

**The Doctrine of Communion**  
*Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training*  
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**Introduction:**

The Lord's Supper is one of the two ordinances of the Christian Church. Like baptism, it is also a doctrine that is surrounded by disagreement and controversy among believers. We should never consider the Lord's Supper a minor issue of doctrine. The purpose of this study is to examine the Biblical doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

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**Part I -- Main Views Held in Christianity**

**Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, Reformed, Memorial**

I. Transubstantiation

A. View Described -

The elements of communion are consecrated by the priest and literally change to the body and blood of Christ. Christ is truly and substantially present in the elements of the supper.

B. This view was adopted as the doctrine of the Catholic Church in 1059 although the term was not used until the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 under Pope Innocent III.

C. Problems with this position

1. The doctrine of transubstantiation is a denial of the biblical doctrine of Christ.

a. Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man – two distinct natures in one person, yet these two natures are not in conflict with each other.

b. Transubstantiation attributes divine attributes to Christ's finite human nature. His human body, His flesh and blood, cannot be all over the world in the Eucharist at the same time without having the divine attribute of omnipresence.

2. Catholics insist that the words of Christ must be taken literally, yet Jesus often referred to Himself using figurative speech.
  - A door – John 10:14
  - A temple – John 2:19
  - A vine – John 15:5
  - A shepherd – John 10:14
  - Bread – John 6:35
3. There is a theological concept *communicatio idiomatum* (commonness of the attributes) that dates back to the 5th century.
  - a. According to the *Dictionary of Religious Terms*, it is the “theological doctrine that the human and divine natures of Christ are so united that the characteristics of one nature may be attributed to the other” (Page 126).
  - b. Biblically, the doctrine is based on certain passages in the New Testament which demonstrate that the union of the two natures in Christ allows characteristics belonging exclusively to one of the natures to be attributed to the other nature. For example: “the church of God, that he (that is, God) bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Or: “you crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8)
  - c. Surely God does not have blood and does not suffer. But since Christ, who was true God and true man, was crucified, and shed his blood for us, the things that he carried out in his human nature were transferred to his divinity.
  - d. There was never a real exchange of divine qualities to the human nature or human qualities given to the divine nature. These things are given in Scripture as figures of speech.
  - e. Likewise, when Jesus describes the bread and wine as His body and blood He is not pretending that His human nature is somehow changed into these elements. He is using a figure of speech.
4. At the institution of the Lord’s Supper the elements could not have become the literal flesh and blood of Christ when He blessed them because He was still there in the flesh and the bread and wine were still there unchanged. Jesus still called it the “fruit of the vine” – not His literal blood.
 

**Matthew 26:29** – “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”
5. Jesus in His human incarnation can only be at one place at a time. He is currently on His throne in glory. He is only omnipresent in His Spirit. Transubstantiation implies that in His flesh He is present everywhere the sacrament is being practice at one time.
6. If His blood did become literal blood, as it is claimed, then to drink it would be forbidden by Scripture.
 

**Leviticus 3:17** – “It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.”

**Leviticus 7:27** – “Whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.”

**Acts 15:20** – “But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.”

7. Roman Catholics teach that in the mass a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice to God is offered. That sacrifice is identical with the sacrifice on the cross, the only difference being in the manner of the offering—the cross is bloody and the altar is bloodless.
  - a. The Bible teaches that the sacrifice of Christ was perfect, final, and complete – a one time event never to be repeated.  
**Hebrews 7:27** – “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”  
**Hebrews 10:12** – “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;”
  - b. The Bible teaches that the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross obtained our redemption.  
**Hebrews 9:12** – “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”
  - c. In the Catholic Church Christ is sacrificed thousands of times each day. It is a denial of the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

## II. Consubstantiation

- A. View Described –  
 The elements do not change into the presence of Christ, but he is actually present “in, with, and under” the elements.
- B. This view was founded by the reformer Martin Luther and is still held by the Lutheran church today. While Luther rejected any change in the substance of the elements he still believed that Christ’s body was present in the Lord’s Supper and that his body is received by all who partake of the elements.  
 “On this we take our stand, and we also believe and teach that in the Supper we eat and take to ourselves Christ’s body truly and physically.”
- C. Luther taught that the benefits of the Lord’s Supper were present to the individual regardless of whether or not they had faith.
- D. Problem with this position.
  1. Like Transubstantiation, the insistence of the physical presence of Christ demands that the body of Christ can be present at many places at one time, thus confusing Christ’s human nature with His divine.
  2. Calvin – “They cannot produce a syllable from Scripture to prove that Christ is invisible; but they take for granted what no sound man will admit, that the body of Christ cannot be given in the Supper, unless covered with the mask of bread” (Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.29).  
 Calvin – “Let us never allow ourselves to lose sight of the two restrictions. First, Let there be nothing derogatory to the heavenly glory of Christ. This happens whenever he is brought under the corruptible elements of this world, or is affixed to any earthly creatures.

Secondly, Let no property be assigned to his body inconsistent with his human nature. This is done when it is either said to be infinite, or made to occupy a variety of places at the same time” (*Inst.* 4.17.19)

### III. The Lord’s Supper is a Memorial

#### A. View Described –

Christ is not present in the elements either literally or spiritually but is only a commemoration of the death of Christ. The participants are reminded of the benefits of redemption and salvation.

#### B. This was Ulrich Zwingli’s position and the historic view of Baptists. Zwingli – “The Lord’s Supper is nothing else than the food of the soul, and Christ instituted the ordinance as a memorial of Himself.” (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Page 627.)

*Baptist Faith and Message* – “The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

#### C. Zwingli saw the doctrine of physical eating as absurd and repugnant to common sense (Elwell, Walter A. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, P. 655). In Zwingli’s position the presence of Christ is not stressed although the spiritual benefits of partaking of the elements is maintained. There is no benefit to coming to the table apart from faith.

#### D. Problem with this position:

This view does not capture the unique presence of Christ in Communion.

### IV. Reformed Position

#### A. View Described –

Christ is not literally present in the elements, yet is present spiritually in the partaking of the elements.

#### B. This was Calvin’s position and became the position of Presbyterian and other reformed churches. Calvin’s position has gained the greatest acceptance within the universal church.

Calvin took the middle ground between Luther and Zwingli.

“In the presence of Christ in the Supper we must hold to be such as neither affixes him to the element of bread, nor encloses him in bread, nor circumscribes him in any way (this would obviously detract from his celestial glory); and it must, moreover, be such as neither divests him of his just dimensions, nor dissevers him by differences of place, nor assigns to him a body of boundless dimensions, diffused through heaven and earth. . . . But when these absurdities are discarded, I willingly admit anything which helps to express the true and substantial communication of the body and blood of the Lord, as exhibited to believers, under the sacred symbols of the Supper, understanding that they are received not by the imagination or intellect merely, but are enjoyed in reality as the food of eternal life” (*Inst.* 4.17.19).

#### C. “With Luther, Calvin believed that the elements in the Supper are signs which exhibit the fact that Christ is truly present, and repudiated Zwingli’s belief that the elements are signs which represent what is absent” (Elwell, Walter A. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, P. 655).

- D. While Christ is in heaven, distance is overcome by the Holy Spirit who enables us to partake of Christ. “Now, should any one ask me as to the mode, I will not be ashamed to confess that it is too high a mystery either for my mind to comprehend or my words to express; and to speak more plainly, I rather feel than understand it. The truth of God, therefore, in which I can safely rest, I here embrace without controversy. He declares that his flesh is the meat, and his blood the drink, of my soul; I give my soul to him to be fed with such food. In his sacred Supper he bids me take, eat, and drink his body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine. I have no doubt that he will truly give and I receive” (*Inst.* 4.17.32).  
Charles Hodge – “There is therefore, a presence of Christ’s body in the Lord’s Supper; not local, but spiritual; not to the senses, but to the mind and to faith; and not of nearness, but of efficacy. If the presence is in the promise, then the body of Christ is present, offered to and received by the believer whenever and wherever he embraces and appropriates the promise.” (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Page 643.)
- E. Calvin believed that the faith of the recipient did not change the essence of the elements, although they will only profit the one coming in faith.  
Calvin: “Wherefore, let it be a fixed point, that the office of the sacraments differs not from the Word of God; and this is to hold forth and offer Christ to us, and, in him, the treasures of heavenly grace. They confer nothing, and avail nothing, if not received in faith” (*Inst.* 4.14.17).  
Thomas Watson: “See the misery of unbelievers: though the Lord has appointed this glorious ordinance of his body and blood, they reap no benefit by it. They come indeed to the sacrament, either to keep up their credit, or to stop the mouth of conscience, but they get nothing for their souls. They come empty of grace, and go away empty of comfort. . . So carnal persons see the external elements, but Christ is not known to them in his saving virtues: there is honey in the Spiritual Rock, which they never taste. They feed on the bread, but not Christ in the bread.” (Watson, Thomas, *The Lord’s Supper*, Page 21).

## II. The Meaning of the Lord’s Supper

- I. The Lord’s Supper must be understood against its Old Testament background  
The Lord’s Supper was instituted at the time of the Passover.
- A. The Passover was a celebration of God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt
1. A lamb was killed and the blood placed on the doorpost as a marking them to be passed over when God brought judgment upon Egypt  
**Exodus 12:13** – “And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt.”
  2. Jesus is our Passover Lamb  
**John 1:29** – “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”  
**1 Corinthians 5:7** – “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:”

3. That Jesus chose to die during the Passover is indeed significant
  - a. His blood is for us a guarantee that we will escape the judgment of God
  - b. The Lord's Supper is a continual reminder to us of that fact
- B. In all four Gospel accounts there is a link between Christ's blood and the new covenant.
  1. The shedding of blood is essential in the Atonement  
**Hebrews 9:22** – "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."
  2. We are brought to a right relationship with God through the substitutionary shed blood of Christ.
  3. The blood of Christ establishes and seals the New Covenant  
**Matthew 26:28** – "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
    - a. When Jesus spoke these words He was referring to Jeremiah 31  
**Jeremiah 31:31-34** – "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: <sup>32</sup> Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: <sup>33</sup> But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
      - b. The sacrifices of bulls and goats are forever ended – they no longer have any meaning
      - c. Forgiveness once and for all flows from His death. The Lord's Supper is a continual reminder of this New Covenant.

## II. The bread and the wine are significant in the Lord's Supper

- A. The breaking of the bread points to our Lord's body broken and sacrificed for us
  1. Paul also makes reference to this point  
**1 Corinthians 11:24** – "And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."  
**1 Corinthians 10:16** – "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"
  2. Jesus is saying this, "Whereas you should have suffered eternal death, I give my body upon the cross for you."
- B. The wine signifies our Lord's blood which was shed as a sacrifice of atonement for us

- C. These elements represent the body and blood of Christ. In the supper we spiritually partake of our Lord.  
**John 6:54-57** – “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. <sup>56</sup> He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”
- III. The Lord’s Supper is also a continuing reminder that He is coming again.
- A. The Supper is a perpetual reminder to us of our risen Lord who will return  
**1 Corinthians 11:26** – “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.”  
**Matthew 26:29** – “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”  
The Lord’s Supper looks back, it also looks forward to our glorious reunion
- B. The Lord’s Supper is perpetual testimony to us. Our Lord died for our sins, was raised from the dead, and is now able to nourish His people until He returns
- IV. The Lord’s Supper is an act of thanksgiving
- A. The Lord’s Table is sometimes called a “Eucharist” from the Greek word εὐχαριστέω – to be grateful, to give thanks
1. The celebration of the Lord’s Supper is a special time of thanksgiving for the church
  2. This is a reason for observing the Supper frequently
  3. Thomas Watson – “See then what dear and entire affections we should bear to Christ, who gives us his body and blood in the Eucharist. If he had anything to part with of more worth, he would have bestowed it upon us. Oh, let Christ lie nearest our hearts, Let him be our Tree of Life, and let us desire no other fruit. Let him be our Mourning Star, and let us rejoice in no other light.” (Watson, Thomas, *The Lord’s Supper*, Page 26)
- B. It is a call to remembrance
1. Of God’s rich mercy in our salvation  
**Psalm 30:11-12** – “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.”
  2. Of the infinite love of our Savior in giving Himself for us  
**John 15:13** – “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”
  3. The Lord’s Supper should help us to grow in our knowledge of Christ’s love  
**Ephesians 3:19** – “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

- IV. The Lord's Supper is a communion with Christ
- A. Calvin suggested that we receive intangible nourishment from this feast and, as such, it is spiritual not carnal food.  
The 1689 London Baptist Confession reads,  
"Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally, but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements are to their outward senses" (Chapter 30, article 7).
- B. Christ is present spiritually as we partake of the Lord's Supper  
**1 Corinthians 10:16** – "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"
1. We are actually spiritually meeting with our risen Lord
  2. It is a communion in the body and blood of Christ
- C. To have communion with Christ demands self-examination and discernment  
**John 1:6** – "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:"
1. The Christian life must be a life of examination
    - a. That Christ is in us - II Cor 13:5  
*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*
    - b. That our motives are pure
    - c. That we come to the Lord's table worthily
      - (1) Properly discerning His body - v. 29
      - (2). To come with a proper state of mind and heart consistent with it our profession
      - (3) To not come harboring sin
      - (4) To not come with a flippant view of it
  2. Coming to the Lord's table demands a regard for personal holiness  
**1 Corinthians 10:21** – "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."
  3. We must come with high reverence
- V. The Lord's Supper is a communion with our fellow believers  
**1 Corinthians 10:16-17** – "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."
- A. It is to be shared by believers – members of the body of Christ  
**Matthew 26:27-28** – "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;<sup>28</sup> For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
1. The original literally says, "Drink from it all of you"
  2. This focuses upon the unity of all believers and the communion of fellowship in partaking of the cup

3. It is a reminder to us that we are members one of another .  
**Romans 12:5** – “So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”  
**1 Corinthians 12:12** – “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.”
  4. Charles Hodge – “In being thus united to Christ as their common head, believers become one body, in a mystical sense. The Holy Spirit dwelling in each and in all constitutes them one. They have one principle of life. The Spirit works in all alike “both to will and to do.” They have, consequently, one faith, and one religious experience, as well as one Lord, and on God and Father. They are so bound together that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it ( 1 Cor. xii. 26). So far as this all churches seem to agree. They all admit that in the Lord’s Supper believers are united to Christ and to one another.” (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Page 623.)
- B. The Lord’s Supper is a reminder that we are called out as God’s holy people  
**2 Corinthians 6:14-15** – “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? <sup>15</sup> And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”  
**1 Corinthians 10:21** – “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.”
- C. The Lord’s Supper is a corporate observance – a feast celebrated in the company of others.
1. This stresses that salvation is not purely an individual experience. The cross marked the emergence of the true Israel.
  2. The Bible assumes that we know those with whom we share this meal  
**1 Corinthians 5:11** – “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”
- VI. The Lord’s Supper is a means of grace
- A. We do not mean this in a mechanical sense
1. A lost person receives nothing from partaking of these elements
  2. We do not receive God’s grace by anything that we do, yet God often incorporates certain “means” in dispensing grace.
  3. Both Calvin and Luther believed that the essential truths concerning the elements are not changed by the faith of the person partaking of them.
- B. The Lord’s Supper provides spiritual benefit to the child of God  
The supper gives spiritual nourishment and brings one closer to the presence of Christ.
1. Charles Hodge – “The efficacy of this sacrament, according to the Reformed doctrine, is not to be referred to any virtue in the ordinance itself, whether in its elements or actions; much less to any virtue in the administrator; nor to the mere power of the truths which it signifies; nor to the inherent, divine power in the word or promise by which it is attended;

nor to the real presence of the material body and blood of Christ, whether by the way of transubstantiation, consubstantiation; nor to a supernatural life-giving influence emanating from the glorified body of Christ in heaven, nor to the communication of the theanthropic (both divine and human) nature of Christ, but only to the ‘blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that receive the sacrament of his body and blood.’ (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Page 649.)

2. Richard D. Phillips - “What benefit does the communicant receive through the Lord’s Supper? We return to the biblical institution, which indicates that the spiritual benefits we receive in the sacrament are analogous to those benefits received by the body through eating and drinking. In the Lord’s Supper, then, the believer is strengthened and fed, receiving sustenance and life. In keeping with the sacrament as a sign, we gain from it a strengthened faith: as a seal of Christ’s covenant, we gain increased assurance of salvation and communion with God.” (Richard D. Phillips, *What is the Lord’s Supper?*, Page 18).
3. From the “Valley of Vision”
 

“O may I rightly grasp the breadth and length of this design, draw near, obey, extend the hand, take the bread, receive the cup, eat and drink, testify before all men that I do for myself, gladly, in faith, reverence and love, receive my Lord to be my life, strength, nourishment, joy, delight. In the supper I remember his eternal love, boundless grace, infinite compassion, agony, cross, redemption, and receive assurance of pardon, adoption, life, glory.

As the outward elements nourish my body, so may thy indwelling Spirit invigorate my soul, until the day when I hunger and thirst no more, and sit with Jesus at his heavenly feast.”

### III. The Lord’s Supper and Church Discipline

- I. The Lord’s Supper is the place of discipline within the church – (1 Cor. 5:11-13)
  - A. A major characteristic of the New Testament church is discipline.
    1. J. L. Dagg - "Churches are often criminally careless, both in the reception of members, and in the discipline of them when received... when discipline leaves the church, Christ goes with it" (Dagg, John L. *Manual of Theology, Second Part: A Treatise on Church Order* - pp. 99, 274)
    2. In the unfortunate occasion that a member must be excluded, the ultimate place of exclusion is the Lord’s Table
  - B. Every individual is responsible for his own soul
 

**1 Corinthians 11:31** – “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”

    1. Self government is essential in the life of every believer – we must be self disciplined
 

**1 Corinthians 11:28** – “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.”
    2. Self government is also essential to the health of any church – each believer is responsible for seeking Christ for the good of his own soul. We must discipline ourselves to live holy lives. We must discipline ourselves to labor for the good of our Lord’s kingdom

3. Paul states that each of us have a responsibility to examine himself before coming to the table.
4. It is a dangerous thing to approach the Lord's Table unworthily  
The consequences are severe  
**1 Corinthians 11:29** – "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

II. Every church has the duty of watching over its members

A. Pastoral watch care

**Hebrews 13:17** – "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you."

B. Each member of a church has the duty of watching over one another

1. We must maintain a spirit of patience, love, and forgiveness  
**Colossians 3:12-14** – "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; <sup>13</sup> Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*. <sup>14</sup> And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness. "
2. We must encourage, teach, and instruct each other that we might be edified (built up and strengthened) in Christ  
**Hebrews 10:24-25** – "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: <sup>25</sup> Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. "  
**Colossians 3:16** – "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

C. The Church as a body has the responsibility to watch over its members.

1. The church is a community of faith – a unique body  
**1 Corinthians 10:17** – "For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."
2. Every church has the duty of maintaining purity
  - a. Because of the terrible effect of sin upon a church and upon God's people the Bible commands us to rid ourselves of those who persist in it  
**Romans 16:17-18** – "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."  
**Titus 3:10-11** – "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned in himself."

**1 Thes. 3:6** – “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

b. The Ultimate place of discipline is the Lord’s Table

**1 Corinthians 5:11** But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

- D. The Lord’s Table is a church’s ultimate place of fellowship, of communion
1. Clearly, we must be in fellowship with those who come to the table with us. Clearly we must not allow those in open sin to come
  2. We are expressly commanded in Scripture NOT to have fellowship with those who consistently practice sinful behavior – “**no not to eat.**”
  3. Those excommunicated from fellowship are separated from the Lord’s Table - This is where we get the word excommunication  
They are removed as communicants.
  4. Not only does this apply to the church as a body. As individuals we should also not enter into friendly relations with anyone whom the Church has excommunicated  
Calvin, “The authority of the Church would count for nothing, if individuals were allowed to invite to their own tables those who have been debarred from the Lord’s table.”

#### IV. Miscellaneous

##### I. How Often Should the Church Observe the Lord’s Supper?

- A. For many in our generation the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper has been grossly neglected.
1. This is tragic because of its importance, and dangerous because of the threats that accompany it.  
**1 Corinthians 11:27-30** – “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. <sup>29</sup> For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. <sup>30</sup> For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”
  2. Sadly, for many churches today, the Lord’s Supper is observed more out of necessity than of delight.
- B. The Bible does not state how often we must partake of the Lord’s Supper  
**1 Corinthians 11:25-26** – “. . . this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. <sup>26</sup> For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.
1. Most today observe the Lord’s Supper quarterly but this seems a sad testimony of our high regard for this ordinance.
  2. Some churches only observe the Lord’s Supper twice a year.
- C. It should be observed with frequency in accordance with the nature of the ordinance

## II. Preparing to come to the Table

### A. Few Christians seriously prepare themselves to come to the Lord's Table.

1. For many God has become the object of disrespect rather than of reverent fear.

*Andrew Gray, 17<sup>th</sup> Century pastor and theologian said, "It is a wonder we are not stricken with silence; and it is a wonder that the places ye sit on are not made the places of your graves before ye go hence."*

2. The Bible is absolutely clear that adequate preparation must be made prior to coming to the Lord's Supper

**1 Corinthians 11:27-31** – "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. <sup>29</sup> For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. <sup>30</sup> For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. <sup>31</sup> For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

### B. How must we prepare?

1. By recognizing that we are partaking of Christ and entering into communion with Him.

- a. We should spend much time before coming to the Lord's Table seeking Him.

Andrew Gray (1633-1656) in a Communion Sermon –  
 "O Christians! Would you have your deadness removed? Be much in seeking of Christ, and then you will get your deadness removed; as is clear, Amos 5:4,6, *Seek ye me, and ye shall live.* Their hearts shall live that seek him. Why is it there is so much deadness of spirit and stupidity? It is because there is but little seeking of Christ. Are there not many here today that sought not Christ before they came here? And it is a doubt if they seek him now either; and what wonder is it that such find him not: but if there be a desire to have the heart living in him, be much taken up in seeking of him." (*The Works of Andrew Gray*, Page 422.)

- b. Thomas Watson – "Why has the Lord frowned upon his people of late but to punish their apathy, and provoked their appetite? As David longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem (*2 Sam. 23:15*), so should we long for Christ in the sacrament. Desires are the sails of the soul, which are spread to receive the gale of an heavenly blessing." (Watson, Thomas, *The Lord's Supper*, Page 43)

2. By considering the severity of our sin – Our Lord suffered the crucifixion because of our sin

3. By examining if we have unconfessed and unrepented sin – we must come with penitent hearts.

- a. Sin has a negative affect upon our worship

**Matthew 5:23-24** – "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; <sup>24</sup> Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

**1 John 1:6-7** - “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

b. We must confess our sin and repent of it

- III. The Lord’s Supper is an ordinance of the local church. It was designed to be celebrated by each church in public assembly
- A. There is often confusion with regard to this
1. It has been observed in associational meetings
  2. Some today are observing the Lord’s Supper at weddings
  3. Some pastors carry the Lord’s Supper to shut-ins.
- B. Paul made it clear that he was delivering the ordinance to the church – not individuals
1. **1 Corinthians** was addressed to a local church  
**1 Corinthians 1:1-2** – “Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother, <sup>2</sup> Unto the church of God which is at Corinth. . .”
  2. In Chapter 11 he delivered the ordinance to the church  
**1 Corinthians 11:23** – “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you,”
- C. Baptism is a prerequisite to the Lord’s Supper  
J. L. Dagg – “Regarding the Lord’s supper as an ordinance committed to the local churches, to be observed by them as such, the question , who are entitled to the privilege of communion, is decided by a simple principle. None are to be admitted but those who can be admitted to the membership of the church” (Dagg, John L. *Manual of Theology, Second Part: A Treatise on Church Order*, P. 219)
- D. There is the necessity that we know those with whom we are partaking  
**1 Corinthians 5:11** – “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”