

Stockton Bible Chapel

An Invitation to the Lord's Supper...

Each Sunday Christians throughout the world assemble in various locations to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. They gather around bread and wine in a meeting that the early Christians called the "Lord's Supper" (Corinthians 11:20) or the "Breaking of Bread" (Acts 2:42). This has been the practice of God's people since the time that the Lord Jesus Himself requested it:

And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood." - Luke 22:19-20

In obedience to this command of the Lord, we gather each week to observe the Lord's Supper. In determining the manner in which to express our worship, we have sought guidance from the principles and pattern found in the New Testament.

Symbols to Remind. The Lord instituted the Breaking of Bread at the Last Supper. There He used bread and wine to symbolize His body and blood.

We often refer to the bread and wine as the emblems, because they symbolize the Lord's body and blood by visually suggesting the objects they represent. The bread reminds us Christ's body. The bread is broken to represent the Lord's body that was broken for us on the cross. The one loaf also reminds us that we are one body in Christ (1 Corinthians 10:17). The wine reminds us of the Lord's blood that was poured out for our sins (Matthew 26:28).

The Lord's Supper is a memorial feast, not a sacrificial offering. For this reason the elements are placed on a table, not an altar. They remind us of Christ's finished work. In partaking of the bread and wine, each person is expressing that he or she has personally placed his faith in Christ as his Savior (1 Corinthians 10:16). The Lord's Supper is meant to be a joyful time in which God's redeemed people enjoy fellowship with the Father in glorifying His Son.

Open to Every Believer. All who know the Lord Jesus and are walking in fellowship with Him are welcome to join in worshipping with us and partaking of the bread and wine (1 Corinthians 10:17). If, however, someone has doubts about his or her relationship with the Lord or his spiritual condition, we ask that he refrains from participation (1 Corinthians 11:27-29; Matthew 5:23-24).

Presided Over by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures teach that our prayer and worship should be led by the Holy Spirit (John 4:23; Romans 8:26; Ephesians 2:18). Consequently, in remembering the Lord with bread and wine we seek to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. Lest we quench the direction of the Spirit, there is no chairman in charge of the meeting or preplanned course that the content of our worship must follow (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Recognizing the Priesthood of Every Believer. Every true Christian is a member of a "holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5), and has direct access through the Son in the Spirit to the Father (Ephesians 2:18). We invite, therefore, every believer to actively participate at the Breaking of Bread. Scripture tells us to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:10). We are to "offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

Recognizing Different Roles within Our Priesthood. The meetings of the early church were open to the participation of various members (1 Corinthians 14:26). The Scriptures, however, limit

the role of publicly addressing the assembly for purposes such as leading in worship or instruction to the men (1 Corinthians 14:34-36; 1 Timothy 2:8-15). Women, as a witness to their acceptance of this divinely established order, are instructed by God's Word to cover their heads when praying or prophesying (1 Corinthians 11:2-16). Men, on the other hand, are instructed to uncover their heads during activities such as worship (1 Corinthians 11:4,7). Both men and women are free to join together in singing hymns of praise.

The Goal of our Worship. The focus of the Breaking of Bread is to "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26), to remember Him and what He has done for us (Luke 22:19). It is a time to exalt our risen Savior. Topics not related to this should be addressed at other meetings of the assembly.

Our Observance of the Lord's Supper. The Scriptures instruct us that the meetings of the church are to be done properly and in an orderly manner" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Therefore, though we desire that our worship be spontaneous and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, there is an order to our observance of the Lord's Supper.

Weekly Observance. We remember the Lord around bread and wine each Sunday, the day of His resurrection, the "Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10). We believe that this was the practice of the early church (Acts 2:42; 20:7). We consider the Lord's Supper to be the primary meeting of the church and ask all in fellowship to join us each week in remembering the Lord as He has requested.

The Participation of All. The Breaking of Bread, as we observe it, generally last about one hour. All are asked to arrive early, quietly take their seat, and spend the time until the meeting begins considering the Lord and His saving work of salvation. At the appropriate time, one of the brothers will introduce the meeting and begin the corporate remembrance of the Lord. The other brothers are then free to offer a prayer, a hymn, or an insight from the Scriptures. As the Spirit directs each one, a theme of worship generally becomes apparent. All publicly participating should be sensitive to the Spirit's leading, and be brief so as to allow opportunity for others (1 Corinthians 14:29-33).

Partaking of the Bread and Wine. After a time, one brother will give thanks for the bread. It will be broken and passed among the believers. This is generally followed by a short time of silence for personal worship. In like manner, someone will give thanks for the wine and it will be distributed. In deference to those who have had a weakness for alcoholic beverages, unfermented grape juice is used.

The Closing of the Meeting [top]. The meeting normally concludes with the taking of an offering. This money will be used for the work of the Lord being conducted through this assembly and the missionaries that it supports.

The ministry of this church is overseen by several men working together, designated by the Scriptures as elders (1 Timothy 3;1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Together they care for the pastoral needs of the assembly. On occasion the elders use the time following the Breaking of Bread to instruct the saints regarding important matters of the church.

If you are new to this type of meeting, you may want to observe for a week or two before publicly participating. If you are unsure about your relationship with God or have any further questions about the Lord's Supper, feel free to discuss it with one of the elders.