

The Lord's Supper- The Details

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Integration Question: *How frequent should the Lord's Supper be administered? What is the proper administration of the Lord's Supper? Should there be variation in the mode of administration? Should this be a meal for Christians only? For repentant Christians only?*

Theological Statement

I believe the local churches must be committed to the regular partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In his letter to the churches in Corinth, the Apostle Paul instructs them that as often as they meet together as a church, they are to partake in the Lord's Supper in a right manner, not in a divisive way like they have been (1 Cor. 11:18-34). Every time they came together they, as often, ate of the Lord's Supper. In other words, since churches typically meet once a week as a community, then administering the Lord's Supper once a week seems wise. Because the Lord's Supper is rooted in the Passover, and in the ceder meal they would drink out of and passed around one cup of wine in which they dipped the different elements of the meal, so to, it seems that in keeping with the most similarities of the New Testament church, people should pass around and drink out of one big cup. I also think there is great freedom to use individual, little cup. I also see liberty in what kind of bread and drink to use, but if we are trying to be the best imitators of the early church, then unleavened bread and wine are the closest to what they did. While, scripturally, there is no stipulation for who should administer the Lord's Supper, I believe leaders in the community should be the ones to lead others through the sacrament, but it can be handed out or prepared by anyone of the congregants as a way for them to be partakers in the community. The spiritual significance of the Lord's Supper reveals that it is meant to be administered to followers of Jesus.

The Lord's Supper is an opportunity for people who have already put their faith in Jesus to spiritually connect in a deeper practice. I believe it is for Christians who are looking for grace

and a deeper relationship with Jesus in their lives, whether that is someone struggling deep in sin or someone walking in righteous freedom. Matthew 4 Luke 18 gives a beautiful picture of those who are invited to Jesus' table, the meek, lowly, repentant, those yearning for more of Him. Again, Paul's writing to the church in Corinth proves helpful as His critique is specifically for communities of Jesus' followers. Said differently, the focus of the Lord's Supper is for those who are already found in Christ. There is also a question if the unbeliever is invited to the table. Many who interpret Paul's warning that misusing the Lord's Supper will result in bringing judgment use this verse to support why a non-believer who partakes in communion is in sin (1 Cor. 11:28-29). On the contrary, I believe in Paul's statement of bringing judgment upon themselves "concerning the body" is in reference those whom he is rebuking. He is admonishing how they specifically were getting drunk off the Lord's Supper and were partaking of it separate than the rest of the community in order to avoid eating with the lower class and slaves (1 Cor. 11:20-22, 29). It is the heart posture of segregating themselves and not being one in Christ that is the rebuke. These people are showing their true heart that they are not walking with Jesus. And the judgment they are reaping is what everyone else who does not walk and follow Jesus reaps. Consequently, I do not think that anything bad happens to non-believers who partake of communion. In fact, allowing a non-believers to partake in the Lord's Supper may allow them to connect in a new way to Jesus and serve as a means to bring them into the faith.

Ministry Application

The first application is to ensure that both believers and non-believers in attendance for a church service have an opportunity to connect with Jesus through the

Lord's Supper. Although its audience is specifically those who believe churches do not need to self-select who gets to be partakers of it. For example, there are some groups who hold the conviction that you must be a member of that denomination, church, or structure, proven in their faith, who are in good standing. The unfortunate thing about this view is that the Lord's Supper becomes an exclusive time instead of a unifying time where people of His Church are growing toward holiness as the bride. It also pushes away those who are in need God's gracious help to deal with their brokenness and sin and can attract the self-righteous people with hard hearts people, exactly who Paul is condemning in 1 Cor. 11:28-32. It is important churches, even if they do not allow non-believers to partake of the Lord's Supper, to have something for them, whether a question to ponder, a Bible verse to look up, that will allow them to experience Jesus while the rest of the community is partaking of the Lords Supper.

A second application is to ensure people are not missing the heart behind the Lord's Supper. Even though I believe drinking wine from one cup and eating unleveled bread is probably the closest we can be to replicating how the New Testament church partook of the Lord's Supper, our church uses little cups of grape juice and leavened bread. Instead of getting caught up in things that Scripture is silent on, I want to ensure the members of our community spiritually deepening their relationship with Jesus every time they partake the Lord's Supper. Likewise, churches should have substitute items if they hold a strong conviction on specific elements of the Lord's Supper. For example, if a church believes it must be wine, then they should be willing to have juice for those who are not able to or comfortable drinking wine. Same thing with the bread. Churches might want to think about offering gluten free bread for people that are gluten intolerant. Lastly, for those who are in jobs or parts of the world where juice and bread is not attainable, I would still recommend partaking of the Lord's Supper with what you

have. During my times in the Army, when I was deployed to Mosul, Iraq while we were taking back the city from ISIS, we were unable to get the normal items for the Lord's Supper, bread and juice. As a result, for the Bible study I was leading, we partook of communion with the only things we had at that time, water and tortillas. Admittedly, it did feel a little strange, the spiritual connection to Jesus everyone experienced was pretty incredible. Because we focused on the heart of the Lords Supper, we were greatly thankful for that experience.