> ” (vv. 23,25,26,29
Deut 16:13-17	Tabernacles	“...have gathered from your threshing floor and <i>from your winepress</i> ; and you shall rejoice in your feast, <i>you and your son and your daughter...fatherless</i> ” (vv. 13-14)
Deut. 18:1-8	sacraments of priests family	“they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach. The firstfruits of your grain <i>and your new wine</i> and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him.... <i>and all his sons</i> ” (vv. 3-5)
Deut. 26:1-15	Firstfruits/tithes	“...worship before the LORD your God. So you shall rejoice <i>in every good thing</i> which the LORD your God

¹⁰ISBE, “Wine.”

Scripture	Feast	Relevant portion of the passage
1 Sam. 1	fellowship offerings	has given to you <i>and your house...the fatherless...the fatherless...</i> ” (vv. 10,11,12,13) “Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty ... he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and <i>to all her sons and daughters...</i> Once when <i>they</i> had finished eating and <i>drinking</i> in Shiloh... <i>Eli thought she was drunk.</i> So Eli said to her, ‘How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!’ ...Now <i>when she had weaned him</i> [Samuel], she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and <i>a skin of wine</i> , and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh. <i>And the child was young.</i> Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli.... <i>So they worshipped</i> the LORD there.” (vv. 3,9,13,24,25,28)
2 Chron. 31	priestly portions	“As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and <i>wine...</i> ” (v. 5) The priests distributed “allotments to their brethren by divisions, to the great as well as <i>to the small.</i> Besides those males <i>from three years old and up</i> who were written in the genealogy...” (v. 16) “and to all who were written in the genealogy - <i>their little ones</i> and their wives, <i>their sons and daughters</i> - for in their faithfulness they sanctified themselves in holiness... <i>distribute portions to all the males</i> among the priests and <i>to all who were listed by genealogies</i> among the Levites” (vv. 18-19)
Neh. 8	Tabernacles	“men and women and those who could understand” (v. 1,2,3) “for <i>all the people</i> wept, when they heard the words of the Law. Then he said <i>to them</i> ‘Go your way, eat the fat, <i>drink the sweet</i> , and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared...and <i>all the people</i> went their way to eat <i>and drink</i> , to send portions and rejoice greatly” (vv. 9-12)

Even if we did not have the clear statements that applied to all the feasts (and thus to Passover), the Reformers correctly taught that all of the feasts and sacrifices that were later added, flowed logically from their proto-type, the Passover. Thus, if wine was essential in the “offspring feasts” that flowed from Passover, it would logically be included in the Passover itself. Peace offerings, for example were integral to the

Passover right from the beginning (see for example, Ex. 3:18; 5:1; 7:16; 10:9; 1 Chron. 30:22,24; 35:8-14), as Coppes admits.

Appendix B

The Three Major Views On Children & Communion

	Paedo-communion ¹¹	“Believer’s Communion” ¹²	“spiritual adult communion” ¹³
1	does not require faith/repentance	requires faith/repentance	faith/repentance is not enough
2	The covenant is the key concept for inclusion	Laying hold of the covenant by faith is the key concept.	though faith and repentance are required, what distinguishes this view is the addition of age and holiness as key concepts for admission (Coppes says the closer one gets to the altar the more holy one has to be to partake)
3	The “age of discretion” is immaterial and there is	“age of discretion” (BCO 56-4-j) “cannot be precisely fixed” (57-2) but is defined	age of discretion is <i>age 13</i>

¹¹The lexicon defines “paedo” as “very young child or infant.” (see Matt. 2:8,9,11,13,20; Lk. 1:59,66,76,80; 2:17,21,27,40; etc. for idea of infant or toddler.) There are two basic types of paedo-communion. Some believe in “tincture” (putting the elements on an infants tongue). Others admit “weaned” children even though they have not made profession of faith. But the absence of profession of faith is common to both. **To argue that believer’s communion is equivalent to paedo-communion, is as inaccurate as saying that all Baptists are “paedo-baptists” since they will baptize anyone who has made profession of faith, even if the person is only five or six years old.**

¹²It is called “believers communion” because faith is the issue, not age. The Westminster Larger Catechism 177 only opposes giving communion to “infants” because they are not “of years and ability to examine themselves.” BCO 57-1 specifically admits “children” to the table. “*Believer’s children ... When they are able to understand the Gospel, they should be earnestly reminded that they are members of the Church by birthright, and that it is their duty and privilege personally to accept Christ, to confess Him before men, and to seek admission to the Lord’s Supper.*” So the PCA allows *believing* children to the table, but does not allow infants or toddlers.

¹³This is the phrase that Leonard Coppes uses to describe his unusual position. He defines “adult” as a person who is a minimum of 13 years of age.

	Paedo-communion¹¹	“Believer’s Communion”¹²	“spiritual adult communion”¹³
	<i>no attempt to discern</i> such an age of discretion	as the time when children “ <i>become subject¹⁴ to the obligations of the covenant: faith, repentance and obedience</i> ” (BCO 56-4-j).	
4	Children of believers partake <i>before</i> they are able to understand the Gospel.	“Believer’s children” may partake at an age “ <i>when</i> they are able to understand the Gospel” (BCO 57-1,2).	Believers children may not partake at ages when they are able to understand the Gospel. Many have to wait for years.
5	infants and toddlers may partake	infants and toddlers may not partake, but all “children” (BCO 57-1) or “young persons” (BCO 57-2) who profess faith in Christ may partake.	infants, toddlers and believing children may not partake. Only “adult” believers partake (interpreted as 13 years of age)
6	children automatically partake	children are “earnestly reminded ...that it is their duty to accept Christ... and to seek admission to the Lord’s Supper (57-1)	Children are barred from the table verbally and earnestly exhorted not to partake.
7	the concept of “worthy partaking” is applied only to those who can understand (primarily adults)	the concept of “worthy partaking” is applied evenhandedly to children and adults (with the caveat that “to whom much is given [whether adult or child] much will be required”)	“worthy partaking” is applied to all but by definition excludes children
8	“partake worthily” = <i>those able</i> to repent must come with repentance	“partake worthily” = all who partake must come with faith in Christ and repentance of sin.	“partake worthily” = holiness, maturity and wisdom (which children presumably are not capable of).

¹⁴It is difficult for me to understand how a child is not subject to the covenant obligations of faith, repentance and obedience until 13 years of age!

Resources Available from the Publisher

- Cummings, Tim. *Ministerial Training: The Bible's Normative Pattern*.
- Davis, Andrew. *Written on Your Heart: An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*.
- Elliot, Michael (Ed.). *Bible Acrostic: An Aid to Memorizing the Content of Every Chapter of the Bible*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Biblical Romance: What Does the Bible Say About Courtship & Betrothal?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *The Canon of Scripture, Volume 1: Biblical Presuppositions*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Church Membership: Is It Biblical?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *December 25 Jewish Style: The Ancient Jewish Celebration Anticipating the Birth of Christ*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Dressed Up for Church: A Contrarian Rag on Appropriate Clothing*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Feed My Lambs: Biblical Guidelines for Parents to Determine if Their Children are Ready for Communion*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *The Flaw of Natural Law*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Getting Christians Back Into Politics*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Glory and Coverings: A Study of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *An Hour of Prayer: A Practical Guide to 12 Kinds of Prayer*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *How to Deal with Objections to Inerrancy*.
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- Kayser, Phillip. *The Problem of Evil: A Dialogue*.
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- Kayser, Phillip, & Pickering, Wilbur. *Has God Indeed Said?: The Preservation of the Text of the New Testament*.
- Rose, Ben Lacy. *Baptism by Sprinkling*.

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Feed My Lambs: Biblical Guidelines for Parents to Determine if their Children are Ready for Communion

Phillip Kayser, Ph.D.

Jesus admonished Peter with the words, “Feed My lambs” (John 21:15). In the same Spirit, the PCA Book of Church Order states that when our children “are able to understand the Gospel, they should be earnestly reminded that they are members of the Church by birthright, and that it is their duty and privilege personally to accept Christ, to confess Him before men, and to seek admission to the Lord's Supper.” This book is intended to help parents through the process of preparing their children for the Lord's Table. The Holy Communion is a great privilege for God's people, and entrance into this privilege should not be unduly delayed.

Founder and President of Biblical Blueprints, **Phillip Kayser** has degrees in education, theology, and philosophy. Ordained in 1987, he currently serves as Senior Pastor of Dominion Covenant Church, a conservative Presbyterian (CPC) church in Omaha, NE. He also serves as Professor of Ethics at Whitefield Theological Seminary and President of the Providential History Festival. He and his wife Kathy have 5 children and 9 grandchildren.



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