

As a new Christian, one of the most immediate issues facing you is the matter of worship. As the Lord's church assembles on the first day of the week, you are going to have the opportunity gather with them to worship God. But it might be that you aren't exactly sure what to do; you are not exactly sure how God desires you to worship Him. Let us first understand that worship is a great privilege given to God's children and it is certainly something that you will want to engage in properly. Within scripture, we find five things mentioned to be done in worship: preaching, prayer, singing, giving, and the Lord's Supper (i.e. communion). For our thoughts during the next few minutes, we want to talk about the Lord's Supper and as we do, I want to cover three points: (1) What is the Lord's Supper, (2) The time and frequency of the Lord's Supper, and (3) abuses and misunderstanding about the Lord's Supper.

1. WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER? First let us consider the fact that it is a memorial. **1 Cor 11:23-25 ... That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: (24) And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.** Now the same thing is given for the cup in v25. **(25) After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.** When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper he took the unleavened bread and he said we are to eat it in remembrance of His body. He then took the fruit of the vine and said we are to drink it in remembrance of His blood. It's really as simple as that. The Lord's Supper is a memorial. It's a time to reflect and a time to remember. There is nothing mysterious and there is nothing magical about it. It is simply two emblems to help us to remember what the Lord did for us.

A few years ago I helped conduct a funeral service for Paul Schilling. He was cremated so there was no casket or body to be viewed. But in the foyer of the building, there was a table set up with many pictures and albums on display as a memorial to Paul's life. Those pictures were there to help those in attendance to remember. In Washington D.C. there is a statue of three soldiers and nearby to that statue is a wall with the names of the thousands who lost their lives in the Viet Nam War. **Question:** Why were those emblems set up? The answer is to help us remember and not forget. The same thing is true about the Lord's Supper. Jesus Christ gave us emblems that represent his body that was broken and his blood that was shed to help us to remember.

The next logical question is what are we supposed to remember. Where should my thoughts be as I partake of the Lord's Supper? The Bible says that we are to remember his death, i.e. his body and his blood. **1 Cor. 11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.** While the death, burial, and resurrection are each significant events in the salvation of man, that's not what the Lord Supper is for. Jesus said we do

this in remembrance of His death. We are remembering the sacrifice that he made; the price that was paid for our salvation. Of course none of us were there when they crucified our Lord, but during the Lord's Supper let us use our imagination and try to recall what happened there as if we were eye witnesses to the abuse that he suffered.

When you partake of the bread, try to mentally see the broken, battered, mutilated body that was beaten and bruised for you. Remember the gruesome scourging. **John 19:1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.** History reveals that when they scourged a person, they would use a short handled whip with several thongs of different lengths. In these thongs there were tied sharps pieces of metal or bone, or maybe small chains with weights in the end so as to rip the flesh from the victim. Often there were two scourges and they would take turns in inflicting the lashes. They would beat the back of the victim until the blood began to trickle, the bruises began to form and the flesh became soft and spongy. Then the lashes began to cut into the flesh and literally rip it apart from the body. It was so painful that some men actually bit their tongues in two during the beating. When you remember the body of Christ, you might remember the scourging.

Maybe you envision after being beating in an inch of his life, they put that heavy cross on his bloody, throbbing, aching back and forced him to drag it through the city streets toward Golgotha. Maybe you picture the driving of the nails through his hands and feet. Actually those nails were likely driven through the base of the hand. It would have been stronger and there is a bundle of nerves there that made the pain excruciating and the Roman's were all about inflicting pain.

Maybe you envision the cross being lifted into the air and dropped into that hole as you try to grasp the pain that Jesus must have felt when that pole hit the bottom of that hole and the intense pain that shot through his body as all his body weight rested on the nails. The bread is to remind me of that body that was broken and sacrificed for you and me.

Then we partake of the fruit of the vine and as we do we remember the blood that was shed. In my mind's eye I see the crown of thorns pressed upon his brow and the blood trickling down his face and possibility into his eyes causing them to burn. I see his back bloody from the scourging. I see the Roman soldier piercing his side with that spear and blood mingled with water flows out. **John 19:34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.** Can your imagination picture that scene of His death. If it can, then think about that when you partake of the fruit of the vine. **1 Cor 11:24 Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (25) ... This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.**

Now why is that blood so precious? Because it was shed for the remission of sins. **Matt 26:28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.** Paul told Christians in Ephesus that without that blood there would be no redemption. **Eph 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;** A man once said that during the Lord's supper, he liked to remember by thinking of it this way; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Now here is what he meant. 1. He thinks about the one Lord. 2. Two thieves between who he was crucified. 3. Three crosses that stood on Calvary's hill. 4. Four parts of his garments divided amongst the soldiers. 5. The five wounds that he suffered. His head with the crown of thorns, his back from the scourging, his hands with the nails, his feet with the spikes and his side bleeding from the soldiers spear. 6. He thinks about the six hours of darkness that covered the earth at his death. 7. He recalls the seven things that the Lord uttered while on the cross. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, it is a memorial. This is why so many tables have the inscription "This Do In Remembrance of Me."

Secondly, not only is the Lord's Supper a memorial, it is a proclamation. When we partake of these emblems we proclaim to the world the death of our Lord. **1 Cor. 11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.** **Question:** Why is it important that we proclaim his death? It's important because of what it means to us. It means we have redemption and forgiveness of our sins, and the hope of eternal life in heaven.

Thirdly, the Lord's Supper is also a communion. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he told his disciples, **Matt 26:29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.** When the Lord said that, he had reference to Lord's Supper that we partake each Lord's Day. When we engages in that supper, Christ said that we are communing with Him. Paul said in 1 Cor 16 that the Lord's Supper is a communion of the body and blood of the Lord. **1 Cor. 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?**

The word "*communion*" is from a Gk word meaning, "*a joint sharing, a joint participation*" and sometimes it is translated as "*fellowship*." When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we fellowship with Christ in a very direct way. Jesus said that he would partake of it with us in the kingdom and he does that every first day of the week.

NO. 2. LET'S CONSIDER THE TIME AND FREQUENCY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. To many, the Lord's Supper is something done very infrequently, perhaps only at Christmas and Easter and it's done on no particular day of the week. You might see on the sign of some modern churches the words, "Candlelight Communion Service on

Thursday Night.” While that may seem like a good idea, it’s not consistent with the Bible. The early Christian met on the first day of the week to break bread, i.e. partaking of the Lord’s Supper. **Acts 20:7** *And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them,* The point of emphasis is that they partook of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week and by divine example we do the same. So every Sunday we remember his death when we partake of the Lord’s Supper.

The next question is how often should we partake of it. To help us with this question, we need to go to Acts 2:42. **Acts 2:42** *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* **Question:** Does it make sense to you that they were continuing steadfastly in the Lord’s Supper if they were doing it once or twice a year? The Gk word for “*steadfastly*” means “*to be constantly diligent.*” If it were two or three times a year is the frequency that the Lord’s wants us to observe the Lord’s Supper, then I would expect somewhere in the Bible the Lord would have specified that frequency. All the OT feast had a set time and frequency for their observance. None were left up to man to choose. If we were to partake of the Lord’s Supper once a year like the feast days of old, we would expect the Lord to give us the time of year; but that’s not what we find. If it was to be observed once a month, then I’d expect to find a certain day of the month to be recorded for us, but I don’t find that either. Now if it were to be recorded once a week, then I’d expect to be recorded for us a certain day of the week we are to observe it; and that’s exactly what I find in Acts 20:7.

Some argue that that is too often and if we partake of it that often then it becomes common place and it loses its significance. Now if the individual let’s his mind wonder it may be that way to him; but that’s same argument could be made with any other part of worship. Do you really think once a week is too often to remember the Lord’s sacrifice on the cross. Can you truly tell me regarding the sacrifice that made available the salvation of my soul that once a week is too often to remember because it loses it’s significance? There are 10,080 minutes in a week, how can five of them trivialize the Lord’s death on the cross.

NO. 3. LET’S DISCUSS SOME ABUSES AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF THE LORD’S SUPPER. **First,** there is the misunderstanding that the elements of the Lord’s Supper literally become flesh and literally become the blood of Jesus Christ. This belief is called “transubstantiation” and is embraced by the Roman Catholic Church. They believe that when they take of communion that Christ is literally present and that he is offering himself to God. They consider the Lord’s Supper as a re-sacrificing of Jesus Christ. But this idea is foreign to the scriptures. If the bread and the fruit of the vine literally become the body and blood of Jesus, that would be called “*cannibalism*”, not

transubstantiation. Fact of the matter is that the Lord's Supper is not a re-sacrifice. **Heb 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;** That word "once" is a conclusive term that literally means "once and for all."

A second misconception about the Lord's Supper is that we partake of it in order to have our sins forgiven. Again the Roman Catholic Church believes that the Lord's Supper, which they call the Holy Eucharist, pays the price for sin. They think that when you partake of it that God pardon's wrong doings and sin. So Christ is actually present, he is re-sacrificed and you are forgiven for your sins. Again, this is nowhere found within the pages of scripture.

When a person becomes a Christian and is baptized, that is when and how they contact with the blood of Christ. Rom 6:3-4 says we are baptized into his death, and it was in his death that the redeeming blood was shed. So there is an association between the blood of Christ and the redeeming blood of Christ.

But now that you are a Christian, you continue to have your sins forgiven by the blood of Christ when you acknowledge your sin to God and seek his forgiveness by penitent prayer. **1 John 1:7-9 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (8) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** You are not cleansed from sin by the elements of the Lord's Supper; you are cleansed by the blood of Christ.

A third and final point is a matter of abuse. Some partake of the Lord's Supper without discerning the Lord's body. To not discern the Lord's body means to partake of the elements without focusing on what they represent; partake of them while not remembering the body and blood of the Lord. This was a problem that they had in the city of Corinth during the 1st century. They had made the Lord's Supper into a common meal and in so doing they missed the significance and meaning of it. Then on top of that, they were slighting the less fortunate when they ate their meal. They were eating it for food's sake and Paul severely scolded them. **1 Cor. 11:20-22 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.** Now it should have been, but not the way they were doing it. **(21) For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. (22) What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.** By this attitude, v 27 tells us that they were partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily. **1 Cor. 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.** This means they were treating the Lord's Supper in an irreverent way. They were not discerning the Lord's body and blood. They were not remembering. **1 Cor. 11:29 For**

he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

I want you to notice the word “unworthily”, it is not “unworthy” and there is a big difference between the two. None of us are “worthy” of the blood of the Lord. If the term “worthy” were used then none of us could partake. I’ve heard some that say something like this, *“I’m not going to partake of the Lord’s Supper this week because I’m not worthy to partake because of the life I lived this past week.”* Understand this, YOU WILL NEVER BE WORTHY.”

Now the same thing could be said of us today. Maybe my mind is wondering and instead of focusing on the purpose of the elements, I’m thinking about something else. Maybe we are not reflecting and maybe we aren’t remembering. **1 Cor 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.** We each have an individual responsibility to check ourselves. I need to make sure that I’m partaking in the right way and make sure that I’m not doing it in a thoughtless manner.

What is the Lord’s Supper? It’s a memorial; it’s a proclamation; and it’s a communion.

When should we partake of it? Each and every first day of the week.

How should we do it? Thoughtfully, considering the body and the blood of Christ and that precious death that saved me from my sins.

Acts 20:7 tells us that on the first day of the week it was the disciples that came together to break bread. This is something Christians do. Perhaps you are here today and not a NT Christian. Examine yourself and give a spiritual assessment of your spiritual life. **Phil. 2:12 ... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.** This means salvation is an individual responsibility.

Invitation.