

Copyright © 2017 Jeremy Daniel Scott

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

EQUIPPING MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH IN VERONA,
WISCONSIN, TO ENJOY A GREATER UNDERSTANDING
AND OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Educational Ministry

by
Jeremy Daniel Scott
May 2017

APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH IN VERONA,
WISCONSIN, TO ENJOY A GREATER UNDERSTANDING
AND OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Jeremy Daniel Scott

Read and Approved by:

Danny R. Bowen (Faculty Supervisor)

Shane Parker

Date _____

I dedicate this project to my loving wife, Anouk,
and our children, Michaela and Isaiah.

When I look at each of you, I am reminded of God's abundant grace.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Context	1
Rationale	3
Purpose	4
Goals	4
Research Methodology	4
Definitions, Delimitations, and Limitations	5
Conclusion	7
2. A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR ENJOYING A GREATER UNDERSTANDING AND OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER	8
The Lord’s Supper Is Necessary because of Its Great Theological Importance	8
Jesus “Earnestly Desired” to Eat the First Lord’s Supper with the Disciples	14
The Early Church Placed a High Priority on the Lord’s Supper	24
Conclusion	30
3. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER	32
The Lord’s Supper Should Be Celebrated Frequently	32
The Lord’s Supper Should Be Celebrated by Baptized Disciples of Christ	36

Chapter	Page
The Lord’s Supper Should Be Celebrated in the Context of a Corporate Church Worship Service	42
The Lord’s Supper Should Be Celebrated Using the Best Possible Means	47
The Lord’s Supper Should Be Celebrated to Enjoy Its Practical Benefits	50
Conclusion	55
4. DETAILS OF THE PROJECT	56
Preparing the Sermon Series	56
Delivering the Sermon Series	60
Evaluating the Sermon Series	64
Conclusion	69
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT	70
Evaluating the Purpose	70
Evaluating the Goals	73
Strengths of the Project	75
Weaknesses of the Project	77
Things I Would Change	79
Theological Reflections	80
Personal Reflections	81
Conclusion	83
Appendix	
1. LORD’S SUPPER SURVEY 1 (PRE-SERMON SERIES)	84
2. LORD’S SUPPER SERMON SERIES EVALUATION	88
3. SERMON 1	89
4. SERMON 2	93
5. SERMON 3	100
6. SERMON 4	107

Appendix	Page
7. SERMON 5	113
8. SERMON 6	119
9. LORD'S SUPPER SURVEY 2 (POST-SERMON SERIES)	126
10. T-TEST RESULTS	130
BIBLIOGRAPHY	131

PREFACE

As a young boy, I saw people eating and drinking together once a month during a church service. For many years my understanding of the Lord's Supper was little more than my perceptions as a boy: we eat and drink together at church once a month to be reminded that Jesus died for our sins. By God's grace and kindness I have grown to appreciate a much fuller understanding of the Lord's Supper.

I must thank my close friend and mentor, Robert P. Bixby, for directing my thoughts to a weekly celebration of the Table. His suggestions during our weekly meeting at Starbucks several years ago set me on a path of study for which I will forever be grateful. I am also indebted to another mentor, Dr. Chris Brauns, for his availability and investment. I also thank my parents, Daniel and Karen Scott, for providing a loving home where Christ was honored daily. I thank my brother Jason for always supporting me and my brother Joshua, for his words of encouragement. Thanks also go to my supervisor, Dr. Danny Bowen. His gracious guidance throughout this project has been invaluable. I must also acknowledge my appreciation and debt to Betsy Fredrick for her invaluable stylistic editing skills.

Finally, I thank my wife and our children for their sacrifice and support. Their understanding, support, and encouragement have made this project possible. Words cannot express my love for you. You are true gifts from God. To Him be the glory.

Jeremy Scott

Madison, Wisconsin

May 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Lord's Supper is a beautiful gift to the church from Jesus Christ. For over two thousand years God's people have regularly gathered around a table to enjoy a simple meal of bread and wine in obedience to Jesus. The symbolism found at the Lord's Table is rich and robust. The blessing of participating with other disciples of Jesus at his table is encouraging and sustaining for the Christian plodding along in a fallen world. Regrettably, many Christians miss much of the symbolism and sanctifying grace to be found at the Lord's Table due to an insufficient understanding of the Lord's Supper. This is unfortunate since the Lord's Supper is more than just a mnemonic device; it is a means of grace that every Christian desperately needs.

Context

This project took place in the context of Memorial Baptist Church (MBC) in Verona, Wisconsin. Like most other General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, the Lord's Supper was observed once a month prior to this project. While most of MBC would have agreed that it is important to regularly eat the bread and drink of the cup together, before this project, many had not given significant thought to the multi-faceted symbolism of the Lord's Supper, nor to the importance of the frequency of the celebration. MBC had historically understood the Lord's Supper to be simply a memorial to the death of Christ. It was this limited understanding of the Lord's Supper that hindered the grace of God intended for MBC at the Lord's Table.

The memorialist understanding of the Lord's Supper is common in many Baptist churches. However, the reality is that the Lord's Supper is "more than a memory."¹ An unfortunate result of MBC's understanding the Lord's Supper before this project was an apparent lack of desire or anticipation on the part of many to observe this important ordinance. The reality is that it requires almost no preparation or anticipation to simply be reminded of a death on a monthly basis. Since Jesus himself "eagerly desired" (Luke 22:15)² to eat with the twelve disciples at the institution of the Lord's Supper, it would seem appropriate for current disciples of Jesus to eagerly desire to gather at the Table. While some in the congregation at MBC did desire to meet at the Table, most appeared to view the Lord's Supper as a monthly perfunctory habit rather than something to prepare for and desire.

Another potential shortcoming with only considering the Lord's Supper as a memorial is a failure to gather around the table weekly. Rather, the Lord's Supper is put off to a monthly observance. If the Lord's Supper is primarily about remembering death, the somberness of the event provides little motivation for participation and a more regular observance is deemed unnecessary. However, when a wider range of purpose to gathering around the Table is understood, as well as an understanding of the biblical precedent to a weekly celebration, a desire for more frequent gatherings at the Table naturally follows.

A final weakness with MBC's understanding of the Lord's Supper before this project was that it tended to be an exclusively introspective, individualistic participation around the Table. The habit of MBC was to seemingly privatize the time around the Table rather than to consciously participate eating and drinking *with* other disciples.

¹Richard C. Barcellos, *The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace: More Than a Memory* (Newton, IL: Mentor, 2014).

²Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

Rationale

The contextual reasons stated above made this project necessary. This project was completed to increase MBC's understanding of and desire for the Lord's Supper because there appeared to be an insufficient desire to observe this sacrament. Part of this apparent insufficient desire was perceived in the lack of personal preparation for the gathering around the Table. It was my hope that because of this project, the people of MBC would greatly desire and prepare themselves to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Secondly, this project was completed to promote a longing for more frequent observances of the Lord's Supper. An increase in appreciation for the robust meaning of Lord's Supper would greatly benefit MBC. Additionally, more frequent observances of the Lord's Supper provides at least two other benefits. First, observing the Lord's Supper more frequently resulted in each Sunday morning's gathering of MBC to be more Christ-centered and cross-focused. If every sermon ends with a celebration around the Lord's Table, it will be the preacher's conscious goal to transition from any text of Scripture to a Christological fulfillment. Secondly, observing the Lord's Supper more frequently resulted in a preaching ministry that provides a greater understanding of the grand narrative of Scripture to the people of MBC.

Finally, this project was completed to intensify a deliberately *corporate* observance of the Lord's Supper. Before this project, MBC's most common approach to the Lord's Supper was introspective and individualistic. While there is certainly room for private prayer and introspection at the Table, a corporate celebration seems to be normative in Scripture. This project was completed to help the wonderful people of MBC discover the greater depth of the Lord's Supper when unity and peace within the body of Christ are symbolized at the Table. Instead of only looking inward at the Table, the Christian finds great grace when he looks upward and outward to experience the benefits of shared grace at the Table.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip Memorial Baptist Church in Verona, Wisconsin, to enjoy a greater understanding and observance of the Lord's Supper.

Goals

The following three goals were employed to ensure the successful completion of this project. These goals were designed to help increase the understanding of and participation in the Lord's Supper at Memorial Baptist Church.

1. The first goal of this project was to assess the current understanding and desire to observe the Lord's Supper.
2. The second goal of this project was to develop a six-week Sunday morning teaching series on the importance of the Lord's Supper.
3. The third goal of this project was to equip MBC to enjoy a greater understanding and desire to observe the Lord's Supper by teaching the six-week Sunday morning series.

Approved research methodologies determined when these three goals were successfully completed.³ The research methods, measurement, and benchmark of success for each goal are outlined in the following section.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess MBC's current understanding of and desire to observe the Lord's Supper with each other. This goal was measured by administering a survey, which was used to measure the congregation's understanding of and desire to observe the Lord's Supper.⁴ This goal was to have 60 percent of the members of MBC complete the survey and then to analyze the data in order to obtain a clearer picture of the

³All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee.

⁴See appendix 1.

understanding and desire to observe the Lord's Supper at MBC prior to the sermon series. Unfortunately, only 36 percent of the membership completed both surveys.

The second goal was to develop a six-week teaching series on the Lord's Supper. The deacons, elders, and select attendees of Memorial Baptist Church used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon series to measure this goal.⁵ This goal was considered successfully completed when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

The third goal was to equip MBC to enjoy a greater understanding and desire to observe the Lord's Supper by teaching the series developed in the second goal. This goal was measured by a post-series survey of the regular attenders and members of MBC,⁶ which was used to measure the change in the congregation's understanding of and desire to observe the Lord's Supper. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

Definitions, Delimitations, and Limitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Definitions

Means of grace. For the purpose of this project, "means of grace" does not refer to salvific grace, but is limited to "continuing or strengthening"⁷ grace for the believer.

⁵See appendix 2.

⁶See appendix 9.

⁷P. E. Hughes, "Grace, Means of," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 522.

Sacrament. A sacrament is “a religious rite or ceremony instituted or recognized by Jesus Christ.”⁸ This project views these rites, in particular the Lord’s Supper, to be a means of *sanctifying* grace for the disciple of Jesus Christ.⁹ This view differs from the Roman Catholic view in two ways. First, this project does not view the Lord’s Supper as a continual sacrifice. Second, this project views the Lord’s Supper as a means of *sanctifying* grace not *saving* grace.

Memorialist. Russell Moore argues that the Baptist memorial position of the Lord’s Supper is more than a symbol to remind Christians of a historical event.¹⁰ While that may be true among some Baptist theologians, it is my experience that the laity of most Baptist churches understands the Lord’s Supper to be simply a memorial. Consequently, in this project, “memorialist” will refer to someone who understands the Lord’s Supper as simply a memorial of the death of Jesus.

Delimitations

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, this project was limited to the members and regular attenders of Memorial Baptist Church in Verona, Wisconsin. Second, this project was confined to a thirty-week timeframe in order to provide adequate time to prepare and teach the six-week series on the Lord’s Supper.

Limitations

One limitation of this project was that I had already begun to teach on the Lord’s Supper at MBC, so the charted growth in congregational understanding and desire

⁸R. S. Williams, “Sacrament,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1047.

⁹The terms *Lord’s Supper*, *Communion*, *Lord’s Table*, *The Table*, and *Eucharist* should be understood to be interchangeable, describing the same sacrament as they appear in this project.

¹⁰Russell D. Moore, “The Baptist View,” in *Understanding Four Views on the Lord’s Supper*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), loc. 370, Kindle.

for the Lord's Supper revealed in the two surveys may not have been as accurate as the actual growth from before I began teaching on the Lord's Supper.

Another limitation was that survey participation was voluntary. There was no way to predict who or how many people in the congregation would participate in the surveys. There also was the potential that some people would complete the pre-survey but not the post-survey, thereby giving incomplete data.

A final limitation for this project was that participants do not universally appreciate the medium of a survey. Some people feel "boxed in" by the responses offered and would do better communicating their ideas and understanding with a more nuanced discussion rather than a survey. Unfortunately, it is unrealistic to attempt a sit-down conversation with every member and regular attendee of the church to discuss the topic of this project within the time frame allotted.

Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is not optional for the Christian church. Jesus himself asked all of his disciples to continue this practice until he returns. This Christological foundation mandates that all Christians should desire, prepare for, and enjoy a celebration of the Lord's Supper while anticipating his return. To do anything less would be to ignore the grace offered by Jesus himself. This is why this project was essential for MBC to understand, enjoy, and desire the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR ENJOYING A GREATER UNDERSTANDING AND OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is a necessary gift from Jesus to His church. Sadly, many Christians miss this important truth. This error is seen in the Christian's minimal preparation before receiving the elements, the lack of intentionality on the part of pastors and church leaders before a Lord's Supper service, and a lack of desire to meet and worship Jesus at the Table. The Christian misses out on a means of grace personally instituted by Jesus when the Table is not appreciated or desired.

The Lord's Supper Is Necessary because of Its Great Theological Importance

Things of great theological importance must be remembered. The Lord's Supper is a gift given by Jesus to help His children remember God and what He has done. Jesus himself said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). This reminder is important because forgetfulness is a problem that plagues all humans. Moses knew of the human weakness of forgetfulness so he admonished the children of Israel to "take care lest you forget the Lord your God" (Deut 8:11). Moses' warning is hardly the only place where God's people are either commanded to remember or warned against forgetfulness.¹ Samuel set up a stone of remembrance and called it "Ebenezer" so the people would not forget that God had helped them (1 Sam 7:12). Joshua did a similar act in Joshua 4:4-9. Even Passover was instantly instituted after the tenth plague for the express purpose of every generation remembering what God had done for His children.

¹Deut 4:23; 2 Kgs 17:38; Pss 78:7, 11; 103:2; 106:7, 13; Heb 12:5; Jas 1:25; Pss 119:153 and 176; Hos 4:6; Jdg 8:34, Ps 78:42; Isa 51:13-15.

Consequently, when Christians gather around the Lord's Table, they should do so remembering what Christ has done for them. This means that there is great theological significance at the Table. Once Christians understand the deep meaning of the Table, this gift will take on new significance. Paul's address in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 highlight at least three important theological concepts found at the Lord's Table: participation, proclamation, and anticipation.

Participation at The Table

In 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul uses the word *κοινωνία* in reference to the Lord's Supper. *Κοινωνία* is commonly translated as "fellowship" in the New Testament (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 6:14; 13:14; Gal 2:9; 1 John 1:3,6,7). In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul highlights the fellowship that surrounds the Lord's Table. To eat at the Lord's Table is to participate in a relationship with Jesus. Richard Barcellos agrees: "Paul's emphasis is not that believers are together when they partake of the Lord's Supper (though that is true), it is that *Koinonia* constitutes some sort of relationship with 'the blood' and 'the body of Christ.'"² Or as John Frame puts it, "The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of continuing fellowship with God, to be received over and over again."³ Simon Kistemaker states, "During communion, the believers are guests at the table of the Lord, eat the bread and drink from the cup, and thus experience fellowship with Jesus as host."⁴ At the Lord's Table, union with Christ is on display for all to see, or to put it another way, Christians are affirming their union with Christ when they partake of the Lord's Supper. Ervin Budiselić summarizes this well:

²Richard C. Barcellos, *The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace: More Than a Memory* (Newton, IL: Mentor, 2014), 48.

³John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 1066.

⁴Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 344.

The Lord's Supper is crucial because it is a Christ-commanded way to remember and summarizing the gospel itself. And we can be reminded weekly of the fundamentals of the faith, and also actually experience the benefits of the work of Christ and have a time of joy of friendship and communion with the risen Christ who is truly present with his people in the table event.⁵

Not only is participation at the table union with Christ, it is union with Christ's body. Vickers explains, "The Supper is *the* ultimate symbolic act to unity in the Church, as the body of Christ gather around common symbols of the one Lord who died for all and in whom all are united."⁶ At the Table, not only do believers show their union with Christ, but also unity within the body of Christ. Gordon Smith emphasizes, "In the Lord's Supper, we are not merely eating; we are eating *together*."⁷ Charles Gresham and Tom Lawson support this idea:

From the beginning among the twelve disciples [the Lord's Supper] has also provided a reaffirmation of the unity of believers with one another in the church. As often as Christians partake of these symbols, they bear witness to the fact that the unity of the church can be found only in its Head.⁸

James Hamilton, Jr., agrees,

The celebration of the Lord's Supper enacts the solidarity of the members of the church and her Messiah, in whose body and blood, death and resurrection, she participates. This solidarity with Christ entails another: the solidarity of the members of the church with one another in the body of Christ as they partake of the one bread.⁹

⁵Ervin Budiselić, "The Power of the Table: Revising the Theology, Form and Place of the Lord's Supper in the Worship of the Christian Church," *KAIROS—Evangelical Journal of Theology* 6, no. 2 (2012): 159.

⁶Brian J. Vickers, "The Lord's Supper: Celebrating the Past and Future in the Present," in *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 328.

⁷Gordon T. Smith, *A Holy Meal: The Lord's Supper in the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 47, emphasis original.

⁸Charles Gresham and Tom Lawson, *The Lord's Supper* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing, 1993), 99.

⁹James M. Hamilton, Jr., "The Lord's Supper in Paul: An Identity-Forming Proclamation of the Gospel," in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord's Supper*, 80.

The Lord's Supper is not an individual event, but rather a corporate event. John Hicks laments the propensity of the contemporary church to reduce the Lord's Supper to an individualistic event: "Our practice of the supper as a silent, solemn, individualistic eating of bread and drinking of wine is radically dissimilar from the joyous communal meal that united Christians in first century house churches."¹⁰ Unity among his followers is important to Jesus, as seen in his High Priestly Prayer in John 17.¹¹ In *A Holy Meal*, Gordon Smith quotes Thomas Aquinas as saying that "the sacramental sign of church unity" is the Lord's Supper.¹² Smith goes on to say that "the Lord's Supper is the declaration—by ritual sign—that we are at peace with one another."¹³

Participation with Christ and with Christians is an important theological truth found at the Table of the Lord. In the context of 1 Corinthians 10, Paul is arguing that to participate in a meal intended to honor a false god is to identify with that god and to be in partnership with honoring the false god. His rationale is that whenever believers meet at the Table of the Lord they are affirming their participation with Christ and other believers.¹⁴

Proclamation at The Table

In addition to participation with Christ and Christ's body found at the Table, Paul told the Corinthians that every time they observe the Lord's Supper they are proclaiming the Lord's death (1 Cor 11:26). The word that Paul uses for "proclaim" in 1

¹⁰John Hicks, *Come to the Table* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood, 2012), loc. 38, Kindle.

¹¹In two verses Jesus asks the Father three times that all of His followers would be one, just like He and the Father are one (John 17:21, 22).

¹²Smith, *A Holy Meal*, 50.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 348.

Corinthians 11:26 comes from the verb καταγγέλλω (to proclaim), which refers to reporting or announcing something publicly.¹⁵ The Lord's Supper is a God-given opportunity for believers to publically testify to the death of Jesus Christ. This public testimony is important because the only hope a Christian has is in the death of Jesus Christ.

Baptists tend to get excited about baptisms because of what baptism symbolizes. When someone is baptized they are publically proclaiming their identification with Christ and desire to obey God. God gave baptism as the means for an initial public proclamation for the new believer. However, since Jesus routinely advocates for believers (Heb 7:25), it makes sense that believers *routinely* publically confess Christ. This routine public confession of identification in Christ is one reason why God gave the Lord's Supper to the Church. Gordon Smith observes, "The Lord's Supper . . . is the rite—the tangible corporate act—by which the terms of our baptism are renewed and sustained in our lives."¹⁶ The Lord's Supper, then, is the means by which Christians are to routinely publically proclaim their covenantal relationship with God.¹⁷

Anticipation at The Table

In the same verse that Paul speaks of proclamation at the table, he also addresses the idea of anticipation at the Table. The Lord's Supper should cause the believer to look forward to Jesus' return with great hope and anticipation. Paul explicitly stated that when believers meet at the Lord's Table, they are proclaiming the Jesus' death "until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). Gordon Fee summarizes Paul's point: "By these final words Paul is reminding the Corinthians of their essentially eschatological existence. They have not

¹⁵Chris Kugler, "Gospel," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014).

¹⁶Smith, *A Holy Meal*, 72.

¹⁷Luke 12:8 and Rom 10:9-10 also illustrate the expectation for believers to routinely publically announce their affiliation with Jesus Christ.

yet arrived; at this meal they are to be reminded that there is yet a future for themselves, as well as for all the people of God.”¹⁸

Therefore, every time the believer takes part in the Lord’s Supper, he or she should be reminded that Jesus is coming back. Jesus told his people to keep meeting together and keep on observing the holy meal until he returns. Brian Vickers insists that the Lord’s Supper be “more than a history lesson; the Lord’s Supper is a sign that God keeps His promises.”¹⁹ Jesus has promised to come back. One purpose of the Lord’s Supper is to give anticipation for Jesus’ return. The fact that believers in Christ are still meeting and eating together is a reminder to anticipate Jesus’ triumphant return.

When Jesus introduced the Lord’s Supper in the upper room, Luke records him saying that He was eating His last Passover meal: “For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:18). Jesus was alluding to a future feast to be held in heaven one day (Rev 19:9). Consequently, John Frame refers to the Lord’s Supper as a foretaste of the Messianic banquet.²⁰ Gordon Smith agrees with Frame:

The Last Supper is a farewell, no doubt. But it is not the last word. It is a meal that points to another meal. The two meals are intentionally linked. Each time we celebrate this special meal in the context of our worship, we look ahead and identify with the heavenly banquet, a meal that will be celebrated on that day when all things are made right.²¹

The believer should not only look back to what Christ has done when at the Lord’s Table, but he or she should also look forward with anticipation of Jesus’ ultimate fulfillment of his promise to come back. It is not just that Jesus is coming back; Jesus is

¹⁸Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 557.

¹⁹Vickers, “The Lord’s Supper,” 339.

²⁰John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 553.

²¹Smith, *A Holy Meal*, 94.

coming back *triumphantly*. The kingdom of God is coming according to Jesus in Luke 22:18. Since believers are co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17), this coming of the kingdom should be something all believers long for with great anticipation. To help keep believers focused on the return of Christ and the culmination of His kingdom, Jesus gave the Lord's Supper to His church.

Jesus “Earnestly Desired” to Eat the First Lord's Supper with the Disciples

In addition to Paul's emphasis of the theological truths of participation, proclamation, and anticipation found at the Lord's Supper, the Table is better understood and appreciated when one considers Jesus saying that he “earnestly desired” to eat the Passover meal in Luke 22:15. A correct understanding of what Jesus meant points to Jesus' motivation and mood at the dinner table that evening. According to Darrell Bock, Jesus used a Hebrew idiom, “I have desired with desire,” to express his strong desire to eat specific with the disciples.²² Robert Stein summarizes the three main views on what Jesus was saying in Luke 22:15:

(1) as an unfulfilled wish, i.e., *I have desired but unfortunately will not be able to eat this Passover*. This interpretation frequently is due to an attempt to harmonize this account with John 18:28, where the Passover is still future. In Luke, Jesus clearly eats the Passover (Luke 22:11, 15), so that this interpretation must be rejected. (2) *I have looked forward to sharing the joy of eating the Passover with you, to teach you of the new covenant in my blood and to bring my work to a conclusion*. (3) *I have desired to participate in this (or possibly a future) Passover with you but will not*. The third interpretation, that Jesus could not or intentionally refrained from participating in the Passover, is unlikely in light of 22:11, 15, so that the second interpretation is to be preferred.²³

If the second view is indeed preferable, then Jesus was expressing his strong desire to eat a very specific meal with the disciples on that important night. Three main reasons for Jesus'

²²Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), Lk 22:7.

²³Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 541.

strong desire are offered: Jesus used the Table to redefine Passover; Jesus used the Table to institute a new covenant; and Jesus used the Table to assure the disciples of the future.

Jesus Used the Table to Redefine Passover

One reason why Jesus “earnestly desired” to eat the Last Supper with the disciples was because he planned to use that meal to redefine Passover. A quick look at Luke’s account would seem to indicate that it was indeed a Passover celebration. However, some who try to harmonize the timelines of the Synoptic Gospels along with John’s Gospel run into some interpretive challenges and doubt if the Last Supper was a Passover meal.

G. D. Yarnold wrestles with this challenge in *The Bread Which We Break*, but concludes,

The significance of the Supper is still to be found in a Passover context, even if it is not itself the Passover meal. . . . Without doubt the Passover was in Christ’s mind, as was also his impending death. Clearly the Lord himself, and the New Testament writers after him, understood his action at the Supper in terms of his creative fulfilment of the Passover.²⁴

In his often-cited work *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, Joachim Jeremias presents a compelling case for understanding the Last Supper meal to be a Passover meal.²⁵ Because Jesus and the disciples are explicitly stated to be reclining at the Last Supper meal, Jeremias believes that the Last Supper had to be a Passover meal:

It is *absolutely impossible* that Jesus and his disciples should have *reclined* at table for their ordinary meals. How is it then that they recline at table in the case of the Last Supper? There can only be one answer: at the Passover meal it was a *ritual duty* to recline at table as a symbol of freedom.²⁶

Another argument from Jeremias that the Last Supper was a Passover meal is that according to John 13:10, the Last Supper was eaten in a state of Levitical purity,

²⁴G. D. Yarnold, *The Bread Which We Break* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 39-40.

²⁵Köstenbeger, Marshall, Green, Moore, and Hendricksen also agree with Jeremias.

²⁶Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 49, emphasis original.

which was required for eating of the Passover lamb.²⁷ Also, the fact that Jesus broke bread during the meal as opposed to at the beginning of the meal (as was the custom in regular meals) is significant to Jeremias because “the Passover meal was the only family meal in the year at which the serving of a dish preceded the breaking of bread.”²⁸

Additionally, Jeremias points to the fact that according to John 13:29, some of the disciples assumed that Judas left the table after the meal to make some last-minute purchases for the festival. Jeremias explains,

Such purchasing at night would be completely incomprehensible if the incident occurred on the evening before Nisan 14, because then the whole of the next day, Nisan 14, would be available for this purpose. But the situation would be quite different if the incident occurred on the Passover evening, *for then the matter would be urgent, because the next day, Nisan 15, was a high feast day, and the day following that, Nisan 16, a Sabbath.*²⁹

Jeremias also is persuaded that the Last Supper was a Passover meal because Jesus did not return to Bethany after the meal, even though he had been staying there leading up to the Last Supper.³⁰ Jesus’ residence is significant because it was a legal requirement that the Passover meal be celebrated within Jerusalem, which meant that a suitable location was necessary.³¹ Even though the city district was enlarged to accommodate the extra crowd for Passover, Bethany was not included in this enlarged city district. However, the Kidron Valley and Gethsemane were included.³²

The most compelling argument though for Jeremias is that Jesus spoke words of interpretation over the bread and the wine. Jeremias insists that the only reason Jesus

²⁷Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 49.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 50.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 53, emphasis original.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 55.

³¹Bock, *Luke*, Luke 22:7.

³²Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 55.

would do this is because the “interpretation of the special elements of the meal is a fixed part of Passover ritual.³³ Since it would be expected to make interpretive comments at the Passover meal, Jesus did just that but went further than what anyone would have expected. Jesus redefined the Passover symbolism. Gordon Fee concurs, “Just as the Passover meal itself was such a ‘remembrance’ to be kept forever in Israel, so Jesus is now reconstituting the ‘memorial’ for the true Israel that will gather around the table in his name to ‘remember’ its own deliverance through him.”³⁴

No longer did Passover simply point back to the historic Exodus. By becoming the Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7), Jesus took the symbolism of the hasty departure from Egypt—the unleavened bread—and redefined it. The bread is to now symbolize his own body and the wine his blood—both pictures of salvation. Brian Vickers is helpful in understanding this idea:

As the Israelites celebrated release from slavery in Egypt, deliverance through blood, so too members of the new covenant celebrate deliverance from bondage to sin—salvation through the body and blood of Christ. Along with Baptism, the Lord’s Supper is *the* defining and shaping event in the life of the church. . . . When we take the bread and the cup, we relive (not reenact) and take part in what God has done, is doing, and is yet to do for us.³⁵

Jesus’ earnest desire to eat this Last Supper was partly because he wanted to take one of the most important Jewish feasts and turn the symbolism to himself and what he was about to do. He knew he was going to suffer soon—he told the disciples as much in the upper room that night. It was not the suffering that Jesus looked forward to; his prayer in the Garden asking God to remove the cup of suffering is proof that he understood the intensity of suffering to come. It was the procurement of salvation for those he loved that caused Jesus to “earnestly desire” to eat the Last Supper. By continuing the

³³Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 56.

³⁴Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 553.

³⁵Vickers, “The Lord’s Supper,” 322.

celebratory meal now known as the Lord's Supper, Christians today are part of a gift that Jesus joyfully gave to his church.

Jesus Used the Table to Institute a New Covenant

In addition to redefining Passover, Jesus “earnestly desired” to institute a New Covenant at that first Lord's Supper celebration. The reason Jesus needed to institute a new covenant was because the former covenant was broken. Consider the covenant that God made with Moses and Israel in Exodus 24:6-8:

And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.

However, Jeremiah records how this covenant was broken by Israel:

And the LORD said to me, “Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: Hear the words of this covenant and do them. For I solemnly warned your fathers when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, Obey my voice. Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of his evil heart. Therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.” Again the LORD said to me, “A conspiracy exists among the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have *broken my covenant* that I made with their fathers. (Jer 11:6-10, emphasis added)

According to Jeremiah 31:29, 30, God acted on a national level, not a personal level as seen in the common proverb of the father eating sour grapes but the son feeling the effects of it. One of the distinctive features of the original covenant is that God made it with a nation, a group of people, rather than individual people. It is true that it takes individuals to make up a group or a nation and that every Israelite was ultimately personally accountable to God. However, the covenant was not instituted on a personal basis, but rather a national basis.

Jeremiah also indicated that God would one day move away from a national interaction and essentially create a new people (Jer 31:33). Years later, Paul celebrated

this coming to pass as illustrated by the Gentiles being brought near to God (Eph 2:11-22). This new people of God was only possible because Jesus instituted a new covenant at the Last Supper. Consequently, whenever a believer celebrates the Lord's Supper, a joyful celebration of being part of a new, much more personal covenant should be on the forefront of his or her mind.

Jesus' new covenant also replaced an impure covenantal family. While discussing the New Covenant, Jeremiah states "And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer 31:34). In *Kingdom through Covenant* Gentry and Wellum provide an excellent explanation of this verse that can be confusing at first glance and often subject to misinterpretation:

What verse 34 is saying, however, in contrast to verses 29-30, is that in the old covenant, people became members of the covenant community simply by being born into that community. As they grew up, some became believers in Yahweh and others did not. This resulted in a situation within the covenant community where some *members* could urge other *members* to know the Lord. In the new covenant community, however, one does not become a member by physical birth but rather by the new birth, which requires faith on the part of every person. Thus only believers are members of the new community: all *members* are *believers* and *only* believers are members. Therefore in the new covenant community there will no longer be a situation where some members urge other members to know the Lord.³⁶

As Gentry and Wellum explain, the purity of God's covenantal family was to be recaptured at the inauguration of the New Covenant. This inauguration of the New Covenant was realized at the institution of the Lord's Supper. Consequently, "when believers take up the cup, they drink as the people of God in a new relationship with Him, sealed by the blood of Christ."³⁷ This new covenant ensured that only those who truly believed in God would be part of the covenantal community. Jesus' work on the cross

³⁶Peter John Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 510.

³⁷Vickers, "The Lord's Supper," 325.

ensured that God's people would not break the covenant with God; Jesus would fulfill it on their behalf.

In summary, the new covenant was a better covenant for God's people: First, because God's people enter this covenant through faith (Eph 2:8, 9; Rom 5:2) rather than through birth, the purity of the covenantal family is preserved. Second, because the Father personally draws His people into the covenant (2 Cor 3:3; John 6:44), the personal nature of the new covenant is established. Finally, because Jesus represents God's covenantal people, the new covenant cannot be broken (Matt 5:17; Phil 1:6).

It is important to consider the implications that the new covenant has on the Lord's Supper. First, when believers take the Lord's Supper, they are embracing Jesus as their representative covenant-keeper, which is why the incarnation is so important; God had to become man so that man could keep covenant with God. Second, if believers ignore or disrespect the Lord's Supper, they are profaning what God has deemed holy (1 Cor 11:27).³⁸ Finally, when believers take the Lord's Supper, they are renewing their covenantal relationship with God through Christ. This last implication deserves more attention.

Gordon Smith reminds his readers that all covenants are represented and formalized through symbolic acts.³⁹ These symbolic acts could include a handshake at the end of a business deal, a signature on a lease agreement, a ring in a wedding ceremony, or a hug at the end of an argument. Smith effectively argues that the Lord's Supper is a renewal of the covenant originally symbolized by the believer in the waters of baptism:

It is through a meal that Jesus establishes and sustains the covenant he has with his followers, enabling them to live under his reign, the kingdom of God. He proclaims that this covenant is established in his blood shed on the cross, but he also gives us an act or means by which to confirm the covenant and to renew our identity within that covenant: The Lord's Supper. Baptism is the rite of initiation, the act that establishes

³⁸This point is discussed further in the next section.

³⁹Smith, *A Holy Meal*, 70.

our identity as participants in the covenant, as those who with the Christian community choose to love under the reign of God. The Lord's Supper, in turn, is the rite—the tangible corporate act—by which the terms of our baptism are renewed and sustained in our lives. Every time we come to this table, we partake in remembrance of Christ's death, of the establishing of the covenant through the shed blood of Jesus.⁴⁰

If Smith is correct, then the “vows” taken by a believer in the baptismal waters are renewed when the Lord's Supper is received. John Frame supports this understanding: “Whenever we take the Supper . . . we renew the covenant relationship between God and ourselves.”⁴¹ So at the Table, God is continually reminding His people of His keeping covenant with them. He ensured they would keep the covenant not through their own works or merit, but through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Consequently, baptism and the Lord's Supper are opportunities for God's people to publically establish and renew their commitment to God through Jesus' new covenant that he established at the Last Supper.

Jesus Used the Meal to Assure the Disciples of the Future

Along with a desire to redefine Passover and institute a new covenant, Jesus “earnestly desired” to use that first Lord's Supper celebration to assure his disciples of the future. Both Luke and Paul refer to the eschatological significance of the Lord's Supper. According to Luke's record in Luke 22, Jesus promised that there would be a future meal together after his work on the cross was complete. Mark records the same promise in Mark 14. Additionally, Paul told the Corinthian church that one of the reasons to consistently observe the Lord's Supper was that Christ's death is proclaimed at each Eucharist celebration. Consequently, Paul commands that the Lord's Supper be observed until Jesus comes back. Each of these eschatological implications are important for the Christ-follower to understand.

⁴⁰Smith, *A Holy Meal*, 71-72.

⁴¹Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 1068.

The fact that Christ will return brings great hope to the believer. This was true in Paul’s day and it is true for the contemporary believer. Russell Moore affirms that the historic Baptist concept of the Lord’s Supper is “a sign pointing both backward and forward.”⁴² Moore also admits that many Lord’s Supper services are orchestrated to emphasize the memorial aspect to the Lord’s Supper:

Often Lord’s Supper services are characterized by a funeral atmosphere, complete with somber, droning organ music as the ministers or deacons distribute the elements to the congregation. The congregation is sometimes led to believe (if for no other reason than the omission of pastoral teaching) that the point of the meal is to screw up one’s face and try to feel sorry for Jesus. This is often accompanied by a psychological attempt to meditate on the physical pain of Jesus’ sufferings—an emphasis that is markedly understated in the biblical text itself.⁴³

This almost exclusive emphasis on the past certainly unnecessarily overshadows the future component to the Table. While the past is certainly part of the powerful message found at the Lord’s Table, it is the promise of Jesus’ return for His people that brings completion or resolution to the “blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Moore states, “The Supper is a victory lap—announcing the triumph of Christ over the powers of sin, death, and Satan.”⁴⁴

Paul’s command to observe the Lord’s Supper until Jesus comes back has the implicit promise that Jesus is indeed coming back. Because of this, the Lord’s Table could rightly be called the table of hope. Consequently, whenever the Christian approaches the Table, they should do so understanding that their savior is approaching them at that moment. Jesus himself promised that he was coming back in John 14:3. The word translated “I will come” (*ἔρχομαι*) is actually in the present tense, indicating it is a

⁴²Russell D. Moore, “Baptist View: Christ’s Presence as Memorial,” in *Understanding Four Views on the Lord’s Supper*, ed. John H. Armstrong and Paul E. Engle (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), loc. 383, Kindle.

⁴³Ibid., locs. 431-42.

⁴⁴Ibid., loc. 442.

process Jesus has already started. According to Paul, this promise in motion is tangibly realized at the Lord's Supper celebration.

Luke's record of Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper includes a statement from Jesus that he would not eat another Passover meal with the disciples until the kingdom of God comes. Even though some have contended that Jesus was either speaking only of the current Passover meal or he was simply saying he would not eat on earth again, the simplest and clearest interpretation of Jesus' words is that the Passover meal he was currently eating with the disciples ("I have desire to eat *this* Passover with you") would be the last Passover celebration with his disciples until he comes back. In essence, Jesus is saying, "Though our continued fellowship here is about to end, it will be renewed gloriously in the kingdom to come, a kingdom of light and love, of triumph and praise, and this throughout all eternity."⁴⁵ This clear wording of Jesus, as well as John's account of Jesus eating on the beach with Peter after Jesus' resurrection, make the understanding that Jesus was telling the disciples there would be no more Passover meals with Jesus until a future feast. In Revelation 19:9, John is told to write, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." The Lord's Supper is a foretaste, a sign of hope, for the coming day when all believers are called to eat and drink with Jesus in the kingdom of God. Consequently, as Bock writes, "[The church] takes the meal, they are to look backward and forward. There is, in fact, a greater meal yet to come."⁴⁶

Gordon Smith writes of this eschatological implication of the Lord's Supper: "[The Lord's Supper] is a sign [and a proclamation] of the great feast toward which all history is moving, the day on which every knee will bow and every person will proclaim

⁴⁵William Hendricksen, *Luke*, The New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 961.

⁴⁶Darrell Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Backer, 1994), 1729.

Christ as Lord.”⁴⁷ This great hope of a future celebration of Christ’s glory is foreshadowed at the Lord’s Table. Russell Moore concurs, “Through the eating of a messianic banquet meal, the church announces – not just to itself but to the principalities and powers (Eph 3:10)—that the kingdom has invaded, the new order is dawning, and the rulers of this age are being cast out.”⁴⁸

Every time a believer approaches the Table, part of the many implications to be found at the Table include anticipation for this promised celebration of Christ’s glory. One can only imagine the great assurance given to the disciples and the first-century church as they understood these eschatological implications of the Lord’s Supper.

The Early Church Placed a High Priority on the Lord’s Supper

If today’s church is to have a proper understanding of and appreciation for the Lord’s Supper, she must understand the great theological truths found at the Table as well as Jesus’ “earnest desire” to eat that first Lord’s Supper with his disciples. Finally, the church must consider the high priority that the early church had for the Lord’s Supper if she is going to truly understand and appreciate the Lord’s Supper. The early church had an understanding of the Lord’s Supper that many contemporary churches do not have. Because of this understanding, the first-century church placed a high priority on the Lord’s Supper. This is seen in how they celebrated the Lord’s Supper. The early church placed such importance on the Lord’s Supper that it could not be celebrated by anyone indiscriminately.

The Early Church Frequently Observed the Lord’s Supper

Acts 2:42 is an important text of Scripture that pulls the curtain back for

⁴⁷Smith, *A Holy Meal*, 97.

⁴⁸Moore, “Baptist View,” loc. 431.

contemporary Christians and allows them to see the core commitments of the early church. Luke reports that one of the core commitments of the early church was that they were “devoted to the breaking of bread.” Most commentators understand this phrase to refer to the Lord’s Supper.⁴⁹ When writing about this text and phrase, Kenneth Gangel states, “The believers joined in breaking bread—Luke’s term for what Paul calls ‘the Lord’s Supper.’”⁵⁰

It is clear in Acts 2 that the early church was devoted to the Lord’s Supper. The word “devoted” in Acts 2:42 comes from προσκατερέω, which means “to keep on with devotion.”⁵¹ As seen in this definition, devotion to something necessitates frequent attention. One lexicon captures this idea well in its definition of προσκατερέω: “To persevere; to spend much time in.”⁵² If the early church is to be a model for the contemporary church, then the early church’s devotion to the Lord’s Supper should have some impact on the frequency of observing the Lord’s Supper by contemporary churches. However, it appears that many contemporary SBC churches do not practice a frequent celebration of the Lord’s Supper. According to a 2012 survey by LifeWay, 57 percent of Southern Baptist Churches observe the Lord’s Supper quarterly; 18 percent monthly; 15 percent 5-10 times a year; 8 percent 0-3 times a year; and only 1 percent observe the Lord’s Supper weekly.⁵³ But does the Scriptures mandate the frequency for observing the Lord’s Supper?

⁴⁹Some of these commentators include F. F. Bruce, John Polhill, R. C. H. Lenski, and Marvin Vincent.

⁵⁰Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 31.

⁵¹James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v. “devoted.”

⁵²Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), s.v. “προσκατερέω.”

⁵³Carol Pipes, “Lord’s Supper: LifeWay Surveys Churches’ Practices, Frequency,” accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.bpnews.net/38730/lords-supper->

The simple answer is no. So admittedly, there should be a measure of elasticity allowed in observing of the Lord's Supper. However, Robert Letham is helpful when he posits, "The degree to which the church desires [the Lord's Supper] is a reliable gauge of how eagerly it wants Christ."⁵⁴ The early church did indeed earnestly desire Christ and there are indicators that they practiced a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Acts 20:7 is one such indication. Luke reports that the church at Troas met on the first day of the week "to break bread." Additionally, it appears that the Corinthian church observed the same purpose of meeting together each week. Much of Paul's instruction around the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11 was because they abused the weekly meal. John Michael Perry supports the historical understanding of the early church celebrating the Lord's Supper each week: "The weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week . . . became standard Christian practice. This practice is never explicitly promulgated anywhere in the New Testament, but it is implied in a number of places."⁵⁵ G. D. Yarnold agrees: "The early Eucharist took shape as a weekly fulfillment of the Jewish Passover."⁵⁶

I. Howard Marshall also agrees with Perry in assuming that "when the church met on the Sunday it was usual to hold the Lord's Supper."⁵⁷ Ray Van Neste admits that

lifeway-surveys-churches-practices-frequency.

⁵⁴Robert Letham, *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word in Broken Bread* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 60.

⁵⁵John M. Perry, *Exploring the Evolution of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1994), 130. Perry lists Acts 20:7; Luke 24:1, 13, 30-31, 35; John 20:19, 26; 1 Cor 16:2; and Rev 1:10 as support.

⁵⁶Yarnold, *The Bread Which We Break*, 39.

⁵⁷I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, Biblical and Theological Classics Library (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1997), 108.

there is no specific command concerning frequency, but maintains that there is a “clear pattern of weekly observance in the N.T.”⁵⁸ Van Neste explains,

The centrality of Communion to the weekly gathering is stated so casually without explanation or defense, suggesting this practice was common among those Luke expected to read his account. These early Christians met *weekly* to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.⁵⁹

He further argues the abuse of Lord’s Supper was such a problem that it “strongly suggests”⁶⁰ that the Lord’s Supper was observed each week. As a final point of argumentation, Van Neste turns to the support of Charles Haddon Spurgeon:

Shame on the Christian church that she should put [the Lord’s Supper] off to once a month, and mar the first day of the week by depriving it of its glory in the meeting together for fellowship and breaching of bread, and showing forth the death of Christ till he come. Those who once know the sweetness of each Lord’s-day celebrating his Supper, will not be content, I am sure, to put it off to less frequent seasons.⁶¹

If the early church’s devotion was expressed in a weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper as indicated by scholars and passages of Scripture cited, it makes sense that the contemporary church should be concerned about a regular and frequent observance of the Lord’s Supper. A common objection to observing the Lord’s Supper weekly is that it will become rote, common place, or less meaningful.⁶² That logic fails quickly, however, when it is realized that today’s church has preaching, prayer, reading of Scripture, singing of songs, and provides a means of taking an offering each week. Van Neste argues, “These practices become rote not because of frequency but because of laziness of mind and heart

⁵⁸Ray Van Neste, “The Lord’s Supper in the Context of the Local Church,” in *The Lord’s Supper*, 130.

⁵⁹Ibid., 131, emphasis original.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Charles H. Spurgeon, “Songs of Deliverance,” quoted in Van Neste, “The Lord’s Supper,” 374.

⁶²Van Neste, “The Lord’s Supper,” 373.

on our part and the lack of robust biblical proclamation alongside the ordinance.”⁶³

Also recognizing the “ordinary pattern of the Supper [being] a weekly observance,”⁶⁴ Russell Moore refutes the notion of churches observing the Lord’s Supper monthly, quarterly, or even less often due to fear that the “it will be seen as sacramental, or, conversely, that it will callous the congregation to the meaning of the ritual.”⁶⁵ Moore states that the congregation must restore the Lord’s Supper as an event of proclaiming the gospel: “If the Supper is gospel proclamation meant to call forth and strengthen the faith of believers, how could such an event become rote?”⁶⁶ No other aspects of worship are put off to quarterly or even monthly out of fear of becoming rote or commonplace. The Lord’s Supper should be no different for today’s church.

The Early Church Used the Lord’s Supper as a Tool in Church Discipline

The early church’s priority of the Lord’s Supper is not only seen in the frequency of their observance, but also in the fact that the early church used the Lord’s Supper as a tool in church discipline. Observing the Lord’s Supper is an expression of Christian fellowship. Consequently, when a church discipline situation occurs, the person being disciplined should not be permitted to eat and drink the Lord’s Supper. Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians gives evidence that barring an unrepentant erring brother from the Table is to be an expression of church discipline. In chapter 5, Paul tells the Corinthians to “not even eat with” a brother who refuses to repent of his sin.

⁶³Van Neste, “The Lord’s Supper,” 373.

⁶⁴Moore, “Baptist View,” loc. 489.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., locs. 489-501.

Whether Paul is referring to casual dining or a meal in a church setting, such as the Lord's Supper, is important to consider. In his comments on 1 Corinthians 5:11, Alan Johnson concludes, "Avoidance of association would include not only public meals and the table of the Lord in church but also private meals: *do not even eat together.*"⁶⁷

The Lord's Supper is a holy meal. It is a time to express unity, submission, and devotion to Jesus Christ. Moore states that the starting point for unity in the church should be the common table.⁶⁸ He also refers to the Lord's Table as "the locus of church fellowship . . . the place where we experience Christ present in one another around the eating of an inaugurated banquet feast."⁶⁹ Therefore, it makes sense that Paul would include exemption of the Lord's Supper when he told the Corinthians to "not even eat with such a one." Given this high priority on the Lord's Supper by the apostle Paul, it would make sense for the contemporary church to also withhold the Lord's Supper from an unrepentant, erring brother or sister.

The Early Church Was Rebuked for Wrongly Observing the Lord's Supper

The Corinthian church is famous for being a problematic church. One of the areas of correction that Paul had to give to the church at Corinth was in the area of the Lord's Supper, and it seems that this was a major offense, given Paul's harsh rebuke.

The issue at Corinth was a casual approach to the Lord's Supper and inequality represented by the way the Supper was observed. Status was of extreme importance in the Corinthian culture. One's status in that day was reflected in more ways than just a

⁶⁷Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 92.

⁶⁸Moore, "Baptist View," loc. 597.

⁶⁹Ibid., loc. 608.

paycheck. People's dress, their house, and even how they ate a meal was tied to their status. Alan Johnson explains,

The wealthier the household, the more status was recognized in the partitioning of space within the home. This was especially the case when meals were served. The better food and service came to the guests of greater status, who occupied the large . . . dining room, while those who counted less were served in the nearby atrium with scraps of food.⁷⁰

Paul's contention with the Corinthian church was that he had heard the church was embracing cultural status distinctions when they gathered on the first day of the week. This was evidenced by the way they were observing the Lord's Supper. Apparently, some members had so much food and wine that they were getting drunk while others had nothing to eat, most likely due to status differences.⁷¹ This status distinction is contrary to the unifying work of the cross. Paul knew that the gospel of Jesus meant everyone was equal before God. Of all places, this equality and unity should be expressed at the Lord's Supper. Johnson adds, "By treating members according to worldly status rather than God's perspective, they were dishonoring Christ's own body."⁷²

Such a casual approach to the Table and a disregard for the equalizing work of the cross brought a harsh rebuke from Paul. He said that observing the Lord's Supper in such a way was so bad that it profaned Jesus. This word from Paul is important because it brings to light the importance of the Lord's Supper and connects it to a worship of Jesus. Do it right and Jesus is honored. Do it wrong and Jesus is profaned.

Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is a gift from Jesus to His church. Jesus "earnestly desired" to eat the Last Supper with His disciples. This great desire of the Lord was because of the

⁷⁰Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, 202.

⁷¹Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 544.

⁷²Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 99.

symbols and theological expressions found at the Table. At each celebration, the believer is reminded of Passover being redefined, the new covenant enacted, and Jesus' triumphant return promised. Given the myriad of theological importance, as well as the example of the high priority placed upon the Lord's Supper by the early church, the contemporary church must be careful and intentional with their observance of the Lord's Supper.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR A BETTER
UNDERSTANDING AND OBSERVANCE
OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

A church must think through practical, historical, and theoretical matters if it is going to have a greater understanding and appreciation of the Lord’s Supper. To that end, this chapter argues that the Lord’s Supper should be frequently celebrated by baptized disciples of Christ in the context of a corporate church worship service using the best possible means in order to enjoy its practical benefits.

The Lord’s Supper Should Be Celebrated Frequently

The early church’s frequent observance of the Lord’s Supper was highlighted in the previous chapter. A case from passages such as Acts 2:42, 20:1, and 1 Corinthians can be made that the first church observed the Lord’s Supper each week. N. T. Wright affirms, “The early church seems to have celebrated the Lord’s Supper on a much more regular basis: at least once a week, and perhaps in some quarters more often.”¹

In *Historical Theology*, Gregg Allison reports that the celebration of the Lord’s Supper was “part and parcel of every weekly church gathering.”² As proof, he cites Justin Martyr:

When our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying ‘Amen!’ Then the Eucharist is distributed to each one, and

¹N. T. Wright, *The Meal Jesus Gave Us: Understanding Holy Communion*, rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 79.

²Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 637.

each participates in that over which thanks have been given. And a portion of it is sent by the deacons to those who are absent.³

John Michael Perry reminds his readers that the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week became the standard Christian practice for the apostles.⁴ Malcom Maclean adds his support to the weekly pattern of the Lord's Supper when he reports, "The ordinary custom of the apostles [was] to dispense the Lord's Supper every Lord's day, a practice that was followed by the [Scottish] church until the fifth century."⁵ However, this understanding of a weekly observance was not universally adopted. For example, Maclean continues to state that while the Scottish church practiced a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, "other countries had chosen quarterly, bi-monthly, or monthly commemorations."⁶

Why the church moved away from a weekly celebration to a less frequent celebration could be an interesting study by itself. Perry suggests that because of abuse on the part of Catholic priests concerning the Lord's Supper, some of the reformers decided to celebrate the Lord's Supper once a month. According to Perry, "it was common practice for a priest to celebrate the Supper with only one other person present."⁷ Apparently, the priests would receive stipends for every Eucharist prayer offered. While some reformers were right to object to such abuse of the Lord's Table, they overreacted in departing from a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper.⁸ However, churches who do not observe the Lord's Supper weekly today most likely are not doing so in response to

³Allison, *Historical Theology*, 637.

⁴John M. Perry, *Exploring the Evolution of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1994), 130.

⁵Malcolm Maclean, *The Lord's Supper* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2009), 101.

⁶*Ibid.*, 102.

⁷Perry, *Exploring the Evolution*, 132.

⁸*Ibid.*

abuse of the Table by the Catholic church. Most look to 1 Corinthians 11:25 and see ambiguity and usually just revert to whatever denominational tradition has governed the practice. Many theologians settle on a view similar to Bobby Jamieson's:

The phrase "as often as you drink it" (I Cor. 11:25) seems to imply a degree of flexibility. So I think that the frequency with which a church celebrates the Lord's Supper is a matter of prudence. It certainly can be celebrated weekly. Whether weekly or not, it must be celebrated often.⁹

Perhaps the most common pushback to celebrating the Lord's Supper weekly is the fear that it would become routine and lose significance. However, this fear is unwarranted. First, if one truly understands the importance and symbolism of the Lord's Supper, then how can it grow old and routine? In fact, if a purpose of the Lord's Supper is to "reenact our response to the gospel"¹⁰ as Buddy Jamieson claims, then it would seem that the Lord's Supper would be the most difficult part of the worship service to become routine. The Lord's Supper is not just a time to inwardly reflect on the cross, but rather it is a time to corporately reaffirm the covenant with the Father held together by Jesus.

Jamieson's description of what the Lord Supper is very helpful:

In the Lord's Supper, both parties of the new covenant—God and his people—attest their commitment to the covenant. God attests the covenant by presenting the signs of Jesus' body and blood to us. In the elements, God visibly extends to us his promise that if we trust in Christ we are saved. And as we receive the elements, we solemnly attest that we receive Christ as ours, and we give ourselves wholly to him. In the Lord's Supper we profess our faith in Christ by partaking of the signs of his body and blood. We thereby convey our commitment to his new covenant as surely as if we spoke a verbal oath.¹¹

When the Lord's Supper is viewed in such a way, it is hard to allow it to become rote or routine. It is not the frequency of the Lord Supper that makes it become routine, instead the blame should be laid on the teaching of the Lord's Supper by the church leaders and the understanding and approach of those coming to the Table.

⁹Bobby Jamieson, *Understanding the Lord's Supper* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 61.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 30.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 31.

Second, it is curious that those who wish to put off the Lord's Supper to once a month or even longer intervals do not apply the same concern for other elements of a worship service. Consider what happens each week in most worship services: preaching, singing, Scripture reading, fellowship, and giving. All of these elements of worship happen each week without fear or concern of becoming too routine and losing their significance and importance. It is odd that this concern is seemingly applied only to the Lord's Supper.

John Hicks provides a helpful argument against the common reasons why churches today neglect a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper:

If the meal proclaims the gospel, its frequency would not undermine its meaning any more than weekly sermons might undermine it? If the supper is fundamentally a celebration of the resurrection hope as we eat in the presence of the Living Christ, a weekly eating on the day of the resurrection is imminently appropriate. If we gather each week to celebrate the resurrection in our assemblies, it seems we should come weekly to the table that is designed to celebrate that resurrection. Theologically, and consistent with the historic practice of the church in Acts and throughout the centuries, the church should eat together at least once a week on the first day of the week in celebration of our resurrection hope. There are no theological reasons for doing otherwise. The resistance to weekly communion is due more to the way in which we presently observe the supper (private silence) than theological concerns. The resistance to weekly communion is pragmatic rather than theological.¹²

When properly taught and applied, the Lord's Supper can and should be a powerful part of the weekly worship service. It appears that the early church was devoted to a weekly celebration, and given the assuring effect that the Lord's Supper has upon sinners in covenant with God, today's church would benefit from a weekly celebration. While a weekly celebration is nowhere commanded in Scripture, a weekly celebration would be very helpful to the believer individually and to the church corporately. Robert Letham discerningly writes,

While [the frequency of the Lord's Supper] remains a matter of Christian liberty, the key word is 'often.' The question to ask ourselves is simply this: How much do we

¹²John Mark Hicks, *Come to the Table: Revisioning the Lord's Supper* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood, 2012), locs. 2060-67, Kindle.

hunger and thirst for righteousness? How far do we desire communion with Christ?¹³

The Lord's Supper Should Be Celebrated by Baptized Disciples of Christ

The Lord's Supper, as discussed, is an important gift from Jesus Christ. Because it is such an important gift, careful consideration should be given concerning whom should participate in the Lord's Supper and if there are any requirements or prerequisites to participating in the Lord's Supper. It is argued in this section that only saved, baptized disciples of the Lord, regardless of age, should participate in the Lord's Supper.

Salvation Requirement

Wayne Grudem asserts that most Protestants would agree that only those who believe in Christ should participate in the Lord's Supper since it is "a sign of being a Christian and continuing in the Christian life."¹⁴ Bobby Jamieson agrees: "The Lord's Supper is something in which only a believer in Jesus should participate."¹⁵ Jesus intended this meal to be for His followers to share, experience, and repeat until He comes back. Paul repeats this instruction in his admonition to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 11:26).

Paul's instruction regarding the Table's symbolism prevents unbelievers from being included in the Lord Supper celebration. Paul was making the point to the Corinthians that when they ate the Lord's Supper together, they did so to show their identity and unity in Jesus Christ. According to Paul, eating the Lord's Supper was a proclamation of their connection to Christ and Christ's body. So, the very nature of what is happening at the Table dictates that only true disciples of Jesus are welcome at the Table.

¹³Robert Letham, *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word in Broken Bread* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 60.

¹⁴Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 996.

¹⁵Jamieson, *Understanding the Lord's Supper*, 29.

Additionally, the fact that withholding the Lord's Supper from an unrepentant person, as suggested in 1 Corinthians 5, underscores the insistence that only true believers are to participate. Paul told the Corinthian church to treat unrepentant people as unbelievers and to refrain from eating the Lord's Supper with them. The reason Paul instructed the church to withhold the Lord's Table from an unrepentant person is because the unbeliever has no place at the Table.

While telling unbelievers to sit quietly by and not participate in the Lord's Supper could seem awkward or even unloving, Jamieson effectively argues that it is actually the most loving thing to do:

The most loving thing for a church to do is instruct non-Christians that they are not to participate in this family meal of the church. Instead, the Lord's Supper should pique non-Christian's interest in Christ. It should serve as a reminder to them that until they trust in Christ, they do not belong to Christ or his church. Until they trust in Christ, the blessings the Lord's supper holds before us—forgiveness, reconciliation, assurance, hope - are not yet theirs.¹⁶

Jamieson writes that the non-Christian should feel welcomed at the church but at the same time, excluded. As he explains, the non-Christian should also feel an element of being excluded:

Non-Christians attending your church should also feel excluded. They should long for the kind of intimacy and unity you have with Christ and each other. And they should become increasingly aware that unless they repent and trust in Christ, they simply will not experience that intimate unity. That the Lord's Supper is only for believers actually clarifies the gospel and reminds non-Christians of their need for Christ.¹⁷

The New Testament intention is that only believers should observe the Lord's Supper. The pattern of the New Testament also indicates that those believers should be baptized before participating in the Lord's Supper.

¹⁶Jamieson, *Understanding the Lord's Supper*, 46.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

Baptism Requirement

A study of baptism is outside the scope of this project, but knowing that baptism is generally understood in Protestant Evangelicalism as the public declaration of faith will bring clarity to identifying who should participate in the Lord's Supper.¹⁸ Because baptism is the symbol and testimony of entrance into God's family,¹⁹ many Protestants would argue that only those who are baptized should participate in the Lord's Supper.²⁰ For example, Ray Van Neste writes, "If we understand baptism correctly—that it is the public profession of faith—then it makes sense for baptism to precede participating in Communion."²¹ Van Neste's position has been the historic Baptist persuasion.²² John Hammett goes even further than the Baptist persuasion when he posits, "Virtually all denominations have seen participation in the Lord's Supper as normally subsequent to baptism."²³ While baptism is a one-time act of obedience and identification for the disciple of Christ, the Lord's Supper is an ongoing testimony of being in Christ and a part of God's family.

¹⁸In this section, baptism by immersion following conversion is assumed to be the most appropriate understanding of the Bible's teaching on baptism.

¹⁹Bobby Jamieson refers to baptism as when someone's faith goes public. For a more detailed explanation, see Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership* (Nashville: B & H 2015).

²⁰Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 996, states that baptism is "clearly a symbol of *beginning* the Christian life, while the Lord's Supper is clearly a symbol of *continuing* the Christian life" (emphasis original).

²¹Ray Van Neste, "The Lord's Supper in the Context of the Local Church," in *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R Crawford (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 380.

²²H. L. Gear, *The Relation of Baptism to the Lord's Supper*, Logos Bible Software (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1880), 5.

²³John Hammett, *40 Questions about Baptism and the Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015), 261.

The “requirement” of baptism to participate in the Lord’s Supper is admittedly, one born out of common sense or scriptural implication rather than scriptural mandate.²⁴ However, in the *Didache*, only the baptized were permitted to partake of the Lord’s Supper, so there is historical precedence to requiring baptism before one can participate in the Lord’s Supper celebration.²⁵ The logical timeline of the Christian life is salvation, public profession through baptism, and then an ongoing recommitment to Christ and a reaffirmation of being united with Christ and His people is through the Lord’s Supper.

It stands to reason that if someone desires to take part in the Lord’s Supper, he or she would have already been obedient to Christ’s command (and New Testament pattern) to be baptized upon salvation, publically declaring their discipleship. The Lord’s Supper is a renewal of that declaration. Jamieson helpfully summarizes the logical flow of baptism and then the Lord’s Supper: “You have to make a profession [baptism] before you can renew that profession [Lord’s Supper].”²⁶

As stated, there may be reasons to admit an unbaptized person to the Lord’s Table. A physical disability, which would prevent immersion, lack of opportunity, such as a church that only baptizes on certain days in the year, and different views on baptism (i.e., paedobaptists) would all be reasons a person should be welcomed to the Lord’s Table even if they have not yet been immersed. Just as Jesus’ point in his Sermon on the Mount, the main issue is the person’s heart. If a man or woman is willing to be baptized and just has not yet had the opportunity or ability to do so, they should be welcomed to the Table. In such cases, the person’s heart is one of obedience, not rebellion.

²⁴Henry F. Colby, *Restriction of the Lord’s Supper*, Logos Bible Software (Watertown, WI: Classic Baptist, 2012), 19.

²⁵Hicks, *Come to the Table*, loc. 1919.

²⁶Jamieson, *Understanding the Lord’s Supper*, 47.

The same is true of those with different views of baptism. Wayne Grudem is helpful here: “A person’s nonparticipation symbolizes that he or she is not a member of the body of Christ which is coming together to observe the Lord’s Supper in a unified fellowship.”²⁷ If a person who believes in Christ as their savior desires to identify with Him, but differs on what baptism is actually communicating, denying access to the Table is problematic because to do so is actually saying that the person is not part of the family of God. The only time church leaders are told to withhold the Lord’s Supper from someone is to help the person understand that he is either not in the family of God at all or is acting like an unbeliever due to a pattern of unrepentance.²⁸

In summary, even though exceptions can certainly be made, the logical pattern for participation in the Lord’s Supper is for the participant to be baptized. A pastor has a wonderful opportunity to talk with a believer about the importance of baptism if the person desires to participate in the Lord’s Supper and has not yet been baptized. It could be an ignorance issue that needs to be addressed or a heart attitude that needs to be helped. Either way, if a pastor sees people participating in the Lord’s Supper that are not yet believers or baptized, he has an opportunity to explain the beauty of the gospel to them. Instead of putting an insurmountable fence around the Table, perhaps using their desire to participate in what is intended for baptized believers to minister to them is the better approach. In addition, no demographic in the church provides more opportunities for great discussions than the children of the church.

²⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 997.

²⁸While I hold to the traditional Baptist understanding of baptism, I would have a hard time withholding the Lord’s Supper from an orthodox Presbyterian, such as Tim Keller, if he were to visit my church. To prohibit Keller from The Table is to declare him an unbeliever. While I may not agree with Keller on a few theological issues, the evidence of His discipleship is clear.

Children at the Table

Most of the debate about whether or not children should be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper centers around children of believing parents who are too young to profess their own belief in and discipleship of Jesus Christ.²⁹ Given the conclusions of the preceding section, time will not be spent on determining whether or not an unbeliever, regardless of age, should participate in the Lord's Supper. Instead, a short discussion concerning the maturity level of a believing child is the purpose of this section.

First Corinthians 11 gives two helpful phrases for instruction to young, believing children and their involvement in the Lord's Supper. First, in verse 28, Paul told the Corinthians that a man should "examine" himself before participating in the Lord's Supper. It is important that young, believing children be taught to use the observance of the Lord's Supper as a time to weigh and analyze their discipleship. Children should be taught to measure their discipleship in terms of how they respond to their parents and other authority figures in their lives as that is the principal way children are to work out their salvation.

The second phrase to be considered in 1 Corinthians 11 is given in verse 29, which is a warning against failure to "discern the Lord's body." Children who participate in the Lord's Supper should have the capacity to discern the Lord's body. Whatever one's conclusion is about what Paul meant by "discerning the Lord's body," the point is that those who participate in the Lord's Supper should have the capacity to understand and think through its significance and importance. As long as children are expressing their trust and hope in Jesus Christ and desire to identify with him through baptism and the Lord's Supper, they should not be prohibited from approaching the Lord's Table.³⁰

²⁹For a good treatment of paedocommunion, see Guy Waters and Ligon Duncan, *Children and the Lord's Supper* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2011), as well as Cornelis P. Venema, *Children at the Lord's Table?* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2009).

³⁰The difficulty for Christian parents is in determining whether a child's faith is genuine or simply adaptation to their Christian culture. Parents and pastors should take

The Lord's Supper Should Be Celebrated in the Context of a Corporate Church Worship Service

Baptists have historically understood the Lord's Supper to be an ordinance for the church to observe. As such, the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated in the context of a corporate church. In other words, the Lord's Supper is a church event.³¹ The implications of the Lord's Supper being a church event means that the Lord's Supper is not intended to be observed in isolation or within segments or subgroups of the entire church. Bobby Jamieson agrees:

[The Lord's Supper] shouldn't be celebrated by only a portion of the church apart from the whole, like a youth group or mission team or the bride and groom at a wedding. It shouldn't be celebrated by a military chaplain—unless of course, the soldiers he is ministering to have constituted a church together. And, despite the commendable compassion behind this practice, it shouldn't be “taken” to those who are homebound or in the hospital.³²

While some may interpret Jamieson's position as cold-hearted toward the infirmed, it is one born out of a desire to maintain the communal nature of the Lord's Supper.³³

Furthermore, Jamieson's conclusion is not outside of orthodoxy. For example, the Westminster Confession of Faith (29.3) states,

The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people, to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to a holy use; and to take and break the

children at their word and allow them to participate in the Lord's Supper, all the while looking for fruit of discipleship. To take someone at his word is in line with Christ's teaching on forgiveness found in Luke 17:4, but to continue to look for evidence of saving grace is in line with Christ's teaching in John 15.

³¹Van Neste, “The Lord's Supper,” 369.

³²Jamieson, *Understanding the Lord's Supper*, 43.

³³Great care should be exercised by church leadership when discussing this point with the church family. The entire church, especially the pastor(s), should exhibit gentleness and graciousness when dealing with the homebound. Occasionally, someone who is homebound may insist on receiving the Lord's Supper at home in an effort to regain a sense of belonging to a community. In such cases, it may prove more pastoral to bring the bread and wine to them even though it loses the communal element/intention of the Lord's Supper.

bread, to take the cup, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants; but to none who are not then present in the congregation.³⁴

Because the Lord's Supper signifies identity in Christ, it is important that the whole family sit down together for the meal—or at least every member who is able to be present at the Table. The only time Paul addresses the Lord's Supper is in the context of a church gathering (1 Cor 10, 11). Paul's language leaves no room for doubt of this fact. Four times in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul describes the context of the Lord's Supper as the church "coming together" or "gathering together" (vv. 17, 18, 20, 33-34). Again, Jamison is emphatic that the Lord's Supper be a church event: "The Lord's Supper is not detachable from the church. Take away the gathering of the church and you take away the Lord's Supper."³⁵

Similar to Paul, when Luke mentions the Lord's Supper in Acts it is in the context of the early church gatherings (2:42; 20:7). In the first century, celebrating the Lord's Supper also included a love feast—this is the difficult issue Paul was writing to the Corinthians about in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11.³⁶ The fact that a larger meal was attached to the Lord's Supper celebration indicates that it was a celebration intended for the entire church, not a small group of the church.

For many Christians, the Lord's Supper has been a time of quiet meditation in silence and often with the lights dimmed. No doubt, the intentions of those who lead the Lord's Supper observance in such a way are noble. However, John Hicks laments this approach and calls for a revision of the church's celebration of the Lord's Supper:

The church should revision the supper as an experience of interactive communion with the people of God. The table is a communal experience. It is not a private,

³⁴Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Edinburgh ed. (Philadelphia: William S. Young, 1851), 151.

³⁵Jamieson, *Understanding the Lord's Supper*, 26.

³⁶W. Harold Mare, *1 Corinthians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 357.

individualistic moment. On the contrary, the sacrificial table in the Old Testament was shared with family and community. If the table is a meal, then it is interactive because meals are interactive. Tables are filled with conversation. The table is a place for fellowship where people share their lives with each other. Unfortunately, the church practices the supper in private silence.³⁷

The intention of the Lord's Supper is that it is to be a communal event. There is not the slightest hint of private celebration of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. Brian Vickers explains why ignoring the communal aspect of the Lord's Supper in favor of individual introspection is not helpful. Vickers states,

The problem with excessive introspection is that it leads us only back to ourselves. . . . The Supper, as a proclamation of the Gospel, leads us away from ourselves to Christ who invites us to come to His Table to remember Him, believe in Him, and wait for Him.³⁸

Ray Van Neste agrees:

In the Scriptures, Communion is part of the gathered worship. It is not merely a private act. It is a corporate confession of faith and gospel proclamation. The inference of I Cor 10:17 on the unity of the church ("the body") and the entire flow of 1 Corinthians 11 only really make sense in a corporate gathering. Thus Communion is not fitting in individual situations.³⁹

Why the contemporary church seems to favor a privatized celebration of the Lord's Supper is not a subject routinely considered. John Hicks, however, provides a fascinating view on why today's church may not be used to the Lord's Supper being a public celebration. He concludes that elements of altar worship cloud the intended mood of celebration:

The predominant atmosphere of the supper in the contemporary church is an altar mentality. The church usually approaches the supper with penance and confession of sin. We come to the "altar" with our guilt and remorse, or we come to the "altar" with deep introspection. We are encouraged to think about the death of Christ, especially its pain and gore. We are told to concentrate on the meaning of Christ's atonement and focus our attention solely on what Christ did on the cross. From childhood we are socialized to eat the supper in silent contemplative prayer or meditation. No one talks while they eat and drink. No one looks up but everyone prays with a bowed head, and certainly no one looks anyone else in the eye. The altar is a time for private, silent meditation on the cross of Christ. In practice, the

³⁷Hicks, *Come to the Table*, locs. 2153-57.

³⁸Brian J. Vickers, "The Lord's Supper: Celebrating the Past and Future in the Present," in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord's Supper*, 340.

³⁹Van Neste, "The Lord's Supper," 376.

table became an altar in the church. We still use the language of “table,” but we practice it as an altar.⁴⁰

In contrast, Hicks believes that the Lord’s Supper should be seasoned with implications of the Table metaphor:

The table, as a meal, was an interactive event where people talked with each other and “fellowshipped” each other. They not only shared food, but they shared their lives. Rather than private introspection, the table was a public, expressive and communal event. Rather than approached in penance, sorrow and remorse, people experienced the table with joy and peace. Rather than feeling remorse for what Christ had to do on the cross because of our sin, the table was a celebrative thanksgiving meal for what God did in Christ. It expressed commitment more than penance. Table was more about eating and drinking with the risen Lord than it was a gruesome remembrance of the death of Christ.⁴¹

Thus, Hicks argues the symbolism of the Lord’s Supper points to it being a corporate celebration rather than an individual celebration. The Table was intended to be a public event, expressing joy and peace found at the cross through Jesus’s merciful sacrifice. The Christian is not expected to bring a sacrifice to the Table in exchange for forgiveness. Instead, the Christian should celebrate with thanksgiving for salvation found in Jesus Christ. Oneness with Christ and His body is expressed by Christians when they eat with their brothers and sisters at the Table.

By observing the Lord’s Supper, Christians signify their identity and membership in the Body of Christ. The Lord’s Supper is also an opportunity to renew the vows publically proclaimed at Baptism.⁴² If baptism is a public declaration to be made in the sight and hearing of others, it would be curious that the Lord’s Supper should be a privatized event. This is not to say that no personal blessings are found at the Lord’s Table for the individual Christian—certainly personal blessings are received at the Table. However, to receive personal blessing does not mean that the observance of the Lord’s Supper should be a private event. To clarify, few, if any, would argue that the Lord’s

⁴⁰Hicks, *Come to the Table*, locs. 1704-10.

⁴¹Ibid., locs. 1714-19.

⁴²Gordon T. Smith, *A Holy Meal: The Lord’s Supper in the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 67.

Supper be strictly a private event—meaning, to be observed in solitude. However, the approach that many take to the Lord’s Supper is functionally a private event. For example, looking at others is implicitly discouraged through dimmed lights, and celebrating the Table *together* is hindered by asking people to bow their heads and close their eyes in meditation before, during, and after the elements are disbursed.

Richard Barcellos provides good insight into the communal element of the Lord’s Supper in his discussion of Paul’s use of *koinonia*.⁴³ Barcellos argues that Paul intends for Christians to understand that observing the Lord’s Supper is not simply a ritual for an individual to perform. Rather, *koinonia* “constitutes some sort of relationship with the blood and the body of Christ.”⁴⁴ The whole point of *koinonia*, or communion, is togetherness and participation. It is difficult to signify communion or participation if the explicit and implicit modes of celebration are privatized rather than corporate. To be biblically and theologically correct, those who organize and preside over Lord’s Supper celebrations should seek to provide ways for people to express their corporate identity in Christ at the Table.

A practical way to encourage more corporate celebrations and appreciation of the Lord’s Supper is for people approach the Table to receive the bread and wine rather than sit in their seats and be served. There is no biblical mandate to have people sit in their seats or approach the Table, but to ask people to approach the Table while the congregation sings together goes a long way in encouraging people to celebrate the Lord’s Supper *together*.

Celebrating the Lord’s Supper in the context of a church gathering is a beautiful blessing from our gracious God. The question of what means to use in observing the Lord’s Supper is another important consideration.

⁴³Richard C. Barcellos, *The Lord’s Supper as a Means of Grace: More Than a Memory* (Newton, IL: Mentor, 2014), 45-50.

⁴⁴Barcellos, *The Lord’s Supper*, 48.

The Lord's Supper Should Be Celebrated Using the Best Possible Means

How the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated is important. The forms chosen for celebration communicate how a church views the Lord's Supper. While some might say that forms do not matter, John Hicks reminds his readers that forms indeed matter. It is not simply a matter of function: "Function cannot exist without form and form must serve the function."⁴⁵ Understanding that form serves the function means that the elements chosen for a Lord's Supper celebration should have significant meaning. Consequently, a youth group decision to use potato chips and soda pop for a Communion celebration should be met with raised eyebrows.

The Bread

Michael Perry argues for a fourfold significance of the elements. First, they signify Jesus's life-giving presence as Risen Lord. Second, they signify participation in his body, which includes the church. Third, the elements signify the saving death of Jesus. Finally, they signify one's duty to follow Jesus and be united with him.⁴⁶ Because so much symbolism is found at the Table, the forms used are important.

Jesus used bread to signify his body. More specifically, he used one loaf of bread.⁴⁷ As much as possible, a church should use a single loaf in their observance of the Lord's Supper to be consistent with Jesus' example and symbolism. The one loaf represents his one body. A single loaf, which is torn into pieces in front of the congregation, is a powerful symbol of the body of Jesus being sacrificed on the cross. The pre-cut, prepackaged wafers common to today's celebrations fail to maintain the symbolism found in a single loaf of bread.

⁴⁵Hicks, *Come to the Table*, locs. 1247-48.

⁴⁶Perry, *Exploring the Evolution*, 127.

⁴⁷Letham, *The Lord's Supper*, 50.

Whether or not the bread should be unleavened is important to some and not to others. If the Lord's Supper is seen as an extension of the Passover celebration, then having unleavened bread would be an important matter. If the Lord's Supper is rather a redefinition of the Passover celebration, then using leavened bread would be no injustice to the celebration. Calvin, representing most reformers' thought on this, did not think whether the bread is to be leavened or unleavened, should be of any consequence.⁴⁸

The bread that Jesus used at the Last Supper may have been unleavened in keeping with Passover tradition,⁴⁹ or as Andreas Köstenberger maintains, the bread may have been leavened: "When recounting the story of Jesus blessing the bread (*artos*), the Synoptics do not feature the technical term 'unleavened bread' (*azuma*) that was used for a Passover meal."⁵⁰ Either way, the bread that the early church used on the first day of the week during their agape feasts and Lord's Supper celebrations was most likely leavened bread.⁵¹ The ambiguity and essential silence of the Scriptures on whether or not to use leavened or unleavened bread gives great latitude to today's church.

One more practical consideration about the bread to be used in a Lord's Supper service is that congregations should consider using gluten free bread. Because of the rise of gluten intolerance, it would be compassionate and inclusive of church leaders to use gluten free bread. If the point is for the Lord's Supper to be a communal, corporate event, then measures should be taken to remove unnecessarily barriers to people having to refrain from participation due to health needs. A simple act of using a type of bread that everyone

⁴⁸John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1997), 4.17.43.

⁴⁹Letham, *The Lord's Supper*, 53.

⁵⁰Andreas Köstenberger, "Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal?" in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord's Supper*, 10.

⁵¹Letham, *The Lord's Supper*, 54.

can consume will speak very loudly and clearly to the congregation that the intention is for all of God's people to participate in the Lord's Supper.

The Cup

Concerning the cup, some traditions use a common cup while others use individual cups. The symbolism of a common cup is powerful. Unfortunately, in today's germ conscience world, using a common cup would probably cause unnecessary (maybe even insurmountable) distractions for many at the Table.⁵² Robert Letham laments losing the symbolism that surrounds the common cup and even argues that there is no recorded instance of worse health among the Christians who have used a single cup.⁵³ The church that has historically used the common cup should hold on to that tradition. The pastor looking to switch to a common cup in a church that has never used one before will almost assuredly be met with harsh resistance. The pastor at that point needs to weigh whether or not it is worth fighting for the common cup.⁵⁴

A final consideration for the forms used in the Lord's Supper is if wine or grape juice should be used. There are good arguments for using wine, one of which is the possibility of helpful symbolism in a bitter taste being left in the mouth when commemorating the Lord's death. Letham maintains the use of wine has been the uniform practice for most of church history.⁵⁵ He further argues that only with the temperance movement in the nineteenth century did the church move away from using wine in

⁵²It should be noted that using wine instead of grape juice would greatly diminish the chance of germs/sickness being transmitted through a common cup.

⁵³Letham, *The Lord's Supper*, 52.

⁵⁴If a pastor does determine to use the common cup, wine should be utilized rather than grape juice in order to decrease the chances of transmitting disease.

⁵⁵Letham, *The Lord's Supper*, 54.

celebrating the Lord's Supper.⁵⁶ Letham summarizes his recommendation for using wine in the Lord's Supper : "Wine itself conveys the intoxicating nature of the gospel. Feeding on Christ is the most enjoyable thing that could be done. It is the heart of the Christian faith, gladdening the heart of the faithful."⁵⁷

However, reasons for a church to avoid the use of wine at the Lord's Supper also exist. Similar to the dilemma of whether or not to use a common cup, overcoming the cultural resistance to alcohol consumption in many Christian circles could prove to be a barrier that is too great to overcome. Another consideration should be people who have a history of alcohol abuse. Coming to the Table where wine is present might be a stumbling block to them. Although these are not definitive arguments against using wine, they are matters to be carefully considered.

In the end, the Bible gives latitude about the forms of the Lord's Supper. In its simplest form, the Lord's Supper must include bread and a cup that contains the fruit of the vine.⁵⁸ These are the elements to be used in celebration of the Lord's Supper. A wise church should carefully show compassion, care, and fidelity to symbolism. Doing so will influence the forms used in the Lord's Supper celebration. When the forms of the Lord's Supper are carefully thought through, the celebration of the Lord's Supper brings great practical benefits to the congregation.

The Lord's Supper Should Be Celebrated to Enjoy Its Practical Benefits

The Lord's Supper, celebrated in a thoughtful and meaningful way, provides several practical benefits to a local congregation. It is out of the scope of this project to provide an exhaustive list of such benefits, but the following four benefits are important

⁵⁶Letham, *The Lord's Supper*, 54.

⁵⁷Ibid., 53.

⁵⁸Vickers, "The Lord's Supper," 374.

for each local church. These benefits are gifts from the Lord to his church found in a meaningful and thoughtful celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The Church Is in Obedience to Christ

Paul made it clear that Jesus intended for the church to continue the celebration of the Lord's Supper until Jesus returns. Neither Jesus nor Paul gave any hint that the Lord's Supper should ever cease to be celebrated while Christians anticipate the return of their Savior. Therefore, celebrating the Lord's Supper is a matter of obedience.

Just as it is important to obey Jesus in fulfilling the Great Commission or in loving God with all heart, soul, and mind, and in loving neighbors as oneself, it is important to obey Christ in celebration of the Lord's Supper; and it seems that Jesus expected his church to obey these commands in meaningful ways. As seen in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was primarily concerned with the heart attitude that accompanies obedience. Therefore, a sincere, thoughtful, awe-filled, celebration of the Lord's Supper brings the blessing of being in obedience to Christ. Another blessing that God has given to the church at the Table is that it is a means of grace for the church.

The Church Receives a Means of Grace

The Lord's Supper is a means of grace given to the church by Jesus Christ. By means of grace, sanctifying grace, not saving grace, is meant. As Richard Barcellos clarifies, the Lord's Supper "is not a converting ordinance but a sanctifying one."⁵⁹ He also states that the Lord's Supper "is a means whereby we grow, are built up, sanctified, and grow up in Christ."⁶⁰ Barcellos' work includes a helpful survey of Confessions and Catechisms that illustrate a unified understanding that the Lord's Supper is a means of sanctifying grace. Some examples include the Belgic Confession of 1561, the Westminster

⁵⁹Barcellos, *The Lord's Supper*, 90.

⁶⁰Ibid., 107.

Confession of 1647, the Second London Confession of 1677 and 1689, as well as the Heidelberg Catechism and the Baptist Catechism. Each of these documents affirm the Lord's Supper as a means of sanctifying grace.⁶¹

Furthermore, support for the Lord's Supper as a means of grace is not limited to Barcellos' work. The famed Charles Spurgeon referred to the Lord's Supper as a means of grace⁶² and John Hicks also clearly supports the idea of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace:

The invitation to the table is an invitation to grace. God invites us to sit at table with him, not because we are worthy, but because he is gracious, forgiving and reconciling. The table testifies to the grace of the gospel. It proclaims the death of Christ as good news.⁶³

Every Christian is on a path of sanctification. To help each Christian along this path, God has given several means by which the believer is to grow in his or her relationship with God. For example, the Bible, prayer, Christian fellowship, and the church are means by which the believer's soul is to be nourished. The Lord's Supper is another one of those means of gracious nourishment.⁶⁴ As a believer's soul is nourished, he understands the importance of unity within the body of Christ.

The Church Is Led toward Peace and Unity within the Brotherhood

A common theme in the New Testament is people being brought together in peace and unity by the cross of Jesus Christ. One avenue of such unity is the Lord's

⁶¹Barcellos, *The Lord's Supper*, 87-102.

⁶²Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon on the Holy Spirit* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2000), 3.

⁶³Hicks, *Come to the Table*, locs. 2167-69.

⁶⁴Barcellos, *The Lord's Supper*, 103.

Supper. Complete equality is found at the Lord's Table, so in a very real sense, the Lord's Supper makes many people one.⁶⁵

When the church has a healthy, intentional celebration of the Lord's Supper, a benefit is that the church will experience greater unity. Wright states that the Lord's Supper should be the thing that "will create a context in which we will be able to understand and respect one another, and grow towards richer unity."⁶⁶ It is hard to feel superior to someone when approaching a table of grace and mercy. Likewise, it is hard to hold grudges against a brother or sister when approaching the table of forgiveness. The Table, with all of its significance, reminds the participants that they are no better than any other person.

As discussed, when believers participate in the Lord's Supper, they are claiming unity with Christ and Christ's body. In order to be part of Christ's fellowship, one has to be committed to peace and unity. Therefore when publically professing adherence to Christ at the Table, the believer is also publically testifying to the importance of unity and peace within the brotherhood.

Thus, a practical benefit of the Table is for believers to refuse to hold grudges against one another. It is incomprehensible to claim fidelity to Jesus and His teachings by taking the Lord's Supper while ignoring His commands against holding grudges and insistence on pursuing peace with a brother as seen in Matthew 5. In many ways, the Lord's Supper is God's built in accountability program for the church. If the church celebrates the Lord's Supper each week, then every believer present has to consider their relationships, not only with Jesus each Sunday, but also their relationship with the other believers present.

⁶⁵Jamieson, *Understanding the Lord's Supper*, 36.

⁶⁶Wright, *The Meal Jesus Gave Us*, 85.

The only way a believer will stay unified with other brothers and sisters is if he maintains a Christological focus. This is incredibly hard to do in a sin cursed world and while sin nature resides in every human. However, Christians have their minds, hearts, and attention drawn to Jesus at the Table.

The Church Maintains a Christological Focus

Gordon Smith recounts Richard Baxter’s suggestion that “nowhere is God so near to man as in Jesus Christ; and nowhere is Christ so familiarly represented to us, as in his holy sacrament.”⁶⁷ It is at the Lord’s Supper that one has unique opportunities to remember, appreciate, and worship Jesus Christ. Paul referred to this unique opportunity as “participation.”

Paul’s address to the Corinthians taught them (and all of Christendom) that participating in the Lord’s Supper is to participate in the body and blood of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 10:16). A natural outcome of participating in the Lord’s Supper in a meaningful and intentional way is that attention is focused upon Jesus Christ. In a world full of harmful distractions, a weekly recalibration of focusing on Christ is a tremendous blessing to any battle-weary disciple.

Just as it is easy for individual disciples to lose sight of following Jesus, churches do the exact same thing. Unfortunately, it is common for local churches to become so busy doing great things “for God” that they forget to draw near to God. Attendance at corporate sessions of prayer are notoriously low in today’s church. While there are many reasons for this, distracted disciples are at the core of the problem. A church would receive great benefit from weekly observing the Lord’s Supper since it would serve as a weekly reminder that the church exists for the glory of God under the headship of Christ. The Lord’s Supper reminds churches to keep honoring Christ as its

⁶⁷Smith, *A Holy Meal*, 48.

priority. The Lord's Supper also serves as a gentle rebuke when one's focus comes off of Christ and on to something else. It is more difficult to ignore Christ when asked to approach the Table of the Lord each week. So, the Lord's Supper is something that every church should be devoted to observing with care and thoughtfulness. Much care, intentionality, and thoughtfulness are given to sermon and music preparation—and rightfully so. The church, however, misses an incredibly powerful way to focus on Christ when the same care, intentionality, and thoughtfulness is not given to the Lord's Supper.

Conclusion

The Lord's Supper should be frequently celebrated by baptized disciples of Christ in the context of a corporate church worship service using the best possible means in order to enjoy its practical benefits. To ignore the Lord's Supper or to demote it to a ritual performed with little thought is to rob oneself of a tremendous gift of the Lord. Today's church must insist on a thoughtful, intentional observance of the Lord's Supper. Failure to do so robs Jesus of His glory and believers of great blessing.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

While considering the options of how to structure the project, it was determined that a six-week sermon series on the Lord's Supper was the best way to influence the appreciation and understanding of the Lord's Supper at Memorial Baptist Church in Verona, Wisconsin. A sermon series was chosen because the church has historically had a predilection for learning in a lecture format. Initially, eight weeks was scheduled for the sermon series, but after discussion with people in the church and analyzing the results of the first survey, it seemed that eight weeks would be too long of a series. Consequently, with supervisor approval, an adjustment was made to reduce the sermon series to six weeks.

Preparing the Sermon Series

The personal preparation for this project began a few years ago when I was posed the question about whether the church I was co-pastoring at the time should adopt a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. However, the formal preparation for this project began about five months before the sermon series with the distribution of the pre-sermon series survey on March 23, 2016 (see appendix 1). Previous study of the topic, discussion with church leadership, and informal conversations with the people in the church contributed to the formation of the survey questions.

Determination of Sermon Series Content

Study on the topic of the Lord's Supper continued for the next five months while the survey's results were monitored as they were submitted. This continued study of the Lord's Supper, as well as the results of the first survey, helped determine the

content of the sermon series. The questions with the lowest scores were highlighted using a six-point Likert scale. Every question that failed to score higher than a 75 percent of the highest possible points was used to formulate the outline for the sermons series. This analysis and determination took place in the final month of study before beginning the sermon series.

The reason 75 percent was chosen as a benchmark to help determine the topics to be discussed was that any issues scoring higher than 75 percent indicated that the majority of the congregation already had a decent understanding of the matter. Thirteen of the questions scored lower than 75 percent, the lowest being 43 percent.¹ Since the sermon series would only be six sermons, it seemed prudent to focus on the issues that scored lower with priority given to the lowest scoring topics.

The survey revealed that the project did not need to include much time discussing the command to observe the Lord's Supper since everyone answered the question positively. Nor was it necessary to discuss the fact that a person must confess Christ as their savior in order to rightly participate in the Lord's Supper. That question scored the highest at 96 percent. However, the importance of being baptized before observing the Lord's Supper did need to be discussed—that question only scored 51 percent.

Also observed from the results was that teaching about Lord's Supper providing saving grace was unnecessary, since 90 percent of the respondents answered the question satisfactorily. However, the idea of sanctifying grace found at the Lord's Table was less clear (74 percent), so that became part of the sermon series. No one in the

¹Two other questions scored lower than 43 percent. One question was whether a common cup should be used (30 percent) and the second question was if wine should be used (35 percent). Since I knew I would not attempt to convince the congregation one way or another, I discarded these two questions. However, I was curious to see where the congregation stood on those matters. I eventually addressed both questions in the final message of the sermon series.

congregation believed that one finds salvation at the Lord's Table, but many needed to be stretched in their understanding of sanctifying grace.

Many respondents indicated that they believe that the Lord's Supper is important for individual growth (87 percent) and the health of the church (89 percent), but there seemed to be a disconnect regarding *how* the Lord's Supper was beneficial for individual and corporate health and growth, since only 73 percent indicated that they feel like they missed something significant if they were not able to participate in the Lord's Supper. Inferred from this data, as well as the data from the sanctifying grace question, was that several believed that the Lord's Supper should be good for them since God commands it.

The results also showed that people viewed the Lord's Supper as *primarily* an individual experience rather than a corporate experience. Consequently, many indicated that they thought it was acceptable to have the Lord's Supper with a group of friends disconnected from a church service. Additionally, several indicated an uneasiness about a church withholding the Lord's Supper from someone under church discipline.

Consequently, it was determined to make the corporate nature of the Lord's Supper prominent in the sermon series, but being careful not to diminish the personal, individual experience at the Lord's Table. However, it was clear that the project should seek to teach that the Lord's Supper is indeed a communal event due to the results of the survey.

Participation

Participation in the first survey was slightly lower than anticipated. Out of 108 adult members in the church, 57 people participated in the survey giving a 52.7 percent participation rate. It was surprising that a few people who are considered faithful members (including some deacons) seemingly did not participate in the survey. I say seemingly because 6 people chose to be anonymous, using a numeric code instead of putting their name on the survey. Therefore, it is possible that those who are considered faithful and were notably absent on the list could have used a numeric code and did indeed

participate. However, given the relationship I have with these people and from what I know of them, my belief is they simply neglected to fill out the survey.

Sermon Series Evaluators

While the post-sermon series survey would produce helpful feedback about the impact or success of the project, additional feedback was needed to determine the success of the sermon series. Therefore, a select group of people from the church was asked to act as sermon series evaluators. This group was asked to listen to the sermon series and then fill out an evaluation form (see appendix 2). The following criteria were used to select the evaluators:

1. They needed to be a member of the church.
2. They needed to be people whose attendance could be assumed.
3. They needed to exhibit mature faith and a seriousness for biblical fidelity.
4. Those in church leadership (elders or deacons) as well as those not in church leadership needed to be represented.
5. Both men and women needed to be represented.
6. People of different backgrounds and life experiences needed to be represented (e.g., grew up in a Christian home versus saved as an adult).
7. People of different age brackets needed to be represented.

In the end, 11 people (6 men and 5 women), met all the criteria and agreed to serve as evaluators, thereby representing just under 10 percent of the adult membership of the church at that time.

Practical Considerations

The final considerations while preparing the sermon series were practical. As mentioned, the church has had a penchant for learning in a lecture format, so small group settings were not an option. In addition, the extra work involved in multiple meetings made small groups an unattractive option. The Adult Discipleship Hour (Sunday school) was considered instead of the Sunday morning service to deliver the content of the Lord's

Supper series; however, only about 30 percent of the adult members attend the class and other adults are involved in teaching during that time. Therefore, it was determined not to utilize the Adult Discipleship Hour to cover the content. The fact that teens of the church have a separate class during that time and that we are in the middle of a three-year church-wide curriculum (The Gospel Project) also solidified the decision not to deliver the project content during the Adult Discipleship Hour.

Our church does not currently have a Sunday night service, so that was not an option either. Additionally, low attendance at special Sunday evening meetings in the past made a Sunday night meeting a poor option to deliver the series material. Therefore, it was determined that the best time to present the content was during the regularly scheduled Sunday morning service.

A final practical matter had to be considered: continuous series versus non-continuous series. I wondered if six straight weeks of sermons on the Lord's Supper would become uninteresting and laborious for the congregation. Consequently, preaching one or two sermons at a time and then breaking up the content with unrelated material was considered. While the possibility of the series becoming uninteresting or laborious was a concern, it was determined that continuity was most important and decided to have a continuous series. The fear was that, by spreading out the content, comprehension would be hindered and would therefore, negatively affect the impact the project would have on the congregation.

Delivering the Sermon Series

The title of the sermon series was "Sensing Grace." That title was chosen because I wanted the congregation to understand that the Lord's Supper is a unique grace gift from the Lord. While Christians are indeed called to walk by faith and not by sight, the Lord's Supper provides the rare opportunity to physically touch, hold, taste, and smell a conduit of God's sanctifying grace for the believer.

As stated, the plan was to deliver the sermon series in six consecutive weeks. However, an emergency surgery in my immediate family required a two-week absence of preaching for me. Consequently, the sermon series took eight weeks to complete. After determining the content of the sermon series, and based on the data collected from the pre-sermon series survey, the series was framed around the questions: Why?, Who?, What?, Where?, When?, and How?. What follows is a summary of each sermon's goals and objectives.

Sermon 1

The first sermon (see appendix 3) attempted to answer the question, "Why should we give priority to the Lord's Supper?" Four reasons were given to answer the question:

1. The Lord's Supper was given by Jesus and is a command for us to obey.
2. The Lord's Supper is a means of sanctifying grace.
3. The Lord's Supper is God's accountability program for the church.
4. The Lord's Supper helps the church maintain a Christological focus.

Additionally, attention was given to the early church's observance of the Lord's Supper as well as clarifying statements on what was meant by "means of sanctifying grace." In short, the emphasis was on *sanctifying* grace to be sure there was no confusion regarding *saving* faith. This first sermon was delivered on September 4, 2016.

Sermon 2

"Who should observe the Lord's Supper" was the focus of the second sermon delivered on September 11, 2016 (see appendix 4). In answering the question, the congregation was reminded that the Lord's Supper was given to *disciples* of Christ. In every place the Lord's Supper is mentioned in the New Testament, it is mentioned in the context of a gathering of disciples. Additionally, it was stated that eating the Lord's Supper together is a public statement of being a disciple of Christ.

To ensure clarity in the sermon, time was spent reviewing what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. A major part of this section was spent trying to help the church understand the importance of baptism in relation to one's discipleship and participation in the Lord's Supper. I planned to finish the sermon with a point emphasizing the role that the Lord's Supper plays in fueling one's discipleship, but due to lack of time, I delayed covering that section until sermon 3.

Sermon 3

After covering the last part that was intended to be included in the previous sermon, the questions, "What?" and "Where?" were addressed in the third sermon given on September 18, 2016 (see appendix 5). The main part of the sermon intended to prove that the Lord's Supper is a celebration meant to be shared with other believers in a church context. The language that the Bible uses about the Lord's Supper and the intended symbolism itself were offered as proof of the shared element of the Lord's Supper. Concerning the mood of celebration, Jesus' mood in Luke 22 at the Table's institution and the theology of the Table were highlighted.

Also included a discussion was why Baptist churches typically observe the Lord's Supper in a privatized, solemn manner. Additionally, it was taught that the celebratory mood does not preclude mourning sin or being saddened by the gruesome sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. Those are legitimate and helpful emotions when considering the gospel. The Lord's Supper, however, completes the gospel story of Jesus making believers worthy to eat at His Table and providing forgiveness of sin. The story may have tears and mourning included, but it ends in celebration.

Sermon 4

On September 25, 2016, the fourth sermon of the series was given to the congregation (see appendix 6). This sermon addressed the question of "When?" or the frequency of celebration. This was a pivotal sermon since one of the goals of the project

was to encourage the congregation to observe the Lord's Supper more frequently than the current practice of once a month.

It was conceded that there is an absence of a command regarding frequency of observing the Lord's Supper. However, it was pointed out that there is a pattern of weekly observance in the Scripture. Evidence from church history was also given to show that the common practice throughout most of church history has been to celebrate the Lord's Supper each week.

The middle part of the sermon was spent addressing the concerns to a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper. The concerns addressed were the lack of command regarding frequency and the fear of the Lord's Supper becoming less meaningful or rote if observed each week. The conclusion of the matter was that the nature of the Lord's Supper should influence the frequency of celebration. Consequently, as the appreciation for the Lord's Supper increases, so the frequency of observance should increase. The sermon concluded by observing seven practical benefits of observing the Lord's Supper more frequently.

Sermon 5

Because of the aforementioned emergency surgery in my family, sermon 5 in the series was not presented to the church until October 16, 2016 (see appendix 7). Due to the interruption, I preached a review sermon to recapture continuity and momentum before delivering the final sermon of the series. Thus, the following questions were reviewed:

1. Why should the Lord's Supper be a priority at Memorial Baptist Church?
2. Who should observe the Lord's Supper?
3. How should the Lord's Supper be observed?
4. How often should the Lord's Supper be observed?

Additionally, time was spent attempting to clarify the "worthy warning" section of 1 Corinthians 11:27 and if children should participate in the Lord's Supper.

This review served the congregation well since some people had missed previous sermons and were helped by a review sermon.

Sermon 6

The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How questions were addressed in the first five sermons. Therefore, the final sermon, preached on October 23, 2016 (see appendix 8), addressed questions that were submitted to me through a Google form sent to the members asking for any questions they would want addressed in the final sermon. Very few questions were submitted but the ones that were submitted were addressed.

These questions were:

1. Should we have a more festive meal attached to the Lord's Supper celebration since the early church seemed to have an Agape Meal?
2. Should we use a common cup when observing the Lord's Supper?
3. Should we use wine when observing the Lord's Supper?

The final part of this last sermon was an appeal to appreciate the Lord's Supper. In effort to encourage a better appreciation for the Lord's Supper, the congregation was reminded of the perpetual problem of forgetfulness and the need to remember the beauty of the gospel. Then ten ways the Lord's Supper helps the believer to remember the beauty of the gospel was illustrated.

This final message concluded by sharing Bobby Jamison's suggestions of where to look when observing the Lord's Supper: (1) look to the cross, (2) look around, (3) look ahead, and (4) look inward and then back to the cross.²

Evaluating the Sermon Series

In some ways, the evaluation of the sermon series began after the first sermon was completed. Constant discussion with other church leaders and those in the

²Bobby Jamieson, *Understanding the Lord's Supper* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 63-65.

congregation helped shape each sermon and often assisted me to clarify points that may not have been sufficiently clear the week before. However, the formal evaluation of the sermon series began on October 23, 2016, with the distribution of the post-sermon series survey.

Post-Sermon Series Survey

A second survey (see appendix 9) was made available to everyone who completed the pre-sermon series survey the day the final sermon of the series was delivered to the church. Not everyone who completed the first survey submitted the second survey. Some moved out of town during the sermon series and others simply chose not to complete the survey. However, 39 of the 57 people who filled out the first survey also completed the second survey providing a 68 percent participation rate. Participation from the congregation of both surveys was 39 out of 108, or 38 percent.

The post-sermon series survey was almost identical to the pre-sermon survey except for the addition of a couple of questions inquiring about the person's opinion regarding the effectiveness of the sermon series, personally and corporately. Additionally, a question was asked about how many of the six messages they listened to either in person or via the recording posted on the church website. Finally, a couple of formatting changes (e.g., bold and italics) were also implemented to questions that seemed to be confusing to some people on the first survey.

T-Test

A six point Likert scale was used to determine numeric values for each question of the survey with each question having the desired highest possible score of six points. Each person's scores were totaled and those who completed both a pre- and post-series survey were compared using a 1-tail, paired *t*-test, which showed a statistically significant improvement ($t_{(38)} = 7.66, p < .0001$) in the congregation's appreciation for and understanding of the Lord's Supper (see appendix 10).

The survey had thirty-one questions, with three questions not included in the six-point Likert scale. Therefore, the maximum score for the survey was 168 points. After the data was put into the spreadsheet, the results showed that the average increase for those who filled out both surveys was 12.923 points. The person exhibiting the greatest change in score increased by 37 points. Only 3 of the 37 did not show any growth when the pre and post-surveys were compared.

Post-Sermon Series Survey Results Analyzed

As each of the surveys were completed and turned in, time was taken to carefully read any comments that were written on the survey as well as compare the results to the previously submitted pre-sermon series survey. For example, several pre-surveys did not include comments on the question of children participating in the Lord's Supper, but these same people did include clarifying comments, such as "as long as they understand and are saved like adults" on the post-survey. The addition of clarifying comments showed that the people had grown to understand the importance that children be saved before partaking of the Lord's Supper. Previously, it appeared to be common for people to believe that unsaved children should be admitted to the Table as a means of instruction and in hopes of them coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.³

The question that produced the most change in comments was the question concerning the frequency of celebration. One person's pre-survey included the following comment about frequency: "No direct Biblical mandate; so, as often as needed while

³This acceptance of unregenerate children to The Table is reminiscent of "Mr. Stoddard's Way" of presiding over communion at the Congregational church in Northampton, MA, in the late 1600s and early 1700s. His grandson, Jonathan Edwards would succeed Solomon Stoddard as the pastor of the church and eventually be fired because he attempted to bring the congregation back to an understanding of the importance of communion being only for regenerate people. Mark Dever, "How Jonathan Edwards Got Fired, and Why It's Important for Us Today," *Desiring God*, October 11, 2003, accessed September 1, 2016, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-jonathan-edwards-got-fired-and-why-its-important-for-us-today>.

trying to avoid it becoming rote.” This same person responded to the same question on the post-survey with, “Every time we meet!” He was not the only person to show such a change, but the fact that he is a deacon in the church made it more gratifying because it is important to influence leaders when trying to make changes in the church. The differences in the two surveys helped determine if the sermon series was successful in increasing the congregation’s understanding of and appreciation for the Lord’s Supper.

The analysis of the survey results went deeper than just looking at the scores provided in the *t*-test. While seeing whether a person’s overall score improved was helpful, it was even more beneficial to see how every person answered each question. Also helpful was to compare the overall score of a person with how they answered the final two questions of the post-sermon series survey, which asked them about their opinion concerning the success of the sermon series.

The first of the final two questions inquired whether they believed the sermon series help them personally to grow in their understanding and appreciation of the Lord’s Supper. Of the 39 responders, 23 replied “strongly agree,” 12 replied “agree,” and 4 replied “somewhat agree.” The final question was if they believed the sermon series helped the church grow in their understanding and appreciation for the Lord’s Supper. Of the 39 responders, 19 replied “strongly agree,” 17 replied “agree,” and 3 replied “somewhat agree.” I inferred from these results that when it came to speaking for others, people were less confident and perhaps a bit unwilling to speak on their behalf.

Finally, it was beneficial to see which questions scored the highest and lowest overall. The question that scored the highest was if the Bible commands believers to observe the Lord’s Supper. Of 234 possible points, this question scored 227 points. Meanwhile, the lowest overall question was about children participating in the Lord’s

Supper.⁴ Of 234 possible points, this question only scored 116 points. More is discussed in chapter 5 about why this question scored so low.

Concerning change, the question that saw the most increase was the frequency of observance, which increased by 59 points. The next highest change was tied between three questions: an affirmation that the Lord's Supper was a means of sanctifying grace, the use of one loaf, and the baptismal requirement to participate in the Lord's Supper. These questions increased by 43 points.

The question with the lowest change was if the Lord's Supper was a means of saving grace. This question had a score of -4. While this could be alarming, the reason why I believe this happened is discussed in chapter 5. The next lowest change came from the question that scored the highest overall, so the low change was due to people already having a good understanding of it.

Comparing some of the lowest scores with individual conversations showed that a couple of the questions may have been confusing to some individuals. More will be discussed in the next chapter concerning the strengths and weaknesses of some of the questions on the surveys.

Sermon Series Evaluators

Also on October 23, 2016, evaluation forms were sent to each of the 11 people who agreed to serve as Sermon Series Evaluators (see appendix 2). The purpose of the evaluation forms was to see if the sermons were successful in meeting the stated goals of the project. As discussed, a diverse sampling of the congregation's demographics was represented among the evaluators and proved to provide beneficial feedback. As each evaluation was received, the comments were carefully reviewed. Each of the evaluators gave positive feedback with every evaluation question being marked as either "sufficient" or "exemplary." There were no "insufficient" or "requires attention" marks. In addition to

⁴Excluding the questions about the use of a common cup and wine.

each question being answered, the evaluators gave helpful suggestions to improve the series, if it were to be presented again.

For example, one evaluator said, “I know your intent wasn’t to make this an academic series, but by the end it felt a bit like a classroom or project. Not sure how to fix this, but just food for thought.” Another evaluator wondered if the sermon series was too long. Both of these evaluators also expressed their gratitude for the series and were only seeking to provide honest feedback. I appreciated their honesty because it showed that I either needed to prepare the congregation for a lecture style in the Sunday morning service or make a concerted effort to make the presentation more pastoral.

Even with the suggestions for improvement, the response was very positive. One comment in response to the statement, “This series helped MBC grow in their appreciation of the Lord’s Supper,” while marked, “exemplary” said, “It helped me personally and I hope it helped others!” Another person made this encouraging comment, “Definitely challenged the church’s thinking and it made me way more appreciative not only as an individual, but as a member of the body.” I was particularly thankful for this comment because a main goal of mine was to help the church see that the Lord’s Supper is a corporate event to be enjoyed by individuals making up a body.

Conclusion

Even though the project required much preparation, the time spent preparing and delivering the sermon series was a privilege for me. Additionally, the subsequent evaluation of the project proved to be a great learning experience for me. The evaluation process also gave solid evidence concerning the success of the project, which it discussed in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

My prayer was that this project would benefit the congregation of Memorial Baptist Church. The Lord's Supper became a primary tool for my own spiritual growth, and consequently, my earnest prayer was that by making the Lord's Supper the topic of this project, the congregation would grow in their understanding of, appreciation for, and desire to observe the Lord's Supper. Despite the imperfect person leading the project, God was gracious to Memorial Baptist Church by granting success to the project.

Evaluating the Purpose

The purpose of this project was to help equip the people of Memorial Baptist Church in Verona, Wisconsin, to have a greater understanding of the Lord's Supper. However, simply having more knowledge of the Lord's Supper would not be enough to fully accomplish the purpose. To accomplish the purpose of the project, the people of MBC needed to demonstrate a greater desire and appreciation for the observance of the Lord's Supper. The hope was that this greater desire and appreciation would result in a more frequent observance of the Lord's Supper. Prior to the project, the church had historically observed the Lord's Supper once a month.

This choice of the project's subject was born out of my personal experience concerning the Lord's Supper. As long as I can remember, I have attended a Baptist church. My memory of celebrating the Lord's Supper is that it was an activity at the end of the Sunday night service on the first Sunday night of the month. I remember it as a solemn, private affair, with the lights being dimmed sometimes to encourage people to

personally reflect on what they were doing. That was my interpretation, although I do not remember it being explicitly communicated.

The problem for a young boy and then teenage adolescent was that I did not know what to think during that time, other than I wanted to be sure I had confessed every one of my sins so I would not take communion (as it was called in my home church) in an “unworthy manner”—we were clearly warned about making that mistake. Consequently, I spent many anxious moments hoping I had remembered to confess all of my sin before digesting the square cracker and small cup of grape juice. Therefore, for me, the Lord’s Supper was only a time to remember my sinfulness which caused Jesus to die on the cross.

This view of the Lord’s Supper stayed with me through college and into the first several years of my pastoral ministry. Thankfully, the other pastor of the church where I was serving at the time suggested that we reexamine at the Lord’s Supper. He even suggested that we consider celebrating it *every* week! That reexamination and change in practice changed the way I viewed the Lord’s Supper. I grew to appreciate the Lord’s Supper in a greater way and found myself desiring the Table every Sunday. I grew to understand the Lord’s Supper to be a means of sanctifying grace and it became something I *needed*.

As I discussed the Lord’s Supper with other believers, particularly my Baptist friends, I realized that most did not have a high appreciation for or desire to observe the Lord’s Supper. True enough, all my believing friends agreed that we *should* observe the Lord’s Supper because we are commanded to do so; however, there appeared to be little thought about the *meaning* and *importance* of the Lord’s Supper.

The church where I currently serve as Lead Pastor was no different in this understanding of the Lord’s Supper. When I first came to the church, I told the other elder and the deacons that a study of the Lord’s Supper was something I hoped to

accomplish within a few years. Part of the purpose of this study would be to increase the frequency of the Lord's Supper.

Approximately three years after arriving at MBC, I began this project with the purpose of helping the congregation have a better understanding of, appreciation for, and desire to observe the Lord's Supper. The results of the project have demonstrated that it has accomplished its purpose. For that, I am grateful. As shown in the survey results and evaluation results, the project accomplished its purpose.

Survey Results

As mentioned in chapter 4, the evidence gained by comparing the pre-sermon series survey with the post-sermon series survey proved that there was statistical improvement in the understanding of the Lord's Supper.¹ Of the 39 individuals who filled out both surveys, only 2 did not have a numerical increase in their score after comparing the two surveys. One of those individuals missed most of the sermon series and the other individual had the highest score on the pre-sermon survey. This person's post-sermon series survey was only two points behind their first survey, so the difference was minimal. Conversation with this individual revealed that the way a couple of the questions were asked was confusing to them, so that could account for the loss of two points. Since 95 percent of the people showed numeric growth in their score, and the other 5 percent can be easily explained. The survey results demonstrate the success of the project.

Evaluation Results

As mentioned in the previous chapter, 11 individuals were asked to serve as sermon series evaluators. Eight of those individuals filled out the evaluation form—2 declined because they were prohibited from listening to most the sermons due to health or personal reasons and were unable to listen to the sermons online in sufficient time to fill

¹The results were measured by a *t*-test.

out the evaluation. The third individual did not fill out an evaluation for unknown reasons. I do not believe this person filled out the surveys either. Every survey that was turned in had markings of “sufficient” or “exemplary.” The surveys did not have any question or statement marked “insufficient” or “requires attention” thereby surpassing the goal of 90 percent positive evaluation results. These results speak to the success of the project.

Additionally, 1 of the evaluators mentioned on her evaluation form that their conversations with others in the church revealed that many appreciated the series and found it helpful in accomplishing its goals. Consequently, given the results of the surveys, the results of the evaluation forms, as well as anecdotal evidence, this project accomplished its goal, by the grace and mercy of God.

Evaluating the Goals

As stated in chapter 1, the goals of the project were designed to help increase the understanding of, and participation in the Lord’s Supper at MBC. The three goals were:

1. To assess the current understanding and desire to observe the Lord’s Supper.
2. To develop an eight-week Sunday morning teaching series on the importance of the Lord’s Supper.
3. To equip MBC to enjoy a greater understanding and desire to observe the Lord’s Supper by teaching the eight-week Sunday morning series.

Prior conversations had given me a good idea about the understanding of and desire for the Lord’s Supper at MBC. However, anecdotal evidence was not going to be sufficient for this project. Therefore, the surveys proved to be a useful tool in assessing the congregation’s understanding and appreciation for the Lord’s Supper.

Fifty-seven people (out of 108) filled out the first survey given to the congregation. Even though only 39 of those people filled out the second survey as well, unfortunately falling short of the 60 percent goal, the fact that 53 percent of the adult members provided data before the sermon series was helpful in determining the understanding of, appreciation for, and desire to observe the Lord’s Supper. This

assessment stage of the project provided a good foundation for the project. The results of the survey confirmed what I had come to understand through anecdotal experience.

Additionally, this pre-sermon series data helped shape what the sermon series should address. This second goal of developing a sermon series had to be revised while in the middle of the project. Initially, I planned an eight-week sermon series, but after looking at the survey results and talking with individuals in the church, I feared that an eight-week series would be too long.

As it turned out, some thought the six-week series was too long. One evaluator stated, “The series was too lengthy.” Perhaps this was because, as mentioned in the last chapter, the series actually took eight weeks to accomplish due to a two-week hiatus because of a medical emergency in my family. Even though at least one person thought the series was too long, the series did meet the goal of covering the topics that needed to be covered. In response to the evaluation statement, “The content of the series covered the Lord’s Supper in a way that made this subject clear to the church,” one evaluator wrote, “Not only made it clear but also expanded on it.” Of the 8 evaluators, 5 evaluators marked “exemplary” and the other three checked, “sufficient” for the same question.

The final goal was the main point of the project: to see growth in understanding of, appreciation for, and desire to participate in the Lord’s Supper. The results of the *t*-test demonstrated a statistically significant improvement that the project was completed successfully. As a result of this project, the church has increased the frequency of observing the Lord’s Supper by adopting an every other week observance. Several even commented that they would like to observe the Lord’s Supper every week because of the project.

One person wrote, “I am one who changed my thinking from monthly to weekly or bi-weekly.” Another person, writing on the second survey about frequency of observance, stated, “I still don’t have strong feelings about this other than that I now understand why more is better.” Still another person who indicated that monthly was

sufficient on the first survey, wrote on the second survey concerning frequency, “Often! I would really like to see us go to weekly celebration.”

The results of the project revealed that while people had differing degrees of conviction concerning frequency, the overall conclusion was that more celebration is better and monthly observance was probably insufficient. This desire for more celebration was rooted in a deeper understanding of the Lord’s Supper. Therefore, by God’s grace, the project goals were successfully accomplished.

Strengths of the Project

Evaluating individual strengths of the project can be slightly difficult when I am the sole person responsible for formulating the components of the project. However, two components aided in producing a successful project. Incidentally, both components were not part of the preaching series, but practical changes made concurrent with the preaching series. These changes highlighted and fleshed out the content of the sermon series.

First, I increased the frequency of the Lord’s Supper during the preaching part of the project. Having the Lord’s Supper every other week while teaching the importance of the Lord’s Supper was beneficial in increasing the congregation’s understanding of and appreciation for the Lord’s Supper. Additionally, having the Lord’s Supper more frequently than what they were used to helped combat the number one argument against increased frequency: fear that the Lord’s Supper would become rote or routine. By observing the Lord’s Supper twice as often as the people were used to, concurrent with the focused teaching on the subject, the congregation came to embrace the fact that we can have meaningful, thoughtful, and worshipful observance of the Lord’s Supper more than once a month.

The second practical change was having people come up to the Table during the Lord’s Supper celebration. A main point in the preaching series was to teach that the Lord’s Supper is not primarily an *individual* worship moment. Rather, the Lord’s Supper

is a *corporate* worship opportunity. A number of people said that they really understood this point when the congregation started coming up to the Table during singing to take the Lord's Supper. It was beautiful to watch people approach the Table with tears, holding hands, arms around each other, and singing of God's grace. I still get to see these sights almost every Sunday when we observe the Lord's Supper. Having people come up to the Table reinforced the communal element of the Table and helped people grow in their appreciation of the Lord's Supper.

In addition to reinforcing the communal element of the Lord's Supper, people coming up to the Table has increased my pastoral ministry during the Lord's Supper to the congregation. While the people are coming up to the Table, I stand at the table, break the bread, and place it in a basket for people to take along with the cup of juice. During this time, I have many opportunities to look people in the eye and say things like, "This was broken for *you*, Don." It is a wonderful, pastoral time in the worship service. Before people approached the Table, the observance seemed distant, cold, and impersonal.

I personally felt this more intimate nature of the Lord's Supper by having people approach the Table one Sunday. The Sunday after my wife's emergency surgery, we were almost certain that she had cancer and the prognosis did not look good. While I was breaking the bread and people were coming up to the Table during singing, one man took the cup and bread and I said, "Broken for you, Keith." This man looked me in the eye and said, "And for you, Jeremy." He then hugged me. I still get tears in my eyes when I recall that experience because this man (who had *never* hugged me before) saw his pastor as one who needed to be reminded of the personal nature of the Lord's Supper amid a personal trial. It was a powerfully pastoral moment for me, and I was not the one being pastoral. This man in the congregation used the Table to remind me of God's presence, power, and grace.

These two practical changes of increasing the Lord's Supper to every other week and having people come up to the Table, played a major role in the success of the

project. For many, it moved the material from academic to practical. Because of these two changes during the teaching portion of the project, the congregation experienced what I hoped they would: the Lord's Supper is a communal, intimate time of corporate worship.

Weaknesses of the Project

Weaknesses are often easier to point out than strengths when pursuing excellence. Even though the project was a success, a few components could have been better. The timing of the sermon series, survey preparation of the sermon series, tone of the sermon series, and setting of the sermon series could have been stronger.

Sermon Series Timing

I had already begun to teach consistently on the Lord's Supper before beginning the project. I wondered if this would hinder the growth of the congregation and think it may have in a small way. Even though the results of the survey comparison show solid growth, the growth could have been greater if I had not already begun to teach on the subject.

Survey Preparation for the Sermon Series

While sufficient, the surveys were not exceptional. Some of the statements were confusing or vague to participants. For example, one statement was, "I believe children should be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper." The response to this question was erratic and had many notations on the margin seeking clarification about if the children were believers, baptized, or neither.

Another example of poor wording of the survey was use of the word "primarily" in three of the questions. Of particular note, were (10) "I think of the Lord's Supper to be *primarily* a personal experience," and (11) "I believe the Lord's Supper to be *primarily* a corporate experience." Based on the number of marginal notes provided by the participants,

these two statements were confusing to several people. I attempted to make clear what I was asking by use of the word “primarily,” but I wonder if there was a better way to word the statement.

Wording these statements differently perhaps could have helped people give more accurate responses to their beliefs. The number of notes seeking or providing clarification of their answer for these questions revealed the need to make the survey clearer. Even though I do not believe the poor or vague wording of the questions had a significant effect on the outcome of the project, better wording could have given better results.

Sermon Series Tone

Overall, I was happy with how the sermon series was presented, but some comments made me consider if I could have made the material more personal and less academic. Three people articulated to me that the series seemed repetitive. One said it was dry and another said it seemed too academic and more like a project. These criticisms have an element of truth to them, so hearing them was instructive to me.

In evaluating this feedback, I want to learn from these criticisms. However, I also need to balance my evaluation by being aware of the personal preference displayed in this feedback as well as the small percentage that they represent of the congregation. Repetition is necessary for instruction, but too much will result in people ignoring the material being presented. Lecturing is the least favorite way for most people in the church to learn. Perhaps incorporating more visual elements would have been helpful to make it less dry and less like a project.

Sermon Series Setting

The Sunday morning sermon seemed the best choice given what was available to our congregation. However, perhaps this series would have been better presented in a setting that fostered immediate feedback and discussion. I had good discussions with

individuals after each service during the series, answering their questions and learning from their insights; however, I wonder if the series was presented in a Sunday school or Bible study type of environment it would have led to more corporate discussion and made the series less dry.

Even though I have identified these four weaknesses, I am pleased with the success of this project. The reality of a successful project that includes weaknesses underscores the truth that we serve a gracious God who uses broken instruments for His glory. Despite this knowledge of God's graciousness, I would change some things.

Things I Would Change

If I were to do this project again, I would change four things. First, I would change the Likert scale from a six-point scale to a five-point scale. I used the following six-point scale: Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; Agree Somewhat; Agree; Strongly Agree. Instead, I would utilize the following five-point scale: Disagree; Disagree Somewhat; No opinion; Agree Somewhat; Agree.

Using this five-point scale would give people the opportunity to record an answer that reflects the fact that they have no informed opinion at that time. Additionally, it would minimize trying to figure out the difference between strongly agree and agree. A few people mentioned this uncertainty to me after filling out the survey.

Second, I would have each sermon evaluated rather than the sermon series evaluated as a whole. I initially made the decision to have the sermon series evaluated collectively as opposed to individual sermons evaluated two reasons. The first reason was to minimize the work required of the evaluators and the second reason was that I wanted people to look at the series as a whole, not as individual sermons. However, while this change would require more work from the evaluators, I think the feedback on individual sermons would be more beneficial.

Third, I would add more interactive components to the project. Adding a discussion page on social media or weekly question put to the congregation could have

made the project more interactive. It would have been nice to get more thoughts fleshed out about what people were thinking about the topic in addition to the answers given in the survey. Adding more interactive components would have also served those in the congregation who do not like filling out surveys because they feel “boxed in” with their responses. If these people had another avenue for articulating their beliefs and thoughts about the Lord’s Supper, I could have tailored the sermon series content better.

Last, I would incorporate teaching avenues in addition to the sermon series. For example, if I were to record a two to three-minute video each week about the subject and email it to the congregation it would help reinforce what was taught in the sermon and allow for a wider treatment of the subject. As it was, the only avenue of teaching the material was the weekly sermon. While this was good and produced successful results, I could have interacted with people’s questions and comments better if I had another avenue to do so that just the Sunday sermon.

Theological Reflections

The extensive reading required for this project, as well as writing about what I had been internalizing about the Lord’s Supper, reinforced and expanded the theological framework I already had concerning the Lord’s Supper. The project forced me to study the Scriptures and history regarding the Lord’s Supper. This study was beneficial because I found that the emphasis I was desiring to put on the Lord’s Supper was supported by both the Scriptures and history.

The purpose of the project has been articulated as attempting to increase the understanding of, appreciation for, and desire to observe the Lord’s Supper. Another way of communicating the purpose would be for the congregation to come to see the Lord’s Supper as a necessary gift from the Lord. As I studied for and then taught the sermon series, I realized anew that the Lord’s Supper is something Christians *need* rather than something they should do simply because God commanded it.

I had hoped that the result of the project would be an increase in frequency of

the Lord's Supper observance at MBC; however, I wanted that increase to happen because people came to embrace the reality that the Lord's Supper is a *gift* from the Lord to His people. In other words, I wanted people to grow theologically, not just behaviorally because of this project.

By God's grace, the congregation did grow in their theological understanding of the Lord's Supper. One person defined the Lord's Supper on their second survey as "a wonderful time of celebrating and remembering Jesus' death and the new covenant in unity with other believers . . . and *so much more*." This person's answer to the same question on the first survey was, "It is a time to remember the Lord's death and share in that time with other believers." Comparing these two responses reveals a deeper theological understanding of and appreciation for the Lord's Supper as a result of the project.

Personal Reflections

I chose the subject of the Lord's Supper for this project because it had become important to my own spiritual growth.² The more I have grown to appreciate the Lord's Supper, the more I have found my love and patience for people expand (for we all need the Table) and my appreciation for God increase. Working through this project has only intensified my love and appreciation for the Lord's Supper.

Recognizing that growth is only possible through the Holy Spirit's work, this project has taught me the importance of mirroring experience with teaching. It is insufficient to teach a subject without giving practical ways to live out the teaching. Growing in appreciation for the Lord's Supper is no different.

I mentioned in a previous section the two practical changes I made during the sermon series. These changes of having the Lord's Supper more often and having people

²I am indebted to my fellow SBTS student, Joshua Owens, who challenged me to make the Lord's Supper the subject of my project.

physically move to the Table were wonderful opportunities for people to start acting on what was being taught. After the project was over and I was waiting for the feedback to come in, I became aware of the impact of a previous change I had made concerning the Lord's Supper, which proved to be beneficial to someone's appreciation for the Lord's Supper.

When I first arrived at MBC, I discovered that a few people in the church were gluten-intolerant. Therefore, I changed the bread used for the Lord's Supper to a gluten-free recipe. One woman reported that it had been over ten years since she had the Lord's Supper because of her intolerance to gluten. On the first Sunday with the new bread, with tears in her eyes, she had the Lord's Supper. This same woman was not able to hear much of the sermon series because of travel, but she did share with me the following:

I appreciate the effort you've invested in understanding it and conveying that understanding to us. I do have a better appreciation for communion as a result even from the few sermons I've heard.

In truth though, the moment I realized that communion meant more to me than I understood, was the first week I was able to take both the bread and the juice. Knowing that my church family had decided that the few of us with gluten issues were worth changing the bread for everyone was huge. It demonstrated a rubber-to-the-road version of Christian family that I hadn't experienced before. So, thanks. I know you were largely responsible for the change and it matters a great deal to me.³

This woman's experience helped clarify what was dawning on my soul and conscience—the Lord's Supper is meant to be *experienced*. I think people from conservative traditions (particularly Baptist) tend to downplay experience and like to keep theology in the rational arena.⁴ We are afraid of being considered Charismatic or

³Personal Facebook Messenger note on October 24, 2016.

⁴John Hammett concurs, "The minimizing of these rites [Baptism and Lord's Supper] is also reflected in the often sloppy, haphazard, dry celebration of them in Baptist churches. Rarely are they high times of worship in Baptist life; rather, they are performed as part of the tradition (in the case of communion, as infrequently as possible) with little expectancy or joy. There is, thus, considerable room for improvement in Baptists' celebration of them." John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 257-58.

minimalistic toward propositional truth. However, we do so to our peril. The more I study the Lord's Supper, the more I enjoy the experience of it.⁵

This project helped me determine to give practical application to all of my teaching. The more practical experience people had in addition to the knowledge given in the sermon series, the better their growth in understanding of, appreciation for, and desire to observe the Lord's Supper. Consequently, the impact of this project was much greater than what I first imagined.

Conclusion

I am grateful for the opportunity to accomplish this project. The purpose, goals, strengths, weaknesses, evaluation, and reflections have made me a better pastor and has benefited Memorial Baptist Church. I am humbled that this project was a success through the guidance of my advisor, the support of my wife, and the graciousness and power of the Holy Spirit. To God be the glory.

⁵For an excellent treatment on the Christian and experience, see Jonathan Edwards, "Religious Affections," accessed March 15, 2017, <http://www.jonathan-edwards.org/ReligiousAffections.pdf>.

APPENDIX 1

LORD'S SUPPER SURVEY 1 (PRE-SERMON SERIES)

Agreement to Participate

I am conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for my doctoral project. Hopefully, at the end of the project, MBC will display a greater understanding of and desire for the Lord's Supper. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completing this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Because ministry is relational, I would prefer that you include your name below rather than completing the survey anonymously. If you prefer to be anonymous, however, please use a four-digit code as your identifier. **Please remember this code because there will be another survey where you will be asked to use the same means of identification as on this first survey.** I will need to match the two surveys for comparison, so if you choose to be anonymous, please pick a code that will be easy for you to remember.

Once you have completed this survey, you can either give it to me personally, drop it off at the church office, or place it in my church mailbox (#37).

Thank you for your participation!

Pastor Jeremy

Date: _____

Name (or 4 digit code): _____

Gender: _____ **(optional)** **Age:** _____ **(optional)**

Part 1: General Questions

1. How many years have you professed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

2. If applicable, how many years have you been a member of MBC? _____

3. Briefly define the Lord's Supper (aka, Communion, The Lord's Table, etc.):

4. How often should the Lord's Supper be celebrated (i.e. – weekly, semi-monthly, monthly, quarterly, annually, only on special occasions, etc.)?

Part 2

Directions: Please mark your opinion using the following scale:

- SD = strongly disagree
- D = disagree
- DS = disagree somewhat
- AS = agree somewhat
- A = agree
- SA = strongly agree

5. The Bible commands Christians to partake of the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6. Knowing that I will be taking the Lord's Supper helps me prepare for the worship service.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7. I believe the Lord's Supper is primarily a memorial of Jesus' death.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8. I believe the Lord's Supper is needed for my spiritual health and growth.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9. I believe the Lord's Supper is needed for our church's spiritual health and growth.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10. I think of the Lord's Supper to be primarily a personal experience.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11. I believe the Lord's Supper to be primarily a corporate experience.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

12.	I believe the Lord's Supper is beneficial to maintaining a healthy church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	I believe the Lord's Supper helps a church maintain Christ-centeredness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	I look forward to taking the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	I believe Jesus is physically present at the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	I believe Jesus is spiritually present at the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	I believe the Lord's Supper is an anticipation of future events.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	I believe the Lord's Supper is a way to publically identify with Jesus Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19.	I believe that a person must confess Jesus as their savior in order to rightly participate in the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20.	I believe that a person must be baptized in order to rightly participate in the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21.	There are times when I refrain from taking the Lord's Supper because of "unworthiness" on my part.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22.	I believe children should be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23.	I believe the church should withhold the Lord's Supper from people who are under church discipline.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24.	I believe that the Lord's Supper can be celebrated with a group of friends outside of a worship service.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25.	I believe that the Lord's Supper is a means of <i>saving</i> grace.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26.	I believe that the Lord's Supper is a means of <i>sanctifying</i> grace.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27.	I believe the Lord's Supper is vital to maintaining unity in the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 28. | I feel like I have missed something important if I am absent when the church has a Lord's Supper service. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 29. | I think the church should use one loaf for the bread. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 30. | I think the church should use a common cup (instead of individual cups) for the juice / wine. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 31. | I think the church should use wine instead of grape juice. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

APPENDIX 2

LORD’S SUPPER SERMON SERIES EVALUATION

Name: _____ Date: _____

Have you listened to all 6 messages in the series? _____ Yes. _____ No.
 If no, how many sermons have you listened to? _____

Lord’s Supper Sermon Series Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the series covered the Biblical passages regarding the Lord’s Supper.					
The content of the series was theologically sound.					
Clarity					
The content of the series covered the Lord’s Supper in a way that made the subject clear to the church.					
Relevance					
The series was applicable to MBC. In other words, it was a series that the church needed to hear.					
This series helped MBC grow in their <i>appreciation</i> of the Lord’s Supper.					
This series helped MBC grow in their <i>desire</i> to partake of the Lord’s Supper.					
This series will help MBC adopt a more frequent celebration of the Lord’s Supper.					

What else would you like to add to the evaluation?

APPENDIX 3

SERMON 1

Sensing Grace: Pursuing a greater appreciation of the Lord's Supper.

Lord's Supper Series pt. 1 – Why should we observe the Lord's Supper?

I Corinthians 10:16,17; 11:17-34

September 4, 2016



Introduction

I have found that messing with people's traditions concerning the Lord's Supper can evoke some strong emotions. People are tied to their traditions concerning Communion / the Lord's Supper. But my experience isn't as bad as **Jonathan Edwards'** experience.

Edwards was the pastor of a **Congregational Church in Northhampton**, Massachusetts in the early to mid 1700's.

Back in **1662** the Congregational Churches in New England formed covenant called **the Halfway Covenant**. The purpose of this Halfway Covenant was to allow unbelieving people all rights of membership in the church (most notably the baptism of their children) **except** for admission to the Lord's Supper.

Initially, the church that Edwards would eventually pastor rejected this halfway Covenant. However, in **1669**, a **new pastor (Solomon Stoddard)** came to the Congregational Church in Northhampton and championed this new Halfway Covenant. Solomon Stoddard was Jonathan Edwards' grandfather.

Consequently, the church began to have both **Covenanters** (those who gave evidence of conversion and were admitted to the Lord's Supper) and **Non-Covenanters** (those who did not give evidence of conversion and were not admitted to the Lord's Supper).

It didn't take long for the non-Covenanters to outnumber the Covenanters in the church so in 1670, the new pastor (Solomon Stoddard) suggested a change: **Everyone would be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper, regardless of their conversion status, with the exception of those whose lives were scandalous.** This way of practicing Communion, known as "Mr. Stoddard's Way" was quietly practiced for several years at the Congregational Church in Northhampton.

Over time, Stoddard began to **publish treatises** in favor of his position, claiming that it might **help in converting the unregenerate**, and soon Stoddard's way became the practice of many, and perhaps most, of the New England churches.

In **1727**, Edwards became the **co-pastor** of probably the most influential church in New England (600 members) with his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard. And two years later, in

1729, Edwards became the sole pastor when his grandfather died.

For about 20 years, Edwards followed his grandfather's way of communion until in **1748, he began to teach that only regenerate persons should be admitted to the Lord's Supper**. A controversy arose for about two years until Edwards was voted out of being the pastor of the church in **1750 by a 10 to 1 margin**.

Edwards was willing to lose his pastorate in the most influential church in New England over the matter of the Lord's Supper.

Even more, J.C. Ryle reports that **Reformers** such as John Rogers, John Hooper, Rowland Taylor, Robert Ferrar, John Bradford, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, John Philpot, and Thomas Cranmer were martyred, in part, over the issues related to the Lord's Supper. (from *Why Were the Reformers Burned?*)

Why is the Lord's Supper such a big deal? Would you be willing to lose your job over the Lord's Supper? Would you be willing to lose your life over the Lord's Supper?

Why should we give priority to the Lord's Supper?

I. The Lord's Supper was given by Jesus and is a command for us to obey.

A. Jesus commanded his disciples to observe the Lord's Supper.

1. Luke 22 – Jesus “earnestly desired to eat this Passover” (He was going to redefine the Passover)
2. I Corinthians 11:24 – “Do this...”

B. The Early Church took this command seriously.

1. **Acts 2:42** – “devoted”
2. **I Corinthians 11:18-20** – “When you come together....the Lord's Supper.”
3. **Acts 20:7** – “On the first day of the week, when they gathered together to break bread...”
4. **We will get into the frequency of the Lord's Supper in a later study, but for now, the point is that the Early Church took Jesus' command very seriously and so should we.** The Lord's Supper should be important to us, personally and corporately.

II. The Lord's Supper is a means of sanctifying grace.

A. Sanctifying vs. Saving Grace.

1. Saving grace – what brings about the forgiveness of sins and salvation of our souls.

2. Sanctifying grace – What “sets us apart” / what brings about spiritual health, nourishment, and maturity.

B. What is meant by “Means of grace”?

1. **“The delivery systems God has instituted to bring grace - that is, spiritual power, spiritual change, spiritual help, spiritual fortitude, spiritual blessings, to needy souls on the earth...the means of grace are those conduits through which Christ alters, modifies, adjusts, changes, transforms, and develops souls on the earth.” - Richard Barcellos *The Lord’s Supper as a Means of Grace* p. 23.**
2. This is nothing new: the Belgic Confession of 1561, Westminster Confession of 1647, Second London Confession of 1577 and 1689, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Baptist Catechism all affirm the Lord’s Supper as a means of sanctifying grace.
3. **Every Christian is on a path of sanctification.** To help them along this path, **God has given several means by which the believer is to grow** in his or her relationship with God. For example, the **Bible, prayer, Christian fellowship,** and the **church** are means by which the believer’s soul is to be nourished. The Lord’s Supper is another one of those means of gracious nourishment.
4. “Sensing Grace” – get to taste, feel, smell, and see God’s means of growth for us.

III. The Lord’s Supper is God’s accountability program for the church.

A. We are reasserting our fidelity to Jesus.

- a. Participation in the blood and body of Christ – I Cor. 10:16.
- b. **More will be said on this in a future study.**

B. We are reasserting our unity with the church.

- a. Unity – Many are **made one.** – I Cor. 10:16,17.
- b. The **reason for Paul’s rebuke** to the Corinthians – no unity at the Table.
- c. It is **hard to feel superior** to someone when approaching a table of grace and mercy. Likewise, it is **hard to hold grudges** against a brother or sister when approaching the table of forgiveness. The Table, with all of its significance, reminds the participants that they are **no better** than any other person.

- d. In order to be part of Christ's fellowship, one has to be **committed to peace and unity**. Therefore, when publically professing adherence to Christ at the Table, the believer is also publically testifying to the importance of unity and peace in the brotherhood.
- e. It is **incomprehensible to claim fidelity to Jesus and his teachings by taking the Lord's Supper while ignoring His commands against holding grudges and his insistence on pursuing peace with a brother as seen in Matthew 5**. In many ways, the Lord's Supper is God's built in accountability program for the church. If the church celebrates the Lord's Supper each week, then every believer present has to consider their relationships, not only with Jesus each Sunday, but their relationship with the other believers present.

IV. The Lord's Supper helps the church maintain a Christological focus.

I think all of us would say that we desire to have a better focus on Christ throughout the week. Looking forward to and participating in the Lord's Supper should do just that.

- A. **"In remembrance of me."** We eat and drink together to remember Jesus.
- B. **We proclaim the Lord's death.** "The Lord's death" is a euphemism for the gospel, not a funeral or memorial service.
- C. Every church service goes back to the cross. Every sermon has to lead to the cross if the Lord's Supper is regularly observed.
- D. **Richard Baxter – "Nowhere is God so near to man as in Jesus Christ; and nowhere is Christ so familiarly represented to us, as in [the Lord's Supper]."**

Conclusion

This is a gift from Jesus to be taken seriously – he **commanded** us to do so.

We must receive this gift from Jesus as **nourishment** for our souls:

1. We remember our need in the brokenness of the bread and the redness of the cup.
2. We sense (taste / feel) God's gracious gift of forgiveness when we eat.
3. We do this again and again knowing that the God's cupboard will never be empty.

We must remember to be at **peace** with each other. The Lord's Supper is a constant reminder of that importance and an extra motivator to work through conflict quickly.

We must remember **Christ**. He is to be the focus of our lives. We eat a small morsel now in anticipation of the feast in heaven yet to come. We proclaim that Jesus is coming back and we are anticipating that return.

APPENDIX 4

SERMON 2

Sensing Grace: Pursuing a greater appreciation of the Lord's Supper.

Lord's Supper Series pt. 2 – Who should observe the Lord's Supper?

I Corinthians 10:16,17; 11:17-34

September 11, 2016



Introduction

Sometimes it's not abundantly clear if something is meant for you or not. One time I came home to the smell of chocolate chip cookies. Super excited, I started to dive in...only to be told by Anouk that the cookies were meant for someone else.

Sometimes it's very clear that something is meant for you. (Irfan two man room devotional.)

Does God mean for you to participate in the Lord's Supper? Or to ask it another way, Who should observe the Lord's Supper?

I. The Lord's Supper was given to disciples of Christ.

A. The Last Supper – Luke 22:15

B. The Corinthian Church – I Corinthians 10:15; 11:18ff

C. Other churches: Acts 2:42; 20:7

D. Application: The Importance of disciples eating together:

a. Eating together creates identity

b. ILL - School lunch room. "Cool kid table" "Sports table" Etc.

Picture of Florida State player, Travis Rudolph eating lunch with an autistic middle schooler named, Bo.

Bo's mom posted this to her FB wall:

"Several times lately I have tried to remember my time in middle school, did I like all my teachers, do I even remember them? Did I have many friends? Did I sit with anyone at lunch? Just how mean were kids really? I remember one kid on the bus called me "Tammy Fay Baker" bc I started

awkwardly wearing eye liner in the sixth grade, I remember being tough and calling him a silly name back, but when he couldn't see me anymore I cried. I do remember middle school being scary, and hard. Now that I have a child starting middle school, I have feelings of anxiety for him, and they can be overwhelming if I let them. Sometimes I'm grateful for his autism. That may sound like a terrible thing to say, but in some ways I think, I hope, it shields him. He doesn't seem to notice when people stare at him when he flaps his hands. He doesn't seem to notice that he doesn't get invited to birthday parties anymore. And he doesn't seem to mind if he eats lunch alone. It's one of my daily questions for him. Was there a time today you felt sad? Who did you eat lunch with today? Sometimes the answer is a classmate, but most days it's nobody. Those are the days I feel sad for him, but he doesn't seem to mind. He is a super sweet child, who always has a smile and hug for everyone he meets. A friend of mine sent this beautiful picture to me today and when I saw it with the caption "Travis Rudolph is eating lunch with your son" I replied "who is that?" He said "FSU football player", then I had tears streaming down my face. Travis Rudolph, a wide receiver at Florida State, and several other FSU players visited my sons school today. I'm not sure what exactly made this incredibly kind man share a lunch table with my son, but I'm happy to say that it will not soon be forgotten. This is one day I didn't have to worry if my sweet boy ate lunch alone, because he sat across from someone who is a hero in many eyes. Travis Rudolph thank you so much, you made this momma exceedingly happy, and have made us fans for life!" - **Leah Paske**

- c. This is why Jesus was looked down on for “eating with sinners.” To eat together is to identify with each other.
- d. **Simply put: Eating at the Lord’s Table is a statement that you are a disciple of Christ.**

Everyone surveyed agreed that the Lord’s Supper is for saved people (or disciples of Christ).

But let’s go back and remember what is a disciple of Christ?

II. A disciple is a student and follower of Jesus.

The salvation experience is something done by God’s Spirit, known as regeneration.

Titus 3:4-7 – “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Ephesian 2:1-5 – “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved

us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—“

It must be understood that any of the points that follow are actions done by man, fueled and motivated by the Spirit of God.

A. We become disciples through repentance.

1. **II Peter 3:9** – *“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”*
2. **II Corinthians 7:10** – *“For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”*
3. Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; Acts 11:18

B. We become disciples through faith.

1. **Ephesians 2:8** – *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,”*
2. Acts 16:31; John 3:16,17

C. We become disciples through confession.

1. **Romans 10:9,10,13** – *“if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.... For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*
2. We **verbally** confess. There has to be a **personal** confession. (We have to know the difference between personal vs. private)
3. We **publically** confess – Baptism is the **church’s** part of confession.
 - i. **Acts 2:38** – *“And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*
 - ii. Acts 2:41 – Baptism was part of the inclusion in the church.

D. Application: Baptism should be viewed as part of the conversion process.

- 1. Romans 6:1-4 – “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”**
- 2. Galatians 3:26,27 – “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”**
3. Colossians 2:11,12; I Peter 3:21

E. So, is it regeneration, repentance, faith, or confession (including baptism) that converts someone?

1. All of these terms, regeneration, repentance, faith, confession, baptism are examples of a synecdoche.
2. **synecdoche** si'nekdəkē/ - a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa.
3. *ILL - Green Bay won by six TD's* (meaning “Green Bay’s football team”).
4. So, the term, *baptism* is used to describe the conversion of a soul.

It is important that we understand that the bible does not have a category for a saved person who refuses to be baptized.

Where did we go wrong in regard to our baptismal understanding? Two points:

1. **An incomplete teaching regarding conversion.** We focus on escaping hell and not on discipleship.

2, Also, we started teaching that baptism was merely **the first step of obedience**. I think in doing so, it gave people the option of baptism. Or the ability to put it off until they matured to that point.

But the pattern of the NT is that people were baptized very soon after what we would call conversion. Also **Matthew 28 should be considered**. How are we to make disciples? Baptizing.

So, bringing this point back to the Lord’s Supper, Because baptism is part of the conversion process, baptism is an implicit requirement for participation in the Lord’s Supper.

The earliest Church documents support this – Didache states that only baptize people can participate in the Lord’s Supper.

- a. Baptism is intended to be the initial confession of Christ and preceded addition to the church (Acts 2:41).
- b. The Lord’s Supper is the Renewal of that confession.
- c. If the initial confession has not yet happened, how can you renew it?
- d. (But, there can be exceptions - thief on the cross).

III. The Lord’s Supper fuels our discipleship.

We are reminded of every “part” of the conversion process at the Table

A. We are given the opportunity to repent at the Table.

- a. The Christian life is a life of repentance. (I’m told that Russian Christians are called “Repenters”)
- b. **This is why those who claim to be a Christian yet refuse to repent of sin are eventually excluded from the church – I Corinthians 5**
- c. The sign of inclusion in the church is the Lord’s Supper. Therefore the mark of exclusion (church discipline) is to withhold the Lord’s Supper. **(58%)**
- d. **This brings up the “worthy” question. (65%)**

- i. I Corinthians 11:27 is misunderstood by many people.

Like every other verse in the bible, it must be interpreted in its context.

Unworthily basically means to not acknowledge the worth or value of a thing. Therefore to partake without acknowledging the value of the elements was to do so unworthily.

- ii. No one is worthy to come to the Table.
- iii. If you have had a bad week and are feeling remorse and unworthy, then the Table is where you need to go.
- iv. Coming to the Table reaffirms our commitment to repentance.

B. We are given the opportunity to strengthen our faith at the Table.

- a. We are **proclaiming** the Lord's death until He comes back. Who are we proclaiming that to? Each other! It's the best sermon of the day!
- b. We are strengthening our faith by **remembering** the effect of Jesus' death.
- c. We are strengthening our faith by **waiting** for Jesus to fulfill His word and return.

C. We are given the opportunity to confess at the Table.

- a. The Lord's Supper is a continual opportunity for **personal** and **corporate** confession.
 - i. Baptism was the first personal (not private) and corporate confession of discipleship.
 - ii. The Lord's Supper is the continual personal (not private) and corporate confession of discipleship.
 - iii. This is why I think baptism should precede participation in the Lord's Supper.
- b. While the supper was intended to be **personal**, it was never meant to be **private**. The Lord's Supper is primarily a corporate event with personal benefits.

Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is for disciples of Christ and is meant to fuel one's ongoing discipleship.

Practical applications:

1. Are you a **disciple** of Christ?
2. That discipleship includes **baptism**. Have you been baptized? If not, why not?
3. What about **children**? One of the questions on the survey was about children taking the Lord's Supper. Answers were all over the board on that one.

The answer is probably, "no" since most young children are not yet disciples of Christ, people who have repented in faith and confessed their repentance through baptism.

At the very least, according to I Corinthians 11:28,29, the participant should be able to "discern the Lord's body" and "examine their own heart."

Discern the Lord's Body = understand the meaning and importance of the Lord's Supper. Why is this different than any other meal?

Examine one's own heart = ensuring that participation is meaningful.

If a child has confessed Christ and can discern the Lord's body and examine their own heart, even on the most basic level, then they should participate.

4. Is your discipleship fueled by the Lord's Supper? The Lord's Supper is a time for **recalibration, reorientation, and reaffirmation** of one's discipleship.

Embrace this gracious, nourishing gift from the Lord!

APPENDIX 5

SERMON 3

Sensing Grace: Pursuing a greater appreciation of the Lord's Supper.

Lord's Supper Series pt. 3 – Who? (pt. 2) What? and Where?

I Corinthians 10:16,17; 11:17-34

September 18, 2016



Introduction

Review:

1. Lord's Supper was given to disciples (Last Supper / Corinthian Church / Other Churches – Acts 2:42; 20:7).
 - Eating together creates identity.
 - Eating the Lord's Supper is a declaration of discipleship.
2. A disciple comes through the Spirit's regenerating work which causes the person to **repent**, have **faith**, and **confess** Christ.
 - We talked about how **Baptism** is confession and should be seen as part of the conversion process rather than merely as the first step of obedience.
 - **Baptism is the front door and the Lord's Table is the family meal.**

I. The Lord's Supper fuels our discipleship.

We are reminded of every “part” of the conversion process at the Table

D. We are given the opportunity to repent at the Table.

- a. The Christian life is a life of repentance. (I'm told that Russian Christians are called “Repenters”).
- b. The Table reminds us to be quick to repent. It puts life in perspective for us. So, we repent, not to earn God's favor, but to give him glory.

c. **This is why those who claim to be a Christian yet refuse to repent of sin are eventually excluded from the church – I Corinthians 5**

d. The sign of inclusion in the church is the Lord's Supper. Therefore, the mark of exclusion (church discipline) is to withhold the Lord's Supper. **(58%)**

e. **This brings up the "worthy" question. (65%)**

i. *I Corinthians 11:27* is misunderstood by many people.

Like every other verse in the Bible, it must be interpreted *in its context*.

Unworthily basically means to not acknowledge the worth or value of a thing. Therefore to partake without acknowledging the value of the Lord's Table / Body was to do so unworthily.

ii. No one is worthy to come to the Table.

iii. If you have had a bad week and are feeling remorse and unworthy, then the Table is where you need to go.

iv. Coming to the Table reaffirms our commitment to repentance.

E. We are given the opportunity to strengthen our faith at the Table.

a. We are **proclaiming** the Lord's death until He comes back. Who are we proclaiming that to? Each other! It's the best sermon of the day!

b. We are strengthening our faith by **remembering** the effect of Jesus' death.

c. We are strengthening our faith by **waiting** for Jesus to fulfill His word and return.

F. We are given the opportunity to confess at the Table.

a. The Lord's Supper is a continual opportunity for **personal** and **corporate** confession.

i. Baptism was the first personal (not private) and corporate confession of discipleship.

ii. The Lord's Supper is the continual personal (not private) and corporate confession of discipleship.

iii. This is why baptism should precede participation in the Lord's Supper.

b. While the supper was intended to be **personal**, it was never meant to be **private**.

The Lord's Supper is **primarily** a corporate event with personal benefits.

II. The Lord's Supper fuels our partnership.

A. *The Lord's Supper is a celebration.*

1. Celebration is implied in Jesus' mood at the Table's institution.

i. Luke 22:15

ii. "earnestly desired." = with desire, I have desired.

2. Celebration is implied in the theology of the Table.

i. **The Lord's Supper doesn't just picture the gospel, it proclaims the gospel!**

I Corinthians 11:26 ~ Proclaiming the Lord's death (shorthand for the gospel, not a memorial – **why the LS is not primarily a memorial – (50%)**). The gospel's definition – good news – implicitly means celebration!

ii. **Romans 8:1**~ "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

iii. How can you not **celebrate** that?!

iv. This is why we do not dim the lights and have people come up to the table. This is a celebration service, not a memorial service.

3. **Implication:** The Lord's Supper is not meant to be a mourned. It's a time of celebration.

B. *The Lord's Supper is a celebration meant to be shared.*

When we want to celebrate something, we seek someone to share the moment with us. **Celebrating alone isn't as fun. Although this meme seems to make it cool.**

1. Sharing is implied in the language about the Table

- i. Vs. 26 “**You**” = **plural**. All of you. We don’t typically have different words for singular or plural “you” in English. “**You guys or you all typically covers it.**” Except if you are from the south – there is a somewhat **redundant** “**all y’all**”
- ii. **Participation. Koinonia** - The whole point of *koinonia*, or communion, is togetherness and participation. It is difficult to signify communion or participation if the explicit and implicit modes of celebration are privatized rather than corporate.
- iii. If we eat w/o love for one another (Koinonia) then we are guilty of profaning the Lord’s body – 11:27.
- iv. Because the Lord’s Supper signifies identity in Christ, it is important that the whole family sit down together for the meal—or at least every member who is able to be present at the Table.

The only time Paul addresses the Lord’s Supper is in the context of a church gathering (1 Cor 10, 11). Paul’s language leaves no room for doubt of this fact.

Four times in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul describes the context of the Lord’s Supper as the church “**coming together**” or “gathering together” (vv. 17, 18, 20, 33-34).

- v. Similar to Paul, when Luke mentions the Lord’s Supper in Acts it is in the context of the early church gatherings (2:42; 20:7).

In the first century, celebrating the Lord’s Supper also included a love feast—this is the difficult issue Paul was writing the Corinthians about in 1 Corinthians 10 & 11.

The fact that a larger meal was attached to the Lord’s Supper celebration indicates that it was a celebration intended for the entire church, not a small group of the church.

- vi. **Implication:** The language surrounding the Lord’s Supper indicates that it is meant to be celebrated **together**.

2. Sharing is implied in the symbolism at the Table.

- i. **10:17 – “ One bread”** – why we use one loaf. **(43%)**

ii. **Table / Supper –**

“The church should revision the supper as an experience of interactive communion with the people of God. The table is a communal experience. It is not a private, individualistic moment. On the contrary, the sacrificial table in the Old Testament was shared with family and community. If the table is a meal, then it is interactive because meals are interactive. Tables are filled with conversation. The table is a place for fellowship where people share their lives with each other. Unfortunately, the church practices the supper in private silence.” – John Hicks

iii. **The intention of the Lord’s Supper is that it is to be a communal event. There is not the slightest hint of private celebration of the Lord’s Supper in the New Testament.**

Brian Vickers explains why ignoring the communal aspect of the Lord’s Supper in favor of individual introspection is not helpful.

iv. **“The problem with excessive introspection is that it leads us only back to ourselves. . . . The Supper, as a proclamation of the Gospel, leads us away from ourselves to Christ who invites us to come to His Table to remember Him, believe in Him, and wait for Him.”**

3. **Implication:** The symbolism of the Lord’s Supper indicates that it is intended to be celebrated **in a corporate setting**, not among friends at a Bible Study or even at weddings by the bride and groom.

4. **So, why do Baptist churches tend to observe the Lord’s Supper in a privatized, solemn manner?**

i. **Table vs. Altar –** John Hicks in *Come to the Table*

ii. **The predominant atmosphere of the supper in the contemporary church is an altar mentality.** The church usually approaches the supper with penance and confession of sin. We come to the “altar” with our guilt and remorse, or we come to the “altar” with deep introspection. We are encouraged to think about the death of Christ, especially its pain and gore. We are told to concentrate on the meaning of Christ’s atonement and focus our attention solely on what Christ did on the cross. From childhood we are socialized to eat the supper in silent contemplative prayer or meditation. No one talks while they eat and drink. No one looks up but everyone prays with a bowed head, and certainly no one looks anyone else in the eye. The altar is a time for private, silent meditation on the cross of Christ. In practice, the table became an

altar in the church. We still use the language of “table,” but we practice it as an altar.

- iii. In contrast, Hicks believes that the Lord’s Supper should be seasoned with the implications of the Table metaphor:
 - iv. The table, as a meal, was an interactive event where people talked with each other and “fellowshipped” each other. They not only shared food, but they shared their lives. **Rather than private introspection, the table was a public, expressive and communal event.** Rather than approached in penance, sorrow and remorse, people experienced the table with joy and peace. **Rather than feeling remorse for what Christ had to do on the cross because of our sin, the table was a celebrative thanksgiving meal for what God did in Christ.** It expressed commitment more than penance. Table was more about eating and drinking with the risen Lord than it was a gruesome remembrance of the death of Christ.
5. Hicks nails our two points about the Lord’s Supper fueling our partnership: The Table is intended to be celebrated and it is intended to be celebrated with others.
 6. Again, this is why we like for people to come up to the table. It invites celebration *together*. This is why I often will say “Broken for you” to people at the table. This is why we sing...we are celebrating together when we sing. This is why I love it when I see some of you come with arms around each other to the Table. Participate! Celebrate! Interact with each other!
 7. To clarify, few, if any, would argue that the Lord’s Supper be strictly a private event—meaning, to be observed in solitude. However, the approach that many take to the Lord’s Supper is functionally a private event. For example, looking at others is implicitly discouraged through dimmed lights, or celebrating the Table *together* is hindered by asking people to bow their heads and close their eyes in meditation before, during, and after the elements are disbursed.
 8. So, the Lord’s supper isn’t a private devotional we do with 125 other people in the room. Instead, the Lord’s Supper is something we do not just with the church but **as a church**.

Conclusion

The supper fuels our Discipleship.

Therefore, we celebrate Christ making us worthy to eat at His Table.

Worthy Disciples in Christ. He is keeping the covenant. So we celebrate, not mourn.

The Supper fuels our Partnership.

Therefore, we celebrate with the church.

The Lord's Supper can be personal, but never private. This is why we come forward to the Table together in a church context with singing.

So, let's have our discipleship and partnership fueled by the Lord's Table this morning.

APPENDIX 6

SERMON 4

Sensing Grace: Pursuing a greater appreciation of the Lord's Supper.
Lord's Supper Series pt. 4 – How often should we observe the Lord's Supper?

I Corinthians 10:16,17; 11:17-34
September 25, 2016



Introduction

My concern is that this will be a lecture rather than a sermon. I have many quotes and, because of the limited time, there are very few (if any) illustrations / stories...but I feel it's important for you to be exposed to the breadth of thinking on this topic.

Stick with me and evaluate your approach to the Lord's Supper.

How often should a church observe the Lord's Supper?

According to a 2012 Survey of SBC churches:

57% - Quarterly

18% - Monthly

15% - 5-10x / yr.

8% - 0-3x / yr.

1% - weekly

What determines the frequency of observance? For most churches, it is denominational tradition that determines how often the Lord's Supper is offered to the congregation.

I. Examining the Scriptural Evidence:

A. We need to recognize the absence of a command.

- a. "For as often as you do this..."
- b. However, I don't think frequency is Paul's main point in 11:26.
- c. "as often as you do it" is not so much about frequency as people tend to argue. They seem to think that "as often" suggests that it's up to us to decide.

The point is more like this:" As often as you say the pledge, put your hand over your heart." In other words, "every time you do this, do it in remembrance of me."

B. We need to recognize the presence of a pattern.

- a. **Acts 2:42** – “And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
- b. **Acts 20:7** – “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.”

So, we don't have a command, but it seems that we have a pattern. And history seems to support that pattern.

II. Examining the Historical Evidence:

- A. **Gregg Allison** (Historical Theology – p. 637) – “the Lord’s Supper was “part and parcel of every weekly church gathering.”
- B. **From the Didache (ca 50-150)** – “On the Lord’s own day gather together and break bread and give thanks...”
- C. **Justin Martyr** (100 – 165 AD) – “When our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying ‘Amen!’ Then the Eucharist is distributed to each one, and each participates in that over which thanks have been given.”
- D. **John Calvin** - “The Lord’s Table should have been spread at least once a week for the assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually.”

“It is certain that a church cannot be said to be well-ordered and regulated unless in it the Holy Supper of our Lord is always being celebrated and frequented.”
- E. **John Michael Perry** - “The weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week . . . became standard Christian practice. This practice is never explicitly promulgated anywhere in the New Testament, but it is implied.”
- F. **G. D. Yarnold**- “The early Eucharist took shape as a weekly fulfillment of the Jewish Passover.
- G. **I. Howard Marshall** - “when the church met on the Sunday it was usual to hold the Lord’s Supper.”

- H. **Malcom Maclean** adds his support to the weekly pattern of the Lord’s Supper when he reports, “The ordinary custom of the apostles [was] to dispense the Lord’s Supper every Lord’s day.
- I. **N.T. Wright** – ““The early church seems to have celebrated the Lord’s Supper on a much more regular basis: at least once a week, and perhaps in some quarters more often.”
- J. **Russell Moore** - The “ordinary pattern of the Supper [was] a weekly observance.”
- K. **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** – “Shame on the Christian church that she should put [the Lord’s Supper] off to once a month, and mar the first day of the week by depriving it of its glory in the meeting together for fellowship and breaking of bread, and showing forth the death of Christ till he come. Those who once know the sweetness of each Lord’s-day celebrating his Supper, will not be content, I am sure, to put it off to less frequent seasons.”

III. Addressing the Concerns:

There are two main concerns:

- A. *The first concern stated: There is no command to have the Lord’s Supper every week.*
- B. *The first concern addressed:*
 - 1. *Why is there no command / direction?*

Ray Van Neste admits that there is no specific command concerning frequency, but maintains that there is a “clear pattern of weekly observance in the N.T.”

The centrality of Communion to the weekly gathering is stated so casually without explanation or defense, suggesting this practice was common among those Luke expected to read his account. These early Christians met weekly to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

The context of I Corinthians 11 seems to indicate that the Lord’s Supper was part of the weekly worship liturgy. “**When you come together...**” is connected to Paul’s rebuke, “It is not the Lord’s Supper that you are eating!” as well as his statement, “**For as often as you do this.**”

To clarify, we could paraphrase Paul’s words to say, “**So, every time you have the Lord’s Supper, you are proclaiming the gospel until Jesus comes back.**”

C. *The second concern stated: The Lord's Supper will become rote, common place, or less meaningful if we have it every week..*

D. *The second concern addressed:*

1. *It's a heart issue not a frequency issue.*

- a) Ray Van Neste argues, "These practices become rote not because of frequency but because of laziness of mind and heart on our part and the lack of robust biblical proclamation alongside the ordinance."**
- b) Russell Moore: "If the Supper is gospel proclamation meant to call forth and strengthen the faith of believers, how could such an event become rote?"**

2. *We preach each Sunday. We sing each Sunday. We pray each Sunday. We give each Sunday. We understand that some people do not appreciate those elements like they ought, but we still do them because there are the means of Grace that God has given to the church. The Supper is no different.*

- a) John Hicks – "If the meal proclaims the gospel, its frequency would not undermine its meaning any more than weekly sermons might undermine it. If we gather each week to celebrate the resurrection in our assemblies, it seems we should come weekly to the table that is designed to celebrate that resurrection.**

Theologically, and consistent with the historic practice of the church in Acts and throughout the centuries, the church should eat together at least once a week on the first day of the week in celebration of our resurrection hope. There are no theological reasons for doing otherwise.

The resistance to weekly communion is due more to the way in which we presently observe the supper than theological concerns. The resistance to weekly communion is pragmatic rather than theological."

"....let a man examine himself...."

We are afraid of the Lord's Supper becoming rote and routine because we know our propensity to ignore the good gifts of God. But should that knowledge cause us to celebrate the Table more infrequently or should that knowledge cause us to repent?

- b) The question to ask ourselves is simply this: How much do we hunger and thirst for righteousness? How much do we desire communion with Christ?

3. ***The Concerns Answered: The nature of the Lord's Supper should influence a church's frequency of celebration.***

- a) In fact, if a purpose of the Lord's Supper is to "reenact our response to the gospel" then it would seem that **the Lord's Supper would be the most difficult part of the worship service to become routine.**
- b) **It is my sincere belief that a high view of the Lord's Supper will protect the Table from becoming rote or routine.**
- c) **If the Lord's Supper is simply a command to obey it will become routine. But, what if the Lord's Supper was much more to you? What if you came to see it as nourishment from Jesus Himself?**

If that is the case, how could it be ho-hum? How could it be just another box to check on a Sunday?

IV. Benefits of observing the Lord's Supper more frequently.

(in no particular order)

A. People have more communion.

With ministry obligations on Sunday mornings, vacations, sickness, work travel, etc. it is not uncommon for someone to only have the Lord's Supper 5 or 6 times a year.

So it's safe to say that, for many people, a monthly celebration is really not monthly at all.

B. Christ remains the focus of the meeting.

If the PA system goes wacky, the message is confusing, and the songs are not your preference, all of those distractions melt away when we gather around the table.

C. Forgetfulness is combatted.

We are prone to forget the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Just as the children of Israel needed stones of remembrance to combat forgetfulness, so we need the Lord's Supper to combat forgetfulness.

D. Accountability is enhanced.

We may be at odds with one another occasionally. Horns and pitchforks tend to disappear when we approach the Table together. We should realize that for all of our differences, what unites us is Jesus – so we eat together in participation.

E. A reserved church actually gets involved in the sermon!

F. There is another avenue of discipleship around the Table.

It's a public meal; people know when others do not eat. Not eating when everyone else is eating causes one to ask, "Hey are you ok?" But if the Lord's Supper is only once a month, it's hard to know if people miss the meal.

G. The preacher is liberated.

The central focus of the worship is not just word, but Word and ordinance / sacrament. If I have a bad day preaching, nothing messes up the Lord's Table!

Conclusion

Robert Letham is helpful when he posits, **"The degree to which the church desires [the Lord's Supper] is a reliable gauge of how eagerly it wants Christ."**

I'd like us to consider observing the Lord's Supper more regularly. My personal preference would be weekly. But I'm thinking we can see how every other week goes.

Think about it. Chew on it. I'd love to hear our voice on the matter. Not everyone gets a vote on this, but everyone does have a voice!

APPENDIX 7

SERMON 5

Sensing Grace: Pursuing a Greater Appreciation of the Lord's Supper.

Lord's Supper Series pt. 5: Review

October 16, 2016



Introduction

This is meant to be a review, so if you want one of these points either listen to the original sermon or set up a time to chat.

Don't be so concerned about getting everything on the screen written down.

If there is something concerning the Lord's Supper, let me know or use the form that was sent out.

Today's review will answer four main questions:

- 1. Why should the Lord's Supper be a priority at MBC?**
- 2. Who should observe the Lord's Supper?**
- 3. How should the Lord's Supper be observed?**
- 4. How often should the Lord's Supper be observed?**

I. Why should the Lord's Supper be a priority at MBC?

A. Because Jesus commands the church to make the Lord's Supper a priority.

1. Jesus' command:
 - i. Luke 22 – “earnestly desired”
 - ii. I Corinthians 11:24 – “do this”
2. The early church made the Lord's Supper a priority.
 - i. Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7
 - ii. I Corinthians 11 – “when you come together”

B. Because the Lord's Supper is a means of sanctifying grace.

“The delivery systems God has instituted to bring grace - that is, spiritual power, spiritual change, spiritual help, spiritual fortitude, spiritual blessings, to needy souls on the earth...the means of grace are those conduits through

which Christ alters, modifies, adjusts, changes, transforms, and develops souls on the earth.”

- **Richard Barcellos** *The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace* p. 23.

Every Christian is on a path of sanctification. To help them along this path, **God has given several means by which the believer is to grow** in his or her relationship with God. For example, the **Bible, prayer, Christian fellowship,** and the **church** are means by which the believer's soul is to be nourished. The Lord's Supper is another one of those means of gracious nourishment.

C. Because the Lord's Supper is God's accountability program for the church.

1. I Corinthians 10:16 – “participation”
2. Union with Christ / Church – I Cor. 10:16,17 – “Many are made one”
3. It is **hard to feel superior** to someone when approaching a table of grace and mercy. Likewise, it is **hard to hold grudges** against a brother or sister when approaching the table of forgiveness. The Table, with all of its significance, reminds the participants that they are **no better** than any other person.
4. It is **incomprehensible to claim fidelity to Jesus and His teachings by taking the Lord's Supper while ignoring His commands against holding grudges and His insistence on pursuing peace with a brother as seen in Matthew 5.**

D. Because the Lord's Supper helps the church maintain a Christological focus.

1. “Remembrance of me”
2. “Proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.”
3. **Richard Baxter** – “Nowhere is God so near to man as in Jesus Christ; and nowhere is Christ so familiarly represented to us, as in [the Lord's Supper].”

II. Who should observe the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper was given to disciples

1. The Last Supper – Luke 22:15
2. The Corinthians Church – I Corinthians 10:15; 11:18ff
3. Other churches – Acts 2:42; 20:7

B. What is a disciple?

A Disciple is...

1. Someone who experiences **regeneration through the Holy Spirit** (Titus 3:4-7; Ephesians 2:1-5)

2. Someone who **repents of sin** (II Peter 3:9; II Corinthians 7:10; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 11:18)?
3. Someone who has **faith in Christ** (Ephesians 2:8; John 3:16,17; Acts 16:31)
4. Someone who **confesses Christ** (Romans 10:9,10,13)
 - i. **Baptism is included in confession** – Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:26,27; Colossians 2:11,12; I Peter 3:21)
 - ii. It is important to understand that the Bible does not have a category for a saved person who refuses to be baptized
 - iii. **Because baptism is part of the conversion process, it is an implicit requirement for participation in the Lord’s Supper.**

C. What about Children?

1. Ability to “remember” – active faith..
 2. Ability to discern the Lord’s body.
 3. Ability to examine oneself
- Note: not perfectly or in complete maturity, since we all are works in progress. However, there should be the ability to do these things on a basic level.

D. What about the “worthy” warning?

1. Church discipline does mean that a person is excluded from the Table – I Corinthians 5.
2. This is because fellowship at the Table is the sign of participation in Christ.
3. But is this what I Corinthians 11:27 is about?
 - i. No.
 - ii. Unworthily basically means to not acknowledge the worth or value of a thing. Therefore, to partake without acknowledging the value of the elements was to do so unworthily.

III. How should the Lord’s Supper be observed?

“What” determines “How”: funeral vs. wedding vs. football party.

A. It is a celebration.

1. Celebration is implied in Jesus’ mood at the Table’s institution.
2. Celebration is implied in the theology of the Table.
 - i. **The Lord’s Supper doesn’t just picture the gospel, it proclaims the gospel!**
 - ii. **I Corinthians 11:26** ~ Proclaiming the Lord’s death (shorthand for the gospel, not a memorial – **why the LS is not primarily a memorial – (50%)**). The gospel’s definition – good news – implicitly means celebration!
3. Note: this does not preclude tears or mourning.
4. **Pep rally is not the goal. ILL – my homecoming.**

B. It is a celebration meant to be shared.

1. This also answers the question of where should the Lord’s Supper be celebrated.
2. The Lord’s Supper is always referred to in local church context.
 - i. “Sharing” is seen in the language use about the Table:
 1. “You” – plural.
 2. “Participation” – *Koinonia*
 3. “Coming together”
 - ii. “Sharing” is seen in the symbolism at the Table:
 1. “One bread” =- 10:17
 2. “Table / Supper”
 3. **“The problem with excessive introspection is that it leads us only back to ourselves. . . . The Supper, as a proclamation of the Gospel, leads us away from ourselves to Christ who invites us to come to His Table to remember Him, believe in Him, and wait for Him.” – Brian Vickers**

4. **Implication:** The symbolism of the Lord's Supper indicates that it is intended to be celebrated **in a corporate setting**, not among friends at a Bible Study or even at weddings by the Bride and Groom.

IV. How often should the Lord's Supper be observed?

A. *The absence of a command.*

1. Define "often"
 - i. "as often as you do it" is not so much about frequency as people tend to argue. They seem to think that "as often" suggests that it's up to us to decide.
 - ii. The point is more like this: "As often as you say the pledge, put your hand over your heart." In other words, "every time you do this,, do it in remembrance of me."
2. Ray Van Neste - *The centrality of Communion to the weekly gathering is stated so casually without explanation or defense, suggesting this practice was common among those Luke expected to read his account. These early Christians met weekly to celebrate the Lord's Supper.*

B. *The presence of a pattern:*

1. NT: Acts 2:42; 20:7
2. History
 - i. **Gregg Allison** (Historical Theology – p. 637) – “the Lord’s Supper was “part and parcel of every weekly church gathering.”
 - ii. **From the Didache (ca 50-150)** – “On the Lord’s own day gather together and break bread and give thanks...”
 - iii. **G. D. Yarnold-** “The early Eucharist took shape as a weekly fulfillment of the Jewish Passover.
 - iv. **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** – “Shame on the Christian church that she should put [the Lord’s Supper] off to once a month, and mar the first day of the week by depriving it of its glory in the meeting together for fellowship and breaking of bread, and showing forth the death of Christ till he come. Those who once know the sweetness of each Lord’s-day celebrating his Supper, will not be content, I am sure, to put it off to less frequent seasons.”

C. The concern of the Lord's Supper losing significance or becoming rote:

1. **Ray Van Neste** argues, "These practices become rote not because of frequency but because of laziness of mind and heart on our part and the lack of robust biblical proclamation alongside the ordinance."
2. **Russell Moore**: "If the Supper is gospel proclamation meant to call forth and strengthen the faith of believers, how could such an event become rote?"
3. **John Hicks** - If the meal proclaims the gospel, its frequency would not undermine its meaning any more than weekly sermons might undermine it. If we gather each week to celebrate the resurrection in our assemblies, it seems we should come weekly to the table that is designed to celebrate that resurrection."

D. The nature of the table should influence the frequency of observance.

1. **It is my sincere belief that a high view of the Lord's Supper will protect the Table from becoming rote or routine.**

If the Lord's Supper is simply a command to obey it will become routine. But, what if the Lord's Supper was much more to you? What if you came to see it as nourishment from Jesus Himself?

If that is the case, how could it be ho-hum? How could it be just another box to check on a Sunday?

E. Benefits of a more frequent observance of the Lord's Table (7 were listed):

1. **People get more communion! – Monthly really isn't monthly.**
2. **Christ remains the focus of the meeting.**
3. **Accountability is enhanced**
4. **A reserved church actually gets involved in the sermon!**

Conclusion

The goal of this sermon series is not a completion of a degree. **The goal of this sermon series is that our church gains a greater understanding of and appreciation for the Lord's Supper.**

This table is meant to nourish our souls. It is an expression of our fidelity to Jesus Christ and our union / participation in the body of Christ.

APPENDIX 8

SERMON 6

Sensing Grace: Pursing a Greater Appreciation of the Lord's Supper – pt. 6

I Corinthians 10, 11
October 23, 2016



Introduction

I have thoroughly enjoyed studying for this sermon series. I hope you are appreciating the importance of the Lord's Supper.

Look at Paul's instruction in I Cor. 10 and 11 – [read text]

Look at Jesus' passion in **Luke 22:14-20**:

[14] And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. [15] And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. [16] For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." [17] And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. [18]

For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." [19] And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [20] And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

Truly, what we call the Lord's Supper is a **gift** from the Lord himself.

We have covered the main **theological** points about the Lord's Supper. But there are some **practical** questions about the Lord's Supper. I'd like to attempt to answer a few of those questions this morning and then give some thoughts regarding making the Lord's Supper **more meaningful**.

I. Answering Misc. Questions:

A. Should we have a larger, more festive meal?

1. Probably...

- i. Acts 2 and I Corinthians 10,11 indicate that the Lord's Supper celebration probably took place in the context of a larger, festive meal called an Agape meal.

2. **Here is why we don't right now....**

- i. **The emphasis is on the bread and the cup, not the meal.**
- ii. It is important that we celebrate the Lord's Supper more often. The stress and work required in a frequent preparation of a full meal would become a distraction from the importance of the meal.
- iii. We need to remember the principle that we are not above the temptations of others (I Cor. 10:12,13). To that end, I fear the very things that caused the Corinthian church to err regarding the Lord's Supper would be repeated here. The full meal became the focus while the Bread and the Cup became part of the blurry background.

3. **Having said that...**

- i. I think it would be good to occasionally have a festive meal and include the Lord's Supper.
- ii. I appreciate Bobby Jamieson's sentiments:

“Celebrating the Lord's Supper in the context of a whole-church meal is a practice I'd love to see more churches recover. It highlights the fellowship we share with one another in the Lord's Supper. It underscores that we go to church in order to be the church.

Sitting down for a meal together is a way to show our acceptance of each other in Christ. And having a communal meal as an element in a church's “worship service,” rather than merely as an optional potluck afterward sends the message that fellowship with one another is an essential part of what it means to be a church.” (*Understanding the Lord's Supper*, p. 62)

B. Should we use a common cup?

1. **Probably...**

- i. The N.T. consistently uses the term, “THE cup”.
- ii. A common cup has been utilized in the Lord's Supper consistently in history.
- iii. The symbolism of being one in Christ is best seen in a common cup and not individual cups.

2. Here is why we don't right now...

- i. **Robert Letham calls the suspension of using a common cup “the triumph of individualism.”** (*The Lord's Supper*, p. 51)
- ii. Somewhere around the early 1900's people began to fear that the flu could be spread through using a common cup.

ILL – Communion Set Advertisement.

- iii. Although “*there is no recorded instance of worse health among the vast majority of Christians who have always used a single cup*” (according to Letham, 52), **the mental hurdle is probably too great** for us to overcome. I fear the distraction would be so powerful that people would dread the Lord's Supper.

3. Having said that...

- i. **We should understand that there is powerful symbolism in a common cup and that a common cup was used by Jesus and has been throughout most of church history.**
- ii. If you are at a church where a common cup is used, you should participate!

C. *Should we use wine?*

1. Probably...

- i. It is almost certain that **Jesus used wine at the institution of the Lord's Supper.**
- ii. It is certain that the **Corinthian church used wine** in their celebrations (they were getting drunk!)

Paul does not condemn the use of wine. Since he was in the mood of pointing out their failings, certainly he would have mentioned the use of wine if it were a problem.

- iii. While drunkenness is consistently condemned, **wine is often spoken of in positive terms in the Bible:**
 1. Wine is called a “gift from God” (Gen. 14:18; 27:28, 37; Lev. 23:13; Ps. 4:7; 104:15; Prov. 3:10)
 2. The eschatological feast that we all anticipate will have the best wine (Isa. 25:1-8)
 3. Jesus' first miracle was to turn water into wine....not grape juice.
- iv. **Church history** shows that wine was consistently used in churches of most denominations up until the temperance movement.

2. Here is why we don't right now...

- i. Some have raised the concerns of **those who struggle(d) with alcohol abuse** as a reason not to utilize wine. That could be a fair point.
- ii. Much like the use of a common cup, **I fear the distraction would be too great for our church** right now. I know that many of you would have no problems with wine. But I also know that there is a good number in our church that would struggle with that. I would rather us focus on having the Lord's Supper more often and appreciate it more than try to get us to use wine (or a common cup, for that matter).
- iii. Some churches offer both, grape juice and wine. However, I think that loses the communion / unity aspect. So, right now (for me personally) it's one or the other for a church celebration.

3. Having said that...

- i. **We should understand the biblical and historical precedence for using wine at the Table** and never think poorly of churches that do use wine for the Lord's Supper.
- ii. You should feel free to participate in communion at a church that does use real wine.
- iii. You should think through why you have a strong aversion to the use of wine at the Lord's Supper.

II. Appreciating the Lord's Supper

A. *The problem of forgetfulness*

1. **Is a universal problem.** The number one problem of God's people throughout the ages has been forgetfulness.
 - i. *Deut. 8:11 – "Take care lest you forget the Lord your God."*
 - ii. *(Deut. 4:23; II Kings 17:38; Psalm 78:7,11; 103:2; 106:7, 13; Hebrews 12:5; James 1:25; Psalm 119:153,176; Hosea 4:6; Judges 8:34, Psalm 78:42; Isaiah 51:13-15; Psalm 119:16,93.)*
2. **God has always provided means of remembrance:**
 - i. I Samuel 17:12 – Stone of help = "Ebenezer"
 - ii. Joshua 4:4-9 – 12 stones were laid to cause people to remember what God had done.
 - iii. Exodus 13:5 - Feast of Passover

3. Much like tying a string around a finger, turning a ring around or using the Reminders app on your phone, God has given a way for us to remember through the Lord's Supper.

B. The need to remember:

1. **The Table reminds us of our need of a Savior.**
2. **The Table reminds us of God's love.**
3. **The Table reminds us of Jesus' sacrifice and obedience.**
4. **The Table is a God-sanctioned means of worship.**
5. **The Table is a God-sanctioned means of spiritual nourishment.**
6. **The Table is an expression of unity and equality.**
7. **The Table is an expression of our partnership in Christ.**
8. **The Table is a symbol of future glory and hope.**
9. **The Table is a symbol of God's New Covenant.**
10. **The Table is an opportunity to reaffirm and strengthen our faith in Christ.**

Conclusion:

Let me quote, in length, Bobby Jamieson's suggestions regarding appreciating the Lord's Supper:

Places to Look (what follows is entirely quoted from *Understanding the Lord's Supper* p. 63-65)

1. **Look to the cross.** The bread you eat and the cup you drink are signs of Jesus giving himself for you. Look to the cross with joy and wonder, with awe and thanks. If you're tempted to believe that your sins are too big or bad for God to forgive, look to the cross. Jesus' sacrifice is enough.
2. **Look around.** The Lord's Supper is not a private devotional experience that just happens to involve a bunch of other people doing the same thing at the same time.

Do revel in the togetherness of the Lord's Supper. Don't just close your eyes and confess your sins; look around and marvel at those he's redeemed.

Use the regular occurrence of the Lord's supper to consider whether you have any sins against others to confess to them.

And rejoice in the unity-in-diversity that the Lord's supper signs and seals. We are many yet one.

3. **Look ahead.** A day is coming when Christ himself will spread a feast for us and celebrate with us (Matt. 26:29).

A day is coming when God will throw the greatest wedding party ever for Christ and His bride (Rev. 19:7,9).

The Lord's supper is the appetizer for the great party when Jesus fully and finally reconciles His people to Himself and sets all things right.

4. **Look inward and back to the cross.** The Lord's Supper is an appropriate time to examine yourself and confess your sins to God.

At the Lord's Supper we should be reminded anew of our need for forgiveness, and we should confess to God the ways in which we have fallen short of His glory.

But don't stop there. If the Lord's Supper becomes an occasion for compounding your guilt, then you're missing the point entirely.

The Lord's Supper proclaims to us that our guilt is gone, our debt is paid, our punishment has been taken, our sins are forgiven and forgotten.

So look inward, and then look right back to the cross.

Let me end where we began several weeks ago:

Jonathan Edwards:

For about 20 years, Edwards followed his grandfather's (Solomon Stoddard) **way of communion** *[that is, unbelievers were to be admitted to the Table as long as their lives were not scandalous – it was a means of peace keeping under the name of evangelism for Stoddard]* **until in 1748, he began to teach that only regenerate persons should be admitted to the Lord's Supper.** A controversy arose for about two years until Edwards was voted out of being the pastor of the church in **1750 by a 10 to 1 margin.**

Edwards was willing to lose his pastorate in the most influential church in New England over the matter of the Lord's Supper.

Even more, J.C. Ryle reports that **Reformers** such as John Rogers, John Hooper, Rowland Taylor, Robert Ferrar, John Bradford, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, John Philpot, and Thomas Cranmer were martyred, in part, over the issues related to the Lord's Supper. (from *Why Were the Reformers Burned?*)

Why was the Lord's Supper so **important to Edwards to the point that he would lose his pastorate?**

Why was the Lord's Supper so **important to the Reformers to the point that they would lose their lives?**

Why was **Jesus so anxious** to start this tradition?

Because it is much **more than a mere tradition**. It is a way that God has **ordained** for us to **grow in our faith** and in **unity** with one another.

I think Edwards understood that. I think the Reformers understood that.

I pray that over the past few weeks you too have gained a better understanding of and a greater appreciation for the Lord's Supper.

I think God is growing us in this regard. More and more I hear of people appreciating the Table in a greater way.

I've had a few of you tell me that you started thinking monthly is enough and now are admonishing me not to go to every other week because it isn't enough!

I've had some of you say that when we started coming up to the table you didn't like it, but now you think that is the best part of the service. And I agree. To God be the glory.

APPENDIX 9

LORD'S SUPPER SURVEY 2 (POST-SERMON SERIES)

Agreement to Participate

This is the second survey to be filled out by those who completed the first Lord's Supper Survey distributed before the Lord's Supper Sermon Series.

I am conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for my doctoral project. Hopefully, at the end of the project, MBC will display a greater understanding of and desire for the Lord's Supper. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completing this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Because ministry is relational, I would prefer that you include your name below rather than completing the survey anonymously. However, if you used a four-digit code on the first survey, please use the same four-digit code on this survey. Once you have completed this survey, you can either give it to me personally, drop it off at the church office, or place it in my church mailbox (#37).

Thank you for your participation!

Pastor Jeremy

Date: _____

Name (or 4 digit code): _____

Gender: _____ **(optional)** **Age:** _____ **(optional)**

Part 1: General Questions

1. Did you fill out the Lord's Supper Survey #1 (before the Sermon Series)? _____

2. Did you listen to all 6 sermons in the Lord's Supper Series?
_____ Yes _____ No. If no, how many did you listen to? _____

3. Briefly define the Lord's Supper (aka, Communion, The Lord's Table, etc.):

4. How often should the Lord's Supper be celebrated (i.e. – weekly, semi-monthly, monthly, quarterly, annually, only on special occasions, etc.)?

Part 2

Directions: Please mark your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree
D = disagree
DS = disagree somewhat
AS = agree somewhat
A = agree
SA = strongly agree

5.	The Bible commands Christians to partake of the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6.	Knowing that I will be taking the Lord's Supper helps me prepare for the worship service.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7.	I believe the Lord's Supper is <i>primarily</i> a memorial of Jesus' death.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	I believe the Lord's Supper is needed for my spiritual health and growth.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	I believe the Lord's Supper is needed for our church's spiritual health and growth.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	I think of the Lord's Supper to be <i>primarily</i> a personal experience.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	I believe the Lord's Supper to be <i>primarily</i> a corporate experience.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	I believe the Lord's Supper is beneficial to maintaining a healthy church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	I believe the Lord's Supper helps a church maintain Christ-centeredness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	I look forward to taking the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	I believe Jesus is <i>physically</i> present at the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	I believe Jesus is <i>spiritually</i> present at the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	I believe the Lord's Supper is an anticipation of future events.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	I believe the Lord's Supper is a way to publically identify with Jesus Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19.	I believe that a person must confess Jesus as their savior in order to rightly participate in the Lord's Supper	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20.	I believe that a person must be baptized in order to <i>rightly</i> participate in the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

21.	There are times when I refrain from taking the Lord's Supper because of "unworthiness" on my part.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22.	I believe children should be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23.	I believe the church should withhold the Lord's Supper from people who are under church discipline.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24.	I believe that the Lord's Supper can be celebrated with a group of friends outside of a worship service.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25.	I believe that the Lord's Supper is a means of <i>saving</i> grace.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26.	I believe that the Lord's Supper is a means of <i>sanctifying</i> grace.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27.	I believe the Lord's Supper is vital to maintaining unity in the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
28.	I feel like I have missed something important if I am absent when the church has a Lord's Supper service.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
29.	I think the church should use one loaf for the bread.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
30.	I think the church should use a common cup (instead of individual cups) for the juice / wine.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
31.	I think the church should use wine instead of grape juice.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
32.	I believe this sermon series helped <i>me</i> have a greater appreciation for the Lord's Supper	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
33.	I believe this sermon series has helped <i>our church</i> have a greater appreciation for the Lord's Supper	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 10
T-TEST RESULTS

t-test results: ($t_{(36)} = 3.33, p < .0001$)

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	119.027027	132.2702703
Variance	104.7492492	176.9249249
Observations	37	37
Pearson Correlation	0.616571075	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	36	
t Stat	-7.551331116	
P(T<=t) one-tail	3.14712E-09	
t Critical one-tail	1.688297714	
P(T<=t) two-tail	6.29425E-09	
t Critical two-tail	2.028094001	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ajith, Fernando. *Acts*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Allison, Gregg. *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
- Barcellos, Richard C. *The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace: More Than a Memory*. Newton, IL: Mentor, 2014.
- Barclay, William. *The Lord's Supper*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982.
- Billings, J. Todd. "The Lord's Supper and the Church's Public Witness." *Theology Today* 67 (2010): 7-14.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.
- _____. *Luke*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.
- Bock, Darrell L., and Andreas J. Kostenberger. *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.
- Boyce, James Petigru. *Abstract of Systematic Theology*. Hanford, CA: Dulk Christian Foundation, 1998.
- Bruce, F. F. *Book of Acts*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Budiselic, Ervin. "The Power of the Table: Revising the Theology, Form and Place of the Lord's Supper in the Worship of the Christian Church." *KAIROS—Evangelical Journal of Theology* 6, no. 2 (2012): 135-61.
- Calvin, John. *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*. Vol. 20 of *Calvin's Commentaries*. Translated by John Pringle. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.
- _____. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1997.
- Chemnitz, Martin. *The Lord's Supper: De Coena Domini*. Translated by J. A. O. Preus. St. Louis: Concordia, 1979.
- Chester, Tim. *A Meal with Jesus*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.
- Colby, Henry F. *Restriction of the Lord's Supper*. Logos Bible Software. Watertown, WI: Classic Baptist, 2012.

- Crawford, Matthew R. "On Faith, Signs, and Fruits: Martin Luther's Theology of the Lord's Supper." In *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, 193-228. Nashville: B & H, 2010.
- Cunnington, Ralph. "Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper: A Blot Upon His Labor's as a Public Instructor?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 73 (2011): 215-36.
- Dever, Mark. "How Jonathan Edwards God Fired, and Why It's Important for Us Today." *Desiring God*, October 11, 2003. Accessed September 1, 2016, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-jonathan-edwards-got-fired-and-why-its-important-for-us-today>.
- Doolittle, Thomas. *A Treatise Concerning the Lord's Supper*. Edited by Don Kistler. Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1998.
- Edwards, James R. *The Gospel according to Luke*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans /Apollon, 2015.
- Elwood, Christopher. *The Body Broken*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- Fee, Gordon D. *First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1987.
- Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008.
- _____. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013.
- Gangel, Kenneth O. *Acts*. Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 5. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998.
- Gardner, W. W. *Church Communion as Practiced by the Baptists: Explained and Defended*. Cincinnati: George S. Blanchard & Co., 1869.
- Garland, David E. *1 Corinthians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.
- Gear, H. L. *The Relation of Baptism to the Lord's Supper*. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1880. Bellingham, WA: Logo Bible Software.
- Gentry, Peter John, and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Gleschen, Charles A. "Baptism and the Lord's Supper in the Gospel of John." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 78 (2014): 23-45.
- Grace, W. Madison. "Early English Baptists' View of the Lord's Supper." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 57 no. 2 (Spring 2015): 159-79.
- Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997.

- Gresham, Charles, and Tom Lawson. *The Lord's Supper: Historical Writings on Its Meaning to the Body of Christ*. Joplin, MO: College Press, 1993.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.
- Hamilton, James M., Jr. "The Lord's Supper in Paul: An Identity-Forming Proclamation of the Gospel." In *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, 68-102. Nashville: B & H, 2010.
- Hammett, John S. *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005.
- _____. *40 Questions about Baptism and the Lord's Supper*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015.
- Haykin, Michael A. G. "'A Glorious Inebriation Eucharistic:' Thought and Piety in the Patristic Era." In *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, 103-26. Nashville: B & H, 2010.
- Hendricksen, William. *Luke*. The New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.
- Hicks, John. *Come to the Table: Revisioning the Lord's Supper*. Abilene, TX: Leafwood, 2012. Kindle.
- Horton, Michael S. "At Least Weekly: The Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper and of Its Frequent Celebration." *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 11 (2000): 147-69.
- _____. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
- Hughes, P. E. "Grace, Means Of." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Edited by Walter A. Elwell. Baker Reference Library. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.
- Hustad, Donald Paul. "The Lord's Supper for Baptists: A Spiritual Meal, a Snack, or a Placebo?" *Review and Expositor* 106 (Spring 2009): 171-87.
- Jaimeson, Bobby. *Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership*. Nashville: B & H, 2015.
- _____. *Understanding the Lord's Supper*. Nashville: B & H, 2016.
- Jeffrey, David L. *Luke*. Brazos Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*. Translated by Norman Perrin. London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990
- Johnson, Alan F. *1 Corinthians*. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 7. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Keener, Craig S. *1-2 Corinthians*. New Cambridge Bible Commentary. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

- Keidel, Christian L. "Is the Lord's Supper for Children?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 37, no. 3 (Spring 1975): 301-41.
- Kistemaker, Simon. *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993.
- Kostenberger, Andreas. "Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal?" In *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, 6-30. Nashville: B & H, 2010.
- Krodel, Gerhard. *Acts*. Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986.
- Kugler, Chris. "Gospel." In *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, edited by Douglas Mangum Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, and Rebekah Hurst. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014.
- Leithart, Peter J. "What's Wrong With Transubstantiation? An Evaluation of Theological Models." *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991): 295-324.
- Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961.
- Letham, Robert. *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word in Broken Bread*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001.
- Lust, Johan, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. Rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003.
- Maclean, Malcom. *The Lord's Supper*. Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2009.
- Macy, Gary. *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period: A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the Theologians, C. 1080-C. 1220*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Mare, W. Harold. *1 Corinthians*. In vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, 173-297. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *The Gospel of Luke*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.
- _____. *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*. Biblical and Theological Classics Library. Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 1997.
- Mathison, Keith A. *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002.
- Moore, Russell D. "Baptist View: Christ's Presence as Memorial." In *Understanding Four Views on the Lord's Supper*, edited by John H. Armstrong and Paul E. Engle, locs. 370-818. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. Kindle.
- Moore-Keish, Martha L. *Do This in Remembrance of Me: A Ritual Approach to Reformed Eucharistic Theology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008.

- Morris, Leon. *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.
- _____. *Luke*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 3. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity; W. B. Eerdmans, 1988.
- Nolland, John. *Luke 18:35-24:53*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35c. Nashville: Nelson, 2008.
- Perry, John M. *Exploring the Evolution of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1994.
- Peterson, David. *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009.
- Pipes, Carol. "Lord's Supper: LifeWay Surveys Churches' Practices, Frequency." Accessed January 20, 2016. <http://www.bpnews.net/38730/lords-supper-lifeway-surveys-churches-practices-frequency>.
- Polhill, John B. *Acts*. The New American Commentary, vol. 26. Nashville: Broadman, 1992.
- Reymond, Robert L. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.
- Robertson, A. T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman, 1933.
- Roth, Robert P., Arthur Voobus, Theodore G. Tappert, and Martin J. Heinecken. *The Meaning and Practice of the Lord's Supper*. Edited by Helmut T. Lehmann. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961.
- Ryken, Philip Graham. *Luke*. Reformed Expository Commentary. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009.
- Ryle, J. C. "Why Were Our Reformers Burned?" Accessed September 3, 2016. http://www.the-highway.com/reformers-burned_Ryle.html.
- Saldenus, Guilielmus, and Wilhelmus à Brakel. *In Remembrance of Him: Profiting from the Lord's Supper*. Edited by James A. De Jong. Translated by Bartel Elshout. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012.
- Saucy, Robert L. *The Church in God's Program*. Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1972.
- Smith, Barry D. "The Problem with the Observance of the Lord's Supper in the Corinthian Church." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20, no. 4 (2010): 517-44.
- Smith, Gordon T. *A Holy Meal: The Lord's Supper in the Life of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- _____, ed. *The Lord's Supper: Five Views*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008.
- Soards, Marion L. *I Corinthians*. New International Biblical Commentary. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999.

- Spencer, F. Scott. *Journeying through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004.
- Sproul, R. C. *Everyone's a Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*. Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2014.
- Spurgeon, Charles H. "Songs of Deliverance." *The Spurgeon Archive*. Accessed January 5, 2016. <http://spurgeon.org/sermons/0763.htm>.
- _____. *Spurgeon on the Holy Spirit*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2000.
- _____. "What the Lord's Supper Sees and Says." *Spurgeon Gems*. Accessed July 15, 2015. <http://www.spurteongems.org/vols43-45/chs2595.pdf>.
- Stein, Robert H. *Luke*. The New American Commentary, vol. 24. Nashville: Broadman, 1992.
- Swanson, James. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- Thomas, Derek W. H. *Acts*. Reformed Expository Commentary. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011.
- Van Amberg, Joel. *A Real Presence: Religious and Social Dynamics of the Eucharistic Conflicts in Early Modern Augsburg, 1520-1530*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012.
- Van Neste, Ray. "The Lord's Supper in the Context of the Local Church." In *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, 364-90. Nashville: B & H, 2010.
- Venema, Cornelis P. *Children at the Lord's Table? Assessing the Case for Paedocommunion*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2009.
- Vickers, Brian J. "The Lord's Supper: Celebrating the Past and Future in the Present." In *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, 313-40. Nashville: B & H, 2010.
- Vincent, Marvin Richardson. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Vol 1. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887.
- Waters, Guy, and Ligon Duncan, *Children and the Lord's Supper*. Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2011.
- Watson, Thomas. *The Lord's Supper*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2004.
- Westerholm, Matthew. "The 'Cream of Creation' and the 'Cream of Faith': The Lord's Supper as a Means of Assurance in Puritan Thought." *Puritan Reformed Journal* 3, no. 1 (2011): 205-22.
- Westminster Assembly. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. Edinburgh ed. Philadelphia: William S. Young, 1851.

White, Sean A. "Southern Baptist and British Baptist Contributions to a Theology of the Lord's Supper Since 1948: Beyond a Theology of the Elements Toward a Sacramental Theology of Enactment." Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 2007.

Williams, R. S. "Sacrament." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Edited by Walter A. Elwell. Baker Reference Library. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.

Wright, N. T. *The Meal Jesus Gave Us: Understanding Holy Communion*. Rev. ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015.

Yarnold, G. D. *The Bread Which We Break*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960.

ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH IN VERONA, WISCONSIN, TO ENJOY A GREATER UNDERSTANDING AND OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Jeremy Daniel Scott, D.Ed.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Danny R. Bowen

This project sought to equip Memorial Baptist church in Verona, Wisconsin, to enjoy a greater understanding and observance of the Lord's Supper. Chapter 1 presents the history and ministry context of Memorial Baptist Church as well as the goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides exegesis of three passages of Scripture (Luke 22:14-23; Acts 2:42; and 1 Cor 10:14-11:34) to show that the Lord's Supper is a necessary gift from Jesus to his church and that it should be observed weekly. Chapter 3 argues for the historical precedent of a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper and the benefits of observing the Lord's Supper (e.g., purity in the church and a Christological focus). Chapter 4 describes the project itself, recounting the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of the project. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on completion of the specified goals. Ultimately, this project sought to equip Memorial Baptist Church to a greater enjoyment and practice of the Lord's Supper.

VITA

Jeremy Daniel Scott

EDUCATIONAL

B.A., Maranatha Baptist University, 2001
M.A., Liberty Theological Seminary, 2011
M.Div., Liberty Theological Seminary, 2013

MINISTERIAL

Youth Pastor, Memorial Baptist Church, Rockford, Illinois, 1999-2002
Assistant Pastor, Cornerstone Church, Warwick, Rhode Island, 2002-2005
Pastor, Morning Star Church, Rockford, Illinois, 2005-2013
Lead Pastor, Memorial Baptist Church, Verona, Wisconsin, 2013-