

The Lord's Supper

One of the most frequent questions we're asked here at Bridge is to the reason for our weekly observance of The Lord's Supper or Communion. If you attend one of our worship services, you might hear a pastor say that communion is the "centerpiece" of our time together. Indeed it is. While singing, preaching, fellowship, giving, and prayers are vital components of our worship, communion transports us to a focused time of praise for the cross of Christ. Why wouldn't we want to remember that whenever we worship together?

The Apostle Paul taught that remembering the Lord's body and blood allowed the church to, "participate" in the death of the Lord:

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.

Jesus told his disciples to remember him when they would share the bread and the cup:

Luke 22:19-20

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Jesus gave no command about how often communion should be observed. We do believe that, historically, the Lord's Supper was a routine element of worship in the early church (Acts 2:42-47).

At Bridge, we want to afford worshipers the opportunity to remember Jesus' love for them by his sacrifice on the cross. We, as one body, have the privilege through the Lord's supper to participate in his body and blood while giving thanks for all that he has done for us.

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon wrote these beautiful words about The Lord's Supper:

Where, beloved, can we find richer instruction than at the table of our Lord? He who understands the mystery of incarnation and of substitution, is a master in Scriptural theology. There is more teaching in the Saviour's body and in the Saviour's blood than in all the world besides (Till He Come, 1894).

For a more detailed explanation of our perspective and practice of Christian communion, we've included the following excellent article by Wes McAdams.



Why I Believe in Taking the Lord's Supper Every Sunday

Wes McAdams

When it comes to communion or the Lord's Supper, there is no direct command saying, "Take the Lord's Supper every first day of the week," but I still believe it is right and good for Christians to come together every Sunday for the specific purpose of taking the Lord's Supper. Whether or not you agree, I hope you'll give me the opportunity to share with you why I believe in taking the Lord's Supper every Sunday.

1. Scripture

The first and most important reason I believe in taking the Lord's Supper every Sunday is the testimony of Scripture.

The night Jesus was betrayed, He instituted the Lord's Supper as a way for His disciples to regularly memorialize His death (Luke 22:14-23). Concerning eating the bread that represented His body and drinking the cup that represented His blood, He commanded them, "Do this in remembrance of me" (vs. 19). So when twenty-first-century disciples of Jesus come together to eat the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Jesus' death, we are following Jesus' explicit instructions.

We also know from Scripture that Sunday was the day first century Christians assembled. They spent time together daily, but Sunday was the day of their assembly because it was the day of Jesus' resurrection (see Luke 24). After discussing how to conduct themselves in their weekly assembly, the apostle Paul gave the church in Corinth instructions about laying funds aside "On the first day of every week" (1 Corinthians 16:2). And a few chapters before that, he gave instructions about taking the Lord's Supper when they came "together as a church" (1 Corinthians 11:18).

Luke records in Acts 20:7 that Paul and his traveling companions spent a week in the city of Troas and on Sunday they, "gathered together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). Although the phrase, "break bread" was also used to describe eating a meal, most commentators agree that Luke was talking about the Lord's Supper. Breaking bread together, in this memorial meal, seems to have been the primary reason for their Sunday gathering. Although they undoubtedly prayed and sang, and we know Paul preached a rather long sermon, it was for the purpose of memorializing Jesus' death that the disciples gathered on Sunday.

Someone might argue, "These are just examples, they aren't commands." And that is true. But lest we forget, Jesus sent the apostle Paul to teach Christians how to conduct themselves, not just by what he said and wrote, but also by his example. Paul said, "What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:9).

2. Tradition

Although the biblical evidence is more than enough to convince me that Sunday is the day to come together with my church family and break bread, I'm further convinced by the evidence of Christian tradition. Before someone objects and says, "But I thought we shouldn't base our beliefs and practices on tradition!" I think it should be pointed out that while tradition should never trump Scripture, it is great at helping us to understand how the early Christians understood Scripture.

Justin Martyr, who wrote in the second century A.D., said this about their Sunday assembly:

“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, 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.”

We can add to Justin’s testimony, the testimony of men like Eusebius, Pliny, Ignatius, Origen and many others to show conclusively that Christians have historically regarded Sunday as the day set aside by the Lord’s apostles as the day on which the church is to assemble and “break bread” together.

3. Personal Experience

While I give very little weight to my personal experience, it is valuable for answering those who fear that taking the Lord’s Supper weekly will cause it to lose its significance. On the one hand, I can tell you from personal experience that it is difficult when you do something frequently not to allow it to become a mindless routine. However, I can also tell you from personal experience that if you will be spiritually disciplined, breaking bread with your church family every Sunday can be a highlight of your week.

I have always found it strange when I hear people say things like, “We only take communion once a quarter, so that it doesn’t lose its significance.” Why would you do that with the Lord’s Supper and not other things like singing or praying? Furthermore, imagine a husband saying to his wife, “I only tell my wife that I love her a few times a year; I don’t want it to lose its significance.”

It doesn’t have to lose its significance when taken weekly; all it takes is discipline. The same discipline that is necessary to “set your minds on things that are above” (Colossians 3:2) at other times.

Bottom Line

I don’t want to squabble about this issue. When Christians fight and squabble about when to take the Lord’s Supper, we miss the point of the meal (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). The Lord’s Supper is something that is supposed to bring us together, not tear us apart.

Sunday is our holiday. It is the day we come together with our Christian family to celebrate our freedom from sin, freedom from the Law, freedom from condemnation, and even freedom from the fear of death – all because of what Jesus did on the cross. And at the center of that celebration is this beautiful and wonderful memorial meal.