

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO



A (somewhat) brief series of articles to answer Lost Mountain's most pressing questions...

WHY DO WE HAVE COMMUNION WEEKLY?

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I want to begin this series of articles with with why we do communion weekly. We are not commanded anywhere in Scripture to observe communion (the eucharist or the lord's supper) on a weekly basis. I am, however, an avid proponent of celebrating communion weekly in the local church. Here are 6 reasons why...

6 REASONS FOR WEEKLY COMMUNION

(1) Communion brings us into alignment with the early church and the global church

Holy Communion has been held weekly on Sundays by most churches in most places from the earliest recorded history of the Church. Communion is still celebrated weekly by the majority of the Church in the world. It has followed the service of the Word (preaching), and the two services (Word and Sacrament), have been an integrated whole.

There is strong evidence in the New Testament (see, Acts 2:42, 20:7, as well as the subject of the Lord's supper in 1 Corinthians where it's hard to imagine the amount of issue they were having with it if they weren't practicing on a regular/weekly basis) that celebrating communion was a weekly practice for the early church. Throughout church history and around the world today, the vast majority of our brothers and sisters in Christ celebrate communion weekly during worship services.

When we observe communion weekly, we join hundreds of millions of our brothers and sisters around the world. We remember that we are a tiny part of an historical and global whole.

(2) Communion is a visible, tangible, reminder of the centrality of Christ and the cross

In our man-centered age where so many services are shamefully devoid of any meaningful reference to the cross, could we not benefit from a regular use of the Christ-ordained means for reminding us of the cross (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)? If we want to be gospel-centered why not make the Christ-ordained portrayal of the gospel a centerpiece in our weekly worship?

However, in our post-Christian culture, celebrating weekly communion is a counter-attack to the gospel amnesia so pervasive in our world today. Perhaps more than ever, it seems easy to forget what our sin did to Jesus or what Jesus really did for us on that cross.

Simultaneously, American Evangelicals have an air for "fixing" ourselves (pulling ourselves up by their own bootstraps) while distancing ourselves from any perception of weakness or brokenness. Communion is the time when we remind ourselves that we are weak and Jesus is strong.

"IF WE WANT TO BE GOSPEL-CENTERED WHY NOT MAKE THE CHRIST-ORDAINED PORTRAYAL OF THE GOSPEL A CENTERPIECE IN OUR WEEKLY WORSHIP?"

(3) Communion is a participatory opportunity to enjoy and exalt Jesus

We "do this" in remembrance of him (Luke 22:19). Communion is meant to redirect our hearts to Jesus's horrific death and hope-filled resurrection for us sinners. We are to remember him so that we might worship him and enjoy his friendship and presence.

We "do this" to exalt him and to proclaim him. In eating at the Lord's table, we "proclaim his death" (1 Cor. 11:26). We exalt his passion and exalt him amid the congregation and to the world. In eating a piece of bread and bit of wine (or juice in our case), every member becomes a gospel herald. Every Christian becomes a participant in proclaiming the ministry of reconciliation and the glory of his name.

(4) Communion is an invitation to unity and a catalyst for unity

Paul reminds us that "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17). The church is reminded during communion that we are one in Christ. Division cannot stand before the communion table; it buckles under the gentle pressure of God's love. *(cont. next page)*

6 REASONS (CONT.)

Hurdles to unity, barriers to fellowship, and footholds for the devil are all dealt with before enjoying communion. Churches in this cultural moment, including ours, need more and more unity! And taking the Lord and communion seriously helps move us deeper and deeper into Christian unity.

(5) Communion is an invitation to repentance and spiritual warfare

Paul told the Corinthians to “flee idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:14) and to do this by taking the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 10:16–22). Paul doesn’t say this as though, “A communion a day keeps the Devil away.” Communion is a realignment to Christ, a refreshing of Christ’s glory and his goodness. It’s a way of preaching the gospel to ourselves, which moves us away from idols, helping us kill idolatry by the Spirit (Rom. 8:13). Communion is a reminder to examine our hearts, confess, repent, and follow Christ above all (1 Cor. 11:28).

The Lord’s Supper is a means of renouncing demonic forces and turning from idolatry. When you take the elements, you are telling the elemental spirits, “I’m with Jesus—not you. I’m no longer under your rule. Jesus is mine and I am his. He defeated you and I will proclaim his death until he comes, and he’s bringing your final defeat with him.”

(6) In communion, like in baptism, we participate with Jesus in a spiritual way

Our creative God gave us two signs—two illustrations, two object lessons—to remind us that we are part of His family: baptism and communion. Neither baptism nor communion are rituals; instead, they are rehearsals. Through both, we rehearse the gospel story to ourselves, to one another in the Church, and to a watching world. Romans 6 explains how baptism does this and 1 Corinthians 10 similarly explains how communion does...

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IN THE BODY OF CHRIST?
(1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-16)*

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- JOHN CALVIN



I don't fully comprehend how this works itself out, just as theologians haven't been able to fully explain it for two millennia. Nevertheless, I believe it. Even after his detailed theological writing on communion, this too was the conclusion of John Calvin: “It is a mystery too sublime for me to be able to express, or even to comprehend; and, to be still more explicit, I'd rather experience it than understand it.”

A FEW COMMON OBJECTIONS...

Celebrating communion weekly will cause it to lose its significance.

This is always the most common objection by those who aren't familiar with observing communion on a weekly basis. I have actually found the opposite to be true—as have most believers I know. Communion often becomes the high-point of the worship experience, a sacred moment shared with others in the presence of Christ.

Ironically, those with this concern never apply it to other aspects of the worship gather. We receive offering every week. We pray every week. We have a sermon every week. We sing every week. No one ever suggests we lessen the frequency of these worship practices so they will not “lose their significance.”

Celebrating communion weekly is insensitive to nonbelievers present.

When we see the communion as the Gospel enfleshed before us, as the grandest of all invitations to partake in the death and therefore the life of Jesus, it becomes something beautiful gospel witness! What a thing to invite outsiders into. I would argue that communion is one of the most evangelical things we can do in church. This holy moment, this place where heaven meets earth, is the one thing we have together that outsiders don't. If this isn't the invitation of the Gospel, what is?

This is not how I grew up. I was raised in a typical “First Baptist Church” (SBC) setting in north Texas. We observed communion (the Lord's Supper) quarterly and it almost seemed as if we felt it was more important to teach about it than actually participate in it—as our Lord commands. Over the past two decades I've had the opportunity to be around many different church denominations and traditions, both in the U.S. and beyond. It has been an interesting time to both reflect on the power of this particular church ordinance as well as its biblical significance. I now believe there are few things we can do in worship on a weekly basis that has the kind of impact on members and the church as a whole that communion does.

I believe we cheat ourselves when communion is not at the center of our gatherings. The early church, and the church throughout most of history, has celebrated it regularly—as most of the global Church does today.

By all means, let us pray expectantly, preach unapologetically, worship passionately, and give generously. But let us also celebrate the death, resurrection, and coming reign of our Lord by participating in communion each week.

In Christ,

Pastor Matt