

# The Family Table

Pastor Randy Booth

Welcome to our worship service. We are delighted to have you visit with us today. During the communion service you will notice that entire families partake of the bread and the wine, including the little children. Allow us to explain why we think this is consistent with what the Bible teaches on the subject and to point out some of the benefits of having our children participate in this covenant meal.

In one sense we are all little children, as Jesus indicated when He said to His disciples: *“Little children, yet a little while I am with you”* (John 13:33). There is another sense in which we speak of “little children,” and that, of course, is in reference to infants or toddlers. As baptized members of the church, they too have been engrafted into the Body of Christ and are included in active worship of God.

Little children are sponges when it comes to soaking in new information. Even when they seem not to be paying attention, the youngest of children often surprise us when we hear them recite the very thing we thought had passed them by (sometimes to our delight or chagrin). From the moment a child is born (or perhaps even before that), parents begin to teach their children by speaking, singing and living out before them a Christian life. They are part of the covenant relationship our households have with God. While very young children cannot articulate immediately *all* that we impart to them, this does not cause us to stop teaching them. Our children are learning that these are the things God’s people do; they are learning that they are counted among the people of God.

Worship is one of the chief obligations of all God’s creatures. As we teach our children to walk and talk, at the same time we diligently teach them the Scriptures and how they should worship God when they *“sit in their house,”* when they *“walk in the way,”* when they *“lie down,”* or when they *“rise up,”* (Deut 6:6-7). In 2 Timothy 3:15, the apostle Paul writes to Timothy saying, *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”* The Greek word for “child” in this text is the word used to describe a “nursing babe.” No doubt, the infant Timothy heard the word of God from the mouths of his faithful mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois from the time he was born.

Being grown-up is no guarantee that one will learn or comprehend the truth of God. Nevertheless, Jesus is thankful that truth is revealed even to the immature: *“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.’”* (Luke 10:21). While it may be a mystery to adults, nevertheless God teaches us that He communicates with and receives praise even from very young children. In fact, we read the prophesy in Psalm 8:2 that this would be the case; a prophecy that was fulfilled in Matthew 21:15-16: *“But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ they were indignant and said to Him, ‘Do You hear what these are saying?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected*

*praise”?’’* We cannot not dismiss the fact that there are mysteries in the ways of God, and that the Spirit, like the wind, “*blows where it wishes.*” (John 3:8).

The Bible is clear that all of God’s covenant promises belong to “*you and your children.*” Covenant children are members of the covenant community and are entitled to its benefits. Just as circumcision was an advantage for Jews—“*much in every way*” (Rom. 3:2)—so too, those who have received the covenant sign and seal of baptism have all the covenant privileges. You will notice how enthusiastically these little ones receive the meal. Their parents have taught them, and continue to teach them, what this means and that they are indeed a part of God’s people.

Children were admitted to the sacramental meals of the Old Covenant. Preeminent among the feasts was the Passover, which was the meal that signified God’s deliverance or salvation. As the blood of the Passover lamb was applied to the doors, entire households were spared the judgment of God, including the children. The Passover meal commemorates this redemptive mercy of God. As the household participates in the Passover meal, the Bible tells us to expect a question from the children: “*What do you mean by this service?*” (Ex. 12:26). The meal is designed to be the occasion for instruction concerning the salvation of the Lord—a rehearsal of God’s salvation. This weekly memorial teaches them who God is and what He has done, thus leading to the worship of God.

The Lord’s Supper is the New Covenant counterpart to the Passover. It points to the Lamb of God—“Christ, our Passover”—who shed His blood for His people to deliver them from the curse due to them for their sins. As baptized members of the New Covenant, children are welcomed to the household table to eat the covenant meal. By faith we receive God’s promises, which are to us and our children, and thus the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are likewise received by us and our children.