

## Preparing for the Lord's Supper

Ever feel like you were just going through the motions, not sure what nor why we do what we do in the Lord's Supper? God blesses His children through worship that they might: trust more only in Christ, grow more like Christ, and live more like Christ – resulting in the kind of glory that only joyful children can give their Father. He intends to use your participation in the Lord's Supper to this end. Please use this guide to help you deepen your understanding and express your faith in His promise to feed you on Christ.

### *Material Picture*

What does it mean that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament? Look briefly at the explanation from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 96:

**Q96.** What is the Lord's Supper? **A.** The Lord's Supper is a sacrament in which bread and wine are given and received as Christ directed to proclaim His death. Those who receive the Lord's Supper in the right way share in His body and blood with all His benefits, not physically, but by faith, and become spiritually stronger and grow in grace. (Lk 22:19-20; 1Co 10:16.)

There are two parts here: (1) material items that picture Christ, and (2) God's promise to give spiritual growth through these (Rom 4:11; 1Co 11:24-25; Acts 2:38; 1Co 10:16; Gal 3:27).<sup>†</sup> This is similar to what God does in the sermon. He uses the material process of our hearing, listening and processing the words of the gospel as a *means* through which he grows faith in us. Likewise, God uses the Lord's Supper as a *means of grace*. As we see the table, listen to His words of promise, feel, smell, and taste the bread and wine, God responds to our faith by growing us in Christ.

### *Spiritual Food*

But how does this work? The bread and the wine are just that, bread and wine. The man serving us is just an ordinary man. In the Lord's Supper *how* does the Lord feed us? The Bible's simple answer is that He does this *by faith*.

Now often that answer sounds no different than the answer a parent might give to a child's question, "because I said so." Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 97, helps us out here:

**Q97.** What is the right way to receive the Lord's Supper? **A.** The right way to receive the Lord's Supper is to examine whether we discern the Lord's body, whether our faith feeds on Him, and whether we have repentance, love, and a new obedience—so that we may not come in the wrong way and eat and drink judgment on ourselves. (1Co 5:8, 11:18, 20, 27-33; 2Co 13:5).<sup>\*</sup>

The Catechism here uses the words "the right way" to explain what *by faith* means. This makes sense when we think that real faith always produces results demonstrating God is the source of our faith. God always does things *the right way*, and so do we when we live by faith.

The Catechism lists five *right ways* in which we express faith when we participate in the Lord's Supper. Each of them involves a personal assessment of our faith:

- Discerning – are we giving evidence that we are united to Christ?
- Feeding – are we asking for more of Christ and His redemptive gifts?
- Repenting – are we growing in our awareness and repentance of our sins?
- Loving – are we growing in loving God and one another?
- Obeying – are we growing in evangelical obedience to God's law?

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<sup>†</sup> For further explanation of the biblical doctrine, see WSC Q92 and WLC Q162.

<sup>\*</sup> See WLC Q168-175 for biblical reflection on how *by faith* we can give serious worship to God in the Lord's Supper.

The Catechism ends this answer by noting that God is serious about the Lord's Supper, so serious that He warns us not to participate if we do not/cannot do so *by faith*.

The critical question for us to answer is simply this, whom am I trusting in? It matters not how weak or frail one's faith is when we come to the table. If we answer this question, even in a fear-laden whisper, "Jesus," then God urges us come to the table and by faith feed on Christ!

### *God's Glory - Our Joy*

So how does such by faith participation in the Lord's Supper result in God's glory? Quite simply, because He responds to our faith in such a way that we can't help but joyfully do so:

- The Lord invites us to feed on Christ and His redemptive gifts (Lk 22:19; 1Co 11:24-25).
- We by faith use the pictures of His body and blood to profess our on-going need for Christ's sacrifice and cleansing (1Co 10:16).
- God responds to our faith by strengthening it, enabling us to trust Him more for growth in all the fruits of the Spirit (Jh 15:16; Gal 5:22).
- We respond to His feeding in the Lord's Supper with greater expressions of love back to him and one another (Phi 3:1-2; 4:4; 1Pe 1:6-8; 1Jo 4:9).
- God receives greater glory as Christ is displayed amongst us (Mt 5:16; 2Co 9:8; Eph 2:10; Tit 2:11-14).

Brothers and sisters, think about it: our Father feeds us on His Son and His redemption, so that we know ever increasing joy, in order that He might receive ever increasing glory. Truly, it does not get any better than this!

So come, come by faith, whether strong or weak, but come at His enabling invitation and worship Him in the Lord's Supper. He will be present to feed your faith, to grow you in your relationship with Christ. He has wedded His own glory to this end – be encouraged He will not be slack to answer.

### *A Note for Our Visitors*

As you probably have gathered by now, we take seriously our participation in the Lord's Supper ☺. You may come from a background where this raises some questions. Many of these will be answered by the summary of biblical doctrine found in the Westminster Larger Catechism (ask us for a copy). If you have other questions, feel free to follow up with any one of our elders (listed on the back panel of the bulletin).

Meanwhile, please know that if you are a professed believer in Christ and have expressed your faith in Him through obedience to His commands for partaking of His table, you are welcome to join us. Specifically, give your attention these considerations:

- Are you trusting Jesus Christ – and Him only - for your right standing with God?
- Have you been baptized in the name of the Trinity, expressing visibly your inward uniting to Christ?
- Are you a member of a church which proclaims the biblical gospel?
- Are you not living secretly and unrepentantly in sin, but by the Holy Spirit's help seeking to obey by faith?
- Have you not been asked by your (a) church to refrain from participating in the Lord's Supper?

If you have reason to believe that you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, or in some way your life shows evidence that you are not trusting in Him, then we encourage to not partake. Instead we urge you to use this time to sit, watch, and reflect on the picture of salvation present in the

Lord's Supper. Pray that God will work in your understanding, agreement and trust in His Son through these things.

If these considerations do not apply, let not undue caution hinder you. In the name of our Great God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who intends your blessing that you might rejoice in Him, we invite you to join us at His table.