

Why celebrate the Lord's supper



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Why celebrate the Lord's supper? What are its "actual benefits"? How frequently? And how should it be celebrated? A Nicaraguan immigrant, former Roman Catholic turned semi-Pentecostal posed the questions.

What are the benefits of celebrating the Lord's Supper?

1. Every believer is reduced to exactly the same level. Personal achievements, spiritual gifts and social standing make no difference when we are reminded of what it took to save each of us. It inspires unity among us when we see our brothers and sisters at the foot of the cross, receiving the same cleansing we are receiving.
2. Every time we celebrate the Lord's supper we are confronted with the amazing mystery of God's grace. As we consider His holiness and our humiliatingly frequent struggles with sin we are moved toward awe and worship!
3. As we prepare for, and share in the Lord's supper we are reminded of our cleansing and receive a good conscience with God and fresh beginning for the days ahead.
4. When we remember, we consider who it was that saved us. He is central to everything. We are not only doers of commands - we are lovers of God because He first loved us. In communion we remember that it is not our performance but His that counts!
5. Jesus shared many meals with His disciples. When we eat and drink together we share "table fellowship" with Him and with His people.
6. Those who eat and drink appropriately share an intimacy with Christ when they "eat His flesh and drink His blood". There is a sense in which we are taking the symbols of his very life into our innermost being.
7. In the Lord's supper, all the great

teachings of Scripture converge:

- the attributes of God
 - the nature of people
 - the beauty of God's holiness, mercy, sovereignty, power, wisdom etc.
 - the workings of God with Israel in the Passover
 - the mystery of the church
 - the doctrine of "last things".
8. In participating in the Lord's supper we are obeying our Lord's loving command, "do this in remembrance of me". There is nothing like obedience to enhance our walk with God. Are there benefits? Absolutely!

How often should we celebrate the Lord's supper?

It is clear that the church of the New Testament celebrated it often. Its benefits demanded it. The book of Acts suggests they did it daily. And according to 1 Corinthians 11 it continued to be done often. Vs 17-22 do not sound like the description of a monthly or quarterly event. Although frequency is not specifically spelled out in Scripture there are reasonable indications that it was celebrated on a weekly basis. Nevertheless we should be loving and flexible in the matter of frequency, not legalistic or self-righteous.

How should the Lord's supper be celebrated?

The Scriptures give surprisingly little attention to this question. This is especially glaring when contrasted with the detail the Old Testament provides in relationship to the Passover.

Why the difference? God hasn't seen fit to tell us exactly, but it is very clear that having all that detail did not hold the hearts of Israel. In spite of it they strayed miserably. The same is true of many Christian churches.

The primary issues for the Lord are:

- "Do you love me?"
- "little children, love one another."
- When he returns, will he "find faith on the earth? Luke 18:8"

Our Lord and the apostles had very little to say about:

- The time, order, or length of services
- The kind of music
- How many cups?
- What kind of bread?
- Wine or grape juice?
- Musical instruments?
- A separate service?

- Levels of organization?

We may have personal opinions, strong feelings and nostalgic memories, but these are not the matters closest to the heart of the Lord. His searching questions are - do you love me? do you trust me? do you love the people I love the way I love them?

Whatever we do is likely to become routine over time. Even if that is not the case for us personally, it may be for others. Let's not judge them for it. Rather we ought to strive for the very best in our celebration of the Lord's supper. Keep combining: the never-changing truths of Scripture, with the strengths of our past and our finest creativity in the present. Don't be afraid of change. Our Lord did not command an order of service, but He longs to be in command of our hearts.