

LIVING STONES DISCIPLESHIP GROUP



SECOND SEMESTER
UNIT 5



"[Y]ou yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

1Peter 2:5

UNIT 5:

God's Glorious Means of Grace (Part I)



IN THIS SESSION

- :: What are God's means of grace?
- :: Why do we go to church?
- :: What is Water Baptism?
- :: What is the Lord's Supper?
- :: Methods and Modes of the Ordinances

UNIT 5: God's Glorious Means of Grace, Part 1

// OPENING SCRIPTURE

"And God is able to make all grace abound to you,
so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times,
you may abound in every good work."

2Corinthians 9:8

// OPENING PRAYER

// FOLLOW-UP FROM PREVIOUS UNIT

Memory Verse :: Psalm 119:118

Homework :: Did everyone in the group complete this unit's work and activities (if applicable)?

UNIT 5: God's Glorious Means of Grace, Part 1

// Means of Grace? What does that mean?

:: "Means of grace" is a strange phrase. By "*means of grace*" we mean the activities within the fellowship of the church that God uses to give us grace. As we participate in these activities, functions, ceremonies, God bless us with additional grace for our walk with Christ. They are meant to equip us for fruitful service for God's glory in the advance of the gospel.

:: These means of grace are not 'salvific'. They do not attribute to our standing with God (our justification). Our participation in these graces does not merit salvation or make us more fit to receive salvation.¹ They are simply God's means of conferring spiritual blessings on His people for their sanctification and service of the gospel.

:: So, what are these "means"? There is no official list in the Bible. We are going to use this unit and the next to highlight a few. For this unit we are going to focus on three: corporate worship, baptism, and communion. In the next unit, we will look at prayer, praise, church discipline, and giving.

// The Church Gathered: A Glorious Means of Grace

:: Swimming in water doesn't make you a fish, but every fish swims in water. Likewise, going to church does not make you a Christian, but every Christian goes to church. Why is church attendance so important?

:: The church was born when the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost. Read **Acts 2:1-47**. When the Apostle Peter stood up to preach, the Lord used His preaching to save 3000 people. Verses 42-47 explain how the early church was organized. Verse 42 says we were devoted to four things. What are they?

¹ This is distinct from the Catholic view, which states that the sacraments are God's means of salvation, making people fit to receive justification from God.

:: From the earliest days of the Christian church, priority was given to the preaching of God's Word. This is because God's word is the primary means through which grace is given. Lookup the following verses and name the effect of God's word on our lives.

Passage:

God's Glorious Grace:

1Peter 1:23

Acts 20:32

2Timothy 3:16

Psalms 119:105

Psalms 19:7-8

1John 1:3

:: Another grace given through the church gathered is fellowship. This is the word used in Acts 2:42. It refers to partnership and participation for mutual benefit. There are many blessings in gathering together for fellowship. Let's consider a few.

:: Fill out Hebrews 10:24-25 from the ESV: "**And let us consider how to stir up one another to _____ and _____, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but _____ one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**"

:: Read the following passages carefully: **1Corinthians 3:1-8; John 13:35; James 5:14-16; Romans 12:4-6; 1Corinthians 12:4-7; Galatians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:12-16.** Clearly, church attendance is of great benefit for Christians. Based on these verses, what is lost when we neglect Christian fellowship?

:: For these reasons, priority should be given to regular church attendance. Since creation, one day per week was reserved for rest and spiritual reflection. The Bible calls this day the Sabbath, the day of the week God's people sit back, enjoy the fellowship of family, friends, and reflect on God's work in their lives. Exodus 20:8, "**Remember the sabbath day, to keep it _____.**"

:: While Christians are not commanded to observe the Sabbath in the way Israel did in the Old Testament, the importance of Sabbath rest remains. Jesus said, “**the Sabbath was made for man**” (Mk 2:27). Today, there are numerous things that keep us from observing Sabbath rest. Many Christian families have decided *not* to participate in sports or extracurriculars on Sundays in order to attend church worship and preserve the holiness of restful family time.

:: What are some ways your family has chosen Sabbath rest? What are some ways your family could improve?

// The Church Baptized: A Glorious Means of Grace

:: Water baptism is a means of grace. It was commanded by the Lord Himself (Matthew 28:19). Water baptism is:

“...an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ for believers to visibly express their union with Christ in His death and resurrection by being immersed into water as a symbol of their new life in Christ.”

:: Read **Romans 6:3-11**. When a believer goes down into the water it is a picture of going down into the grave and being buried. Coming up out of the water is a picture of being raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. Colossians 2:12, “**having been _____ with Him in baptism, in which you were also _____ with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.**”

:: While the physical act of baptism does not confer grace in itself, when it is accompanied by faith, it produces great rejoicing in the reality of the gospel it represents. See Acts 8:39 and Acts 16:33-34.

Water Baptism: Methods & Modes

:: At CornerstonePiqua, we practice '*credobaptism*'. This is the conviction that baptism is reserved for those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ (see Act 2:41; 8:12; 10:47-48; 16:14-15, 32-33). Our position is distinct from Christians who practice '*paedobaptism*', the baptizing of infants.

:: We also baptize by immersion. We believe it was the method used by the church in the New Testament (Acts 8:38-39). We think immersion is a better symbol of what baptism represents. This is distinct from others whose preferred method is by sprinkling with water.

:: Baptism is a glorious grace from God, but it is not *necessary* for salvation and does not cause regeneration. However, baptism should be an expected ceremony following conversion. For more information on water baptism, see the workbook on our website entitled, "**What is Water Baptism?**".
(If you are interested in being baptized, contact the church office.)

// The Lord's Supper: A Glorious Means of Grace

:: An additional means of God's glorious grace is communion or the Lord's Supper. There is no magical benefit which comes from the physical act of taking communion.² However, God gives grace to our lives when we participate in faith, remembering His death for our sake.

:: There is a special union which takes place when we take communion. The Apostle Paul calls it a "participation" in the blood and body of Christ (1Corinthians 10:16). When we take communion, we share in the benefits of the body and blood of Christ given for us. There is a unique union among believers which is solidified and strengthened at the Lord's Table.

² This is distinct from the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist which teaches that during the Mass, the sacrifice of the Mass effects the remission of sins as the bread and the wine transforms into the body and blood of Christ. As you partake of it, it becomes part of you, transforms you, and makes you more and more righteous.

:: Communion should not be taken lightly. Read **1Corinthians 11:17-34**. What was the result of taking communion in an “unworthy manner”? (Hint: v.29-30)

:: It is hard to know exactly what was taking place in the Corinthian church. Read the passage above again. List the problems you see.

:: Probably, eating and drinking “**in an unworthy manner**” and “**without discerning the body**” (v.27, 29) refers to taking communion with no regard to the beautiful unity and interdependence of the church, for whom Jesus died. Whatever the meaning, what does verse 28 tell us we should do before taking communion? Explain how you think this should be done.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Discuss the following subjects with your group. Keep it respectful!)

:: Does baptism have to take place within the church building? Why or why not? Who should perform the ceremony?

:: What if a person was baptized as an infant and came to faith later in life? Should that person be re-baptized as an adult?

:: Who should take Communion? Believers only? Only church members? Is it ok to serve communion outside the fellowship of the church (i.e. at home, on your own)?

UNIT 5: God’s Glorious Means of Grace, Part 1

PRAYER REQUESTS // PRAISE REPORTS

Go around the room and have each person share a prayer request and/or a praise report. Members should commit to praying for these requests.

UNIT 5: God's Glorious Means of Grace

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

:: Memorize the following verse(s):

**"And God is able to make all grace abound to you,
so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times,
you may abound in every good work."**

(2Corinthians 9:8)

:: Complete the next unit's worksheets and activities (when applicable).

:: Pray for the needs of your brothers/sisters in your group.

:: Ensure you are able to attend the next session.