

... Because it is a “Means of Grace.”

What is it?

A *means of grace* is a theological term for a select few special practices that Christ has given the church to help us grow together spiritually. The Westminster Shorter Catechism question #88 lists three of them: the Bible, the sacraments, and prayer (many would include Christian fellowship because of Acts 2:42). These are special ways that Christ has chosen for us to be strengthened in our faith to believe that our Father really does love us on the basis of what Jesus did as a free gift, which gives us the ability to live happy lives loving Him and serving others.

Christ instituted two *sacraments*, the Lord’s Supper (also called Communion or Eucharist) and Baptism. A *sacrament* is distinguished from the other means of grace in that it is not only a verbal practice or message like the others, but is also a physical, concrete, tangible message, so that God’s people not only hear the good news of grace, but see it, smell it, touch it, and taste the message of grace. A sacrament is a physical symbol of a spiritual reality, in which God says, “Just as surely as you see the physical symbolic activity happen, so surely can you believe the spiritual activity is happening as well.”

Just as physical food effects the body, when we take the Lord’s Supper, we are being acted upon by a supernatural influence. This influence is from the Holy Spirit. As we eat the bread and drink the wine, He acts upon us to cause a clearer awareness and a deeper certainty of God’s acceptance and love, which in turn causes us to live more powerfully, loving Him and others.

Obviously, one consequence of holding this view of the Lord’s Supper is that it causes us to desire to take it more often.

Why do we need it?

We need this spiritual nourishment because we are always growing spiritually weak. We continually lose our joy and heart reliance on Christ, which then leads to old cravings for happiness and meaning from things other than God which can never satisfy us and only leave us empty, exhausted, and lonely. ...sound familiar?

We continually run out of satisfaction in our intimacy with our God and His church. So, we quickly return, unconsciously, to the pursuit of building our own happiness and identity on old ways and trusts.

The Bible explains we are all predisposed to this, because of the result of Adam’s historic and tragic “fall” which passed down this broken nature to us. Being “fallen” means our hearts are now prone to lose this deep dependence on God and to chase after happiness from other sources. And it is this tendency which then results in losing our former joy, freedom, and love. This...is what creates our need for constant spiritual nourishment to restore a true and living dependency on Him.

For this reason, Christ continually offers himself to us in the Lord’s Supper, to nourish our hearts back to the joy and power of His love, which his body and blood so powerfully restore when we *faithfully* take it. The Supper is an act of divine hospitality where God restores and confirms our peace and communion with Him. He is not only the host of this meal, He is the meal itself!

How does it 'work'?

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”

1 Cor. 10:16 (ESV)

“For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.”

John 6:55-57 (ESV)

“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Luke 22:19 (ESV)

Because of Scriptures like these, we believe that what actually happens when we take the Lord’s Supper is that *the Holy Spirit mysteriously, yet truly, unites and connects our souls with Christ’s actual glorified body and blood*, who remains bodily in Heaven until He returns. In a special way, as we partake of this meal, the Holy Spirit connects us to Christ who is the source of life. Just as light rays are separate from the sun and yet connect us to it, so the Holy Spirit connects us to the Son. And, as that life is channeled to us from Christ through the Holy Spirit, our hearts are warmed to believe and enjoy God’s presence and love, along with all His promises.

Throughout the Bible wine is symbolic for joy. The Bible says that wine “gladdens the heart.”(Ps. 104:15) and we see Jesus providing it in abundance for the wedding celebration at Cana (Jn. 4). Thus, in the Lord’s Supper, God is saying that not only is our faith being strengthened as bread does the body, but also that our joy is being increased as well, as wine does our hearts.

What we believe is that *our souls partake of the body and blood of Christ by the Holy Spirit uniting the two*. It is a profound and amazing mystery how the Holy Spirit is able to so connect us, but it should not surprise us that God is able. It also should not surprise us that it was God’s plan all along to make Jesus such an integral and intimate part and source of who we are. And, if we take Scripture at face value, this indeed is what we must believe.

... Because it is a means of UNITY.

“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”

1 Cor. 10:17 (ESV)

We believe that the unity of Christ’s one body both *causes and encourages* our unity with each other. We are all mysteriously yet truly a part of the one body of Christ. We are all indwelt by the one and same Holy Spirit. And, we have all been adopted into the same family by the same Father. Thus, knowing that we are each members of Christ’s one body should encourage us to act out and diligently work toward that unity in our relationships with each other.

So Why Weekly?...

(In addition to our heart's need for it...)

...For Scriptural Reasons.

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ... And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

Acts 2:42,46 (ESV)

“Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. ... For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, ... it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.” **[this is a rebuke, but it reveals their practice of taking the Lord's Supper each time they met]**
1st Cor. 11:2,18,20 (ESV)

...For Historical Reasons.

Historical figures who embraced a weekly Lord's Supper:

- Saint Augustine (354-430 AD) - early theologian and "Church Father."
- John Chrysostom (347-407 AD) - gifted preacher of the early church.
- Justin Martyr (100-165 AD) - Greek apologist and martyr for the faith in the mid-2nd century.
- John Calvin (1509-1564) - the great Reformer.
- John Owen (1616-1683)-English theologian, author
- Richard Baxter (1615-1691) - Pastor, author.
- Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) - great American theologian and president of Princeton.
- Weekly Lord's Supper was Christianity's practice for the first 1500 years of its existence.

... but, won't it become routine and less meaningful?

Answers:

1. The Apostles didn't think so. (Acts2:42,46; 1st Cor.11)
2. This objection usually comes as a result of holding what's called the *Zwinglian* or *Memorial* view of this sacrament, which sees the only thing which happens in the Supper is our mental exercise of remembering. (Thus, losing the belief in its power as a means of grace to Spiritually nourish our need as explained in this brochure, which is commonly called the Calvinist or Reformed view of this sacrament.) We believe the *Memorial* view does not reflect a sufficient consideration of 1st Corinthians 10:16; John 6:50-58; or Luke 22:19-20.
3. The Lord's Supper simply bears the weight of repetition, as does God's Word, confessing sin, prayer....the kiss of a beloved parent or spouse.

Conclusion:

It is indeed an amazing gift the church has been given. This is certainly a "high view" of the sacrament, but we believe it is the view most true to the Scriptures. Therefore, for all the above reasons, Grace Presbyterian Church would like to offer to all baptized believers, and to children whom the Elders have interviewed, a weekly Lord's Supper. May the Lord bless you immensely with it!

Sources:

The Institutes of the Christian Religion, John Calvin, pp. 1370,1381,1415,1420-24.
The Westminster Confession of Faith Systematic Theology, Louis Berkhof, pp.644-58.
The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Gen. Editor, Vol. 3, p.164ff
The Worship of the English Puritans, by Horton Davies, pg. 204ff
The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards, John Gerstner, pg. 447
The Lord's Service, Jeffrey J. Meyers, pg. 65ff

Written by Rev. Richard H. (Rusty) Mosley
Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church

Why
Weekly
Lord's
Supper
During
Easter?...



GRACE
PRESBYTERIAN
C O N W A Y

Conway, Arkansas
www.gracepresconway.org