

“Improving Our Participation in the Lord’s Supper”

Special Presentation

Jordan Obaker

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Jordan: Heavenly Father, we thank You for this morning. We thank You that it’s a new morning. We pray that as we consider Your word today that You would, through Your Spirit, challenge us to see where we can improve our sanctification, where we can become more like Christ. And so we pray, Father, that You would help us to consider these things.

We lift up to You those that are not with us this morning. We ask for travel mercies for those who are traveling. We pray for Don as he preaches at a funeral and speaks at a funeral, Lord, that he would speak the gospel to those who are there, that they might be comforted knowing that You are sovereign, Father, and through Your providence that we can take hope and assurance in You.

And so, Lord, we lift up to you Tab and Jeff and their family as Tab receives her chemo treatment. We pray, Lord, that You would allow that treatment to be received well by her body. You are her Creator and we know that You are capable of all things. So we pray that if You are willing that You would heal her of this. And we pray, Lord, in the meantime that You would be encouraging them and giving them endurance through this trial. We pray this in Your Son’s name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jordan: Okay. I’m sure that some of you don’t know me very well. But it may be interesting to hear. I actually started attending this Bible study probably twenty years ago. My dad Bill Obaker, who some of you may know, would bring me when I was a kid when I was still in middle school and we had snow days on Fridays. And I was like all right; we get to sleep in. And you’re getting up at 5:30 to go to a Bible study. *(Laughter)* And so that is how I was introduced to this group. And so I knew Bruce well. I go to the same church that Jeff preaches at today. And so I’m listening under Jeff on a weekly basis.

As for me I’m married and I have three girls—ten, eight, and almost five. And I live here in the North Hills.

As far as the topic for today goes, I wanted to set some ground rules for the conversation. And first and foremost I will let you know that I am not a theologian, okay? I don’t have any degrees; I’ve not been formally trained. So just keep that in mind that I’m a brother just like you, trying to do the best that I can to continue my sanctification.

But the second rule is ask questions, but remember the first rule. I am not a theologian. So depending on your question I may not be able to give you an answer to your satisfaction, which leads me to the third rule. I’m hoping for today that we can all be like the Bereans that you read about in Acts—men who when they heard the Word examined the Scriptures for themselves to see if these things were so. And so I’m going to present things to you today. And I would encourage you to challenge yourselves to take what we hear today and to examine it for yourselves in the Scriptures.

On the handout that I gave or provided for today on the back, this is from the Westminster Larger Catechism questions and answers. And I’ve provided all the Scripture proofs at the bottom. So this is here for your benefit. And we’ll talk more about

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this as we go through it today. But there is information here that you can use for yourselves to go and examine if these things are so.

And then the last thing that I just want to mention is to kind of start off with a Bickelism that I remember when I used to listen to Bruce. He would always challenge us about the difference between knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Knowledge is the accumulation of facts. Understanding is do you understand what those mean? And wisdom is can you now apply that in your lives? And he would always ask us, “What are you going to do with what you learned about today and what you heard today?” And my challenge to you is to try to be wise with what we hear about. Challenge yourself to say, “What am I going to do with what I heard today?”

And so those are the ground rules for the topic for today. And the topic that I chose was “Improving Our Participation in the Lord’s Supper.” And the reason why I chose this is because it’s something that I think until recently in my own life I was taking for granted what this sacrament was. And so I kind of wanted to start out with what is the sacrament? Why is it important to us, and why should we be taking it seriously?

I’ll speak from my own experience. I’ll say that for most of my Christian life so far I would approach the Lord’s Supper as “*Do this in remembrance of Me.*” It was a thing I was supposed to be doing to remember Christ’s death and sacrifice for us. I kind of viewed it as a “check the box” exercise. It’s offered by the church; I’m supposed to do it in remembrance of Him, so I’ll show up and do it.

And I think what I may have missed out on and did not appreciate until just recently is the actual benefits that we are supposed to receive from this sacrament. It’s not just a thing we do, but it is a thing that we receive benefits from. And if you’re thinking about yourself, and maybe coming out of this telling yourself, “I don’t know if I’m receiving those benefits; maybe I’m not experiencing the benefits that I should be experiencing when I participate in the Lord’s Supper,” then maybe it has something to do with how we’re preparing for it. Maybe it has something to do with how we’re receiving it. And we’ll certainly see later on that Paul challenges us to do this in a worthy manner, which implies that there is an unworthy manner in which we can be taking the Lord’s Supper.

And so a couple things that I have just to start with are from *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. And this is from the chapter on sacraments. And so you can see here that *The Westminster Confession of Faith* is telling us that “*Sacraments are holy signs and seals.*” And they represent Christ and His benefits. It is something that is both a sign and also a seal, a promise to us of benefits.

And similarly, in the third paragraph of this same chapter, we’re told that sacraments in general contain “*a promise of benefits to worthy receivers.*” So what are these benefits?

And as I looked more into this it struck me that the benefits that we get from the sacrament are first the items that we receive through salvation. So what I have here is called the *ordo salutis*—the order of salvation. And you can see here election and calling. But after that we have benefits of regeneration: conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification and perseverance—things that we can experience in this life.

And so I think it’s important to know what the sacrament is not. It is not just a checkbox exercise that we do as Christians. And while there are benefits, it’s not

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something that we do solely to remember Jesus. But it is a thing that seals to us the benefits of what His death provides to us. So I think that’s the first benefit.

But there is an additional benefit that we’re told about in this sacrament. And here in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* in the 29th chapter where it speaks specifically to the Lord’s Supper we’re told that there is “*Spiritual nourishment and growth in Him.*” We can be “*encouraged to further obedience.*” And it’s also “*a bond of our communion with Him*” and with others.

And so I think for myself that this is the big difference. This is what we should be experiencing when we take the Lord’s Supper properly: spiritual nourishment.

John Calvin has said about this that “*Our most excellent Father, concerned for His offspring, nourishes us throughout the course of our life. He has given to His church a spiritual banquet wherein Christ attests Himself to be the life-giving Bread upon which our souls feed unto true and blessed immortality.*”

And so I think that’s one of those things that for me is changing my mindset on what the Lord’s Supper is. That’s probably the first and most important thing. If you’re going to go into it just thinking it’s a thing to do to remember Him, that it’s a check the box exercise, you’re going to be missing out already on some of the benefits that you’re supposed to be receiving when you participate in the sacrament.

This is another quote from John Calvin. He says: “*Christ is the only food of our soul. And therefore our heavenly Father invites us to Christ, that we can be refreshed by partaking of Him, and that we may repeatedly gather strength until we have reached heavenly immortality.*”

The example that I’ve heard is that if you think about physical bread, it nourishes us; it sustains us; it keeps the life of our bodies. And so too Christ is that to our souls. If you think about wine it’s something that nourishes and refreshes us; it strengthens and gladdens us. And so too Christ’s blood sacrifice on our behalf is that to our souls. We should be seeing this as something that actually has an effect on us, not just something we do.

And I think we talked about this last week. I had brought up sometimes feeling the lack of experience—you know, that impact of conversion moment or whatever—when you experience Christ. I think the Lord’s Supper is how we can do that today. We can experience Christ through participation in the sacrament.

And I know that on top of that it can be really wearying to be in our culture as it is today. Surrounded by sin we see even in ourselves that we are totally sinful. And I know that I’m very often repeating the words of Paul in Romans. I say, “Why do I do the thing that I do not want? I do the thing that I hate.” And it’s wearying, and it can be burdening to you. And this sacrament is a way to be relieved of that burden, to be refreshed, to come out of it being nourished and encouraged.

And I think that if you’re not viewing it that way, if you’re not treating it that way, then you’re off on the wrong foot to begin with. And so my hope is that you can see and understand that there are benefits to this. And we should be taking it seriously for those benefits.

But secondly, because of the benefits that are offered to us, we also need to be aware of the opposition that is trying to keep us from receiving those benefits. Again John

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Calvin says: *“Satan is trying to deprive us of this treasure.”* That’s how he refers to the Lord’s Supper: as a treasure that Satan is trying to deprive us of.

I have a couple of Scripture references here that you’re probably all familiar with. The first one in 1 Peter says: *“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him; stand firm in your faith.”*

Ephesians 6: *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”* And in Matthew 13—the parable of the sower—*“Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on the rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. Yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while. And when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, he immediately falls away.*

“As for what was sown among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word. But the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.” There is opposition in our world, and forces at work with Satan, who are trying to deprive us of the benefits that we get from God. This is a means of grace to us, and he is trying to prevent us from receiving this.

And so with that opposition in mind, with the seriousness and the benefits that we have, we are given certain charges in the gospel as to how we should be treating the sacrament. Again in 1 Corinthians 11, this is where Paul is telling us that it is possible to eat the body and drink the cup in an unworthy manner, without discerning the body. So it’s possible for that to be done. We will come to what that means. As a result Paul charges us to examine yourself, to judge yourself. Do it truly; don’t do this lightly.

In the previous chapter in 1 Corinthians Paul again is explaining what the Lord’s Supper is. He first encourages the Corinthians to *“flee from idolatry.”* And then he explains the cup and the bread as our participation in Christ. When we take those we are participating in Christ and in His body.

And then he goes on to say: *“You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.”* The idea here is that you should not be coming to this if you are not taking it seriously, if your heart is not ready for it. If you are coming to Christ lukewarm then you are partaking of this in an unworthy manner. He’s talking about food offered and sacrificed to idols. You can’t both be doing that and coming to the Lord’s table. You can’t have your foot in both camps.

And I think the challenge here is that when we think about ourselves it is so easy to fall into idolatry. It is so easy to put other things before God in this world and this culture and our lives. And so if we’re not preparing ourselves to come to the Lord’s Supper to set those things aside, to repent of those things, to desire after Christ, are we coming to the table where we’re both participating with idols as well as partaking of the Lord’s Supper? And so these are things that we’re being charged about.

And again in Romans, as Paul is talking about another one of the sacraments—in this case he’s talking about circumcision which was replaced by baptism—he says: *“No one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit.”* Are we

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taking the Lord’s Supper just outwardly? Or are we preparing our hearts to take this in a proper manner? These are the charges that we have on taking this seriously.

And this is the last one here. You know, I mentioned earlier that these are a means of grace to us—something to help sustain us in this life. Two more references I want to provide from *The Westminster Confession of Faith* are from the chapter on “*The Perseverance of the Saints*,” and on “*The Assurance of Faith*.” In both of these chapters we are told that if we neglect the means of our preservation—the means of grace—that there is the possibility for us to fall into grievous sins. Or there’s the possibility for the assurance of our faith to be “*shaken, diminished and intermitted*.” If we are neglecting what Christ has given us to preserve our faith, to preserve and sustain us, and we’re not taking that seriously, there is a temptation for us to fall into grievous sins. These are the charges to us to be diligent to make our assurance sure.

And so I think these are the reasons why we need to take this seriously. There are benefits to it. There is opposition working against us to take hold of those benefits. And we have been charged in the Scriptures to take this seriously.

And so with all that being the case, the next question then is: all right. If this is how I’m supposed to be doing this, what help is available to me maybe to do better than how I’m doing today? And so we’re going to dive into *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, where I think they provide some really helpful information for us on how we should be approaching the Lord’s table before we take it, how we should be behaving during the receiving of it, and what we should be doing afterwards as helps here. But I’m just going to pause for a moment and just ask if there are any questions so far, any comments or conversations you’d like to have on what we’ve talked about so far.

Gary Craig: Jordan, you mentioned the fact that we need to examine ourselves.

Jordan: Yes.

Gary: In what capacity? Is it confession of sin, or what is it?

Jordan: We’re going to get into that if you don’t mind holding on for one moment. Anything else? Yes?

Mike Davis: You were talking about food sacrificed to idols. I’ll just back up just a little bit to where you were at here. I don’t think it’s about food. I think it’s about our heart attitude to idols.

Jordan: I think you’re right.

Mike: For a while I thought: Well I don’t eat food sacrificed to idols; I’m okay. That was in years past. But as we talk about that, it’s not about food; it’s about us.

Jordan: You’re right; exactly. Anything else? Yes?

John Gratner: The only thing I have to add is this, and maybe you mentioned it but I didn’t hear it. What is the consequence of not being worthy and taking the Lord’s Supper?

Jordan: Yes. Well Paul tells us that we drink judgment to ourselves. The idea is that if you’re not doing that, instead of receiving the benefits you are receiving the judgment of not being someone who Christ suffered and died and sacrificed for.

Now that being said, there’s a difference between that being a judgment that is like an unforgivable sin type of judgment, and that being like any other sin that I think we still need to repent of. For myself I acknowledge right off the bat that I did not treat the sacrament as well as I should have. And I still don’t; I still can do better. And that’s a

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thing where I think that we constantly need to be repenting of our sins and of the weakness of our faith, and coming to Christ for help. And I think that if we’re doing it in that manner, then that’s where the benefits of the Lord’s Supper are available to us. Yes?

Michael Rush: First of all I just wanted to say thank you for this topic. A brother of mine in the faith and I talk about this sometimes. I remember as a young boy in church that those words rung out heavy. If you eat and drink unworthily, you eat and drink damnation. And my mother was like no, you don’t take this until you confess Christ for yourself. And so that’s the really important thing. And I know that sometimes I’ve wondered why it’s not put out as strongly as it used to be in some of our congregations; it’s hard to understand.

Jordan: Yes. And I think for myself that I can attest to that. Going to other churches this wasn’t talked about with the same seriousness. The idea was, as long as you’re a believer, come take Communion. There wasn’t the sense of having examined yourself prior to taking this. Have you truly judged yourself each and every time? Remember, each and every time we do this, this is how we’re supposed to prepare. It’s not “I’ve done this once in my life and so I’m good for the rest of the times that I take Communion.” This should be an each and every occurrence type of examination and judging of ourselves. So that’s a great comment; thank you for that.

So before we get specifically into the help, I think this is where the back of the page that you’re on right now will hopefully be helpful. And here’s what I would encourage. I have these in a little book that I’d gotten maybe about a year ago. It has *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and the Catechisms with Scripture proofs. I have come to start bringing this with me to just about everything I go to where the word of God might be preached, because I like to go back to this. And if I hear connections, where are the Scriptures in here that I can then further examine? This also has an index in the back--it’s like a concordance in the back—of all of the Scripture references, and which of the Confessional standards they apply to. So if my pastor is preaching on a certain passage in the Bible, I’ll go in here and say, okay, where is that passage referenced within the Westminster Confessional standards?, and learn more about it. This has become an amazing resource for me. And this page is just a snippet of what’s here. So I would highly encourage you to get this; it costs maybe ten bucks. I would highly encourage you to potentially get one yourself.

But if you don’t want to do that, my hope would be that the appendix here would be something that you can leverage ongoing, for your own future preparations for the Lord’s Supper. So keep this in a safe space; pull this out as you prepare. We’ll talk about how we can use this. But use this as part of your devotions as you’re preparing ahead of time. I think it can be helpful in that regard, especially if you’re looking for a good place to start. How do I examine myself? This is going to be a really good resource for that.

The only thing I’ll say is that these are long sentences. So it can be easy to get lost in what this is saying. One of the things that I think has helped me is to look for the semicolons in here and break them up by semicolons. So if we look at this first one: *“How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to prepare themselves before they come to it?”*, it goes on to say: *“They that receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves unto by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants.”*

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I’ll just pause there and I’ll meditate on that. Am I in Christ? Can I say that confidently? What sins and wants do I have? Just meditate on those things. This should be an exercise that humbles us. This should be an exercise that causes us to desire more after Christ because we realize we need Him.

And then we continue: *“The truth and measure of their knowledge, faith and repentance;”* Stop there and meditate on those things. Do you truly understand what you know is in the Scriptures? Why do you believe what you believe? Why do you have faith? What does it mean to repent? Do you understand those things?

And we continue: *“Love of God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong;”* Stop there. This is where we talk about our communion with the saints. Are you holding grudges against anyone that you need to potentially forgive or ask for forgiveness? Is there any one of the saints who you may be feeling that you’ve not been very charitable too? Maybe you’ve been having a quarrel with your wife or a family member—a son or daughter, whoever it may be. Do you need to reconcile a relationship before you come to the Lord’s table.

And if we continue from there, *“of their desire after Christ and of their new obedience;”* Pause there. Am I truly desiring Christ above all the things in my life right now? And if not, beg Him in prayer that He would increase your desire for Him, that you would want Him more than other things in this life. That is something that we could all honestly use daily, not just as we prepare for the Lord’s Supper.

“Of their new obedience.” This is putting off and putting on. This is repentance at its finest. And it goes on to say: *“And renewing the exercise of these graces by serious meditation and fervent prayer.”*

I mentioned to you that I still don’t do this as well as I should. I had asked Pastor Jeff. If you know when the Lord’s Supper is coming up in your church—I imagine many of you know when you’re going to have that sacrament served at your church;--if you know when it’s going to be, how long in advance should you start preparing? That was the question I had for him. He recommended and encouraged me that you should start the week before. Use the week leading up to that sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to start preparing yourself in this way.

And if you think about those semicolon breaks, there are four or five there—one for each day of the week. If you’re doing daily devotions, set aside your daily devotions that week to meditate on these things; spend time thinking about them.

And honestly, even just to mention a couple of specifics here, if you’re looking for additional information, the *Westminster Larger Catechism* can humbly you really quick if you look at the questions and answers related to what is required in the Ten Commandments and what is forbidden in the Ten Commandments. So we talked already a little bit about idolatry and it being a matter of the heart. I just want to read briefly from the *Westminster Larger Catechism* the sins that are forbidden in the First Commandment: *“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”* So this is not what we are supposed to be doing.

“The sins forbidden in the First Commandment are: atheism, and denying or not having a God, idolatry and having or worshiping more gods than one, or any with or instead of the true God; not having and avouching Him as God and our God, and the omission or neglect of anything due to Him; ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions,

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false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of Him.” And I’m going to continue a little bit because you might be saying to yourself, “Okay, I’m pretty good there. I’m not doing any of that.”

Let me continue. It goes on to say: *“Inordinate or immoderate setting of our minds, will or affections upon other things, taking them off from Him in whole or in part; unbelief, distrust, despair, hardness of heart; pride, presumption, tempting of God.”*

Let’s see where it goes on: *“Lukewarmness and deadness in the things of God.”* It would be very hard to look at this list and still say to yourself, “I think I’m okay.”

This to me sounds like the rich young ruler that we read about in the Gospels, where he comes to God and he says, “What must I do to be saved?”

Christ says, “Well, you know the Commandments. What do they say? Honor God; love your neighbor.”

He’s like “I’ve done all these things since my youth.” He was faced with the law. And faced with the law he didn’t humble himself before God. He thought he was still in good standing.

This is not what our examination should be doing. It should not be approving ourselves to ourselves that we are worthy enough to take the Lord’s Supper. It should be reminding us that we need Christ. We need His sacrifice on our behalf. And it should have us to be begging after Him to continue to improve us and sanctify us, and cause us to put off the things in our lives that we should be putting off.

And so for this slide I basically just put bullets on the slide that are the same as what is right there in the wording; I just kind of separated it out by commas and semicolons. But it’s at least a way for me to help digest this a little bit better than when you see all of that in large paragraphs in a row. So maybe that’s something that can help there.

And I mentioned, having done this, that it should cause you to desire Christ, to see Your need for Him. You know, one of the things that I thought of is that when you think about these things—and I realize here that not everyone is a Calvinist or whatever it may be—but when we think about the five points of Calvinism, the things that he says are the doctrines of our faith, he talks about total depravity. You should come away from this examination realizing that we are totally depraved. You should realize from an unconditional election perspective that there is nothing you can do or have done to merit your salvation. This is the free gift from God. You know, it applies to you, not everyone. This isn’t something that everyone can do; this is a grace to us as God’s children. It’s irresistible, and God promises us that we will persevere. We should be able to use this as a means of persevering in this life.

But again you can come away from this feeling very humbled; you should. And there have been occasions even in my own life, having come away from this examination, where I said to myself, “Holy cow! Am I even saved?” When I think about my sins and wants, when I think that maybe I don’t desire Christ as much as I should. Should I be taking this? Am I taking this in an unworthy manner if I take this?

And I want you to know that what has been an encouragement to me is that this is meant for relief of the weak and doubting. It can help those people; it’s meant as something to sustain the weary. We talk about this. We’re on a pilgrimage in this life, and we’re weary pilgrims. This is meant as a nourishment to you on that pilgrimage.

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There’s something I want to read to you that I thought was particularly helpful. It was from some German theologian who I’ve never heard of before, so I won’t say his name. But he asks the question: Who may be admitted to the Communion table?

And his answer to this was: *“Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned, and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life. Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant however eat and drink judgment on themselves.”*

So I think that if you’re feeling humbled, if you’re starting to doubt, based on the life that you’re living, am I saved? Am I in Christ? But you have the desire for Christ; you are truly desiring after Him, and you are willing to turn from your sins, you should not keep yourself from the Lord’s table. It is meant again as a benefit to you, to sustain and nourish you.

However, if you are unrepentant of your sins, if you are living in open sin, maybe you should caution yourself from approaching the Lord’s table, because again that is where you could be drinking judgment to yourself.

And then the last thing I have on this slide is some references that again encourage us on how this is meant to be helping us if we are weary. I think many of you know the Isaiah 40 passage, where he talks about strengthening the weary and giving them wings like eagles. You can look those up on your own.

In the Matthew 11:28 passage He goes on to say: *“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”* And in Revelation 22:17 we have a similar invitation to come: *“Those who are thirsty, come and drink; be refreshed.”* And so those are more verses that you can look up on your own as well.

So I think these are some helps for how we can prepare ahead of time. And again I’m speaking of myself. I know I don’t prepare as well as I should. And I’d like to continue in my own life preparing better and treating this more seriously. And so my hope is that this is an encouragement to you as well. And again the Bible passages that are here at the bottom in the index tie back to the points that are in that paragraph for what you should do ahead of time. So I encourage you to look those up on your own time as well.

So during the service itself, this is one of those things where I think the main idea that they’re getting to within the *Westminster Larger Catechism* question is that you’re diligently participating. You’re not just kind of waiting for it to be over. You’re not thinking about what you’re going to do after this. But these elements are signs of something. They signify and seal something. You should be discerning that as you’re doing it. What does that mean to me? What do these mean to us?

And so we should be paying attention. We should be affectionately meditating upon Christ during that time, again not allowing our thoughts to wander.

And here again *“with holy reverence and attention”*; this is kind of the last part of the paragraph. We *(continue to judge ourselves, be sorrowful for our sin, hungering and thirsting after Christ”* during this time, renewing your covenant with Him and with the saints.

I’ll mention for myself that I bring this book with me. I’ve started to get into the habit. While I’m taking Communion at our church I just have this question up in front of me. I’m reading it as I’m waiting for the plate to come to me. I’m reading it as I’m waiting for

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the cup to be passed. I’m just reminding myself of what this is, that I should be taking this seriously. And it’s helping me to focus my attention on what we’re doing, and not being distracted the best I can by my kids, potential plans that I have, whatever it may be. So I won’t say much more on this one.

But the last one that I wanted to spend some time on is what we should be doing afterwards. And I’ll admit that this is something that I don’t think I’ve even considered until I read it here. And the question is that we should be doing something afterwards. And so I’m going to read this one from the Catechism as well.

“The duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is to seriously consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what success.”

If we just pause there, I can tell you that for most of my life I never thought much of the Lord’s Supper after I took it. Again it was a thing I did: check the box and move on. This is telling us that we should be seriously considering how we behave before, during and after, and with what success. Consider it a performance review for those of you who had those at your jobs, or still do. How have you done?

If you find quickening and comfort, if you find that you have been comforted, having now taken this sacrament, *“bless God for it and beg for the continuance of it. Watch against relapses, fulfill your vows,”* and encourage yourself to a frequent attendance on that ordinance.

So if you receive the comfort of the benefits that are extended to us that we’ve talked about, thank God for it. Thank Him that He has sanctified you. He has given you that means of grace; it has been an encouragement to you and a relief and a nourishment that has sustained you.

But if you find no present benefit, review your preparation more exactly. And if you can approve yourself in how you prepared to God in your own conscience, then wait for the benefits to come in due time. But if you see that you have failed in either your preparation or how you might have carried yourself during the service, humble yourself and attend upon it afterwards with more care and diligence.

And I think that maybe this is a great place for us to start as it comes out of this conversation today. It would be really good for us to take some time individually in your devotions and ask yourself. How have I carried myself? How have I used the Lord’s Supper in the past?—the last time I did it, up until this time that I’ve done it? And if you can approve yourself to God and your conscience that you’ve been doing a good job, then keep doing a good job. And hopefully you’re receiving the benefits that Christ is extending to us. But again, if you feel that you have failed, humble yourself and express more care and diligence going forward.

I’ll say this for myself. I know that at our church we celebrate Communion in the evenings, during our evening service. So we set aside a separate service to do that from the mornings. And so I’ve tried to start getting into the habit of my Monday morning devotions to spend some time just thanking God for the Communion service, considering how I prepared. If you do it during the day at your churches you could take the rest of that Lord’s Day potentially to take that time to think about this.

So anyway that’s what I had prepared for today. I realize that we still have a few more minutes. I’m going to go back to what I said at the very beginning with what it is you’re going to do with what you’ve heard today. I’ll let you answer that for yourselves. But my

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hope would be that you’ve found something out of this with which you can challenge yourself. You can improve your participation in the Lord’s Supper. And my hope for all of us is that we can experience the benefits that Christ is extending to us through this sacrament as an encouragement to us in our lives, in our repentance, and in our further sanctification. So any additional questions or comments?

Roger Myers: As a sidebar, can I get you to talk about closed and open Communion?

Jordan: Well, I said at the beginning that I’m not a theologian. So I’m not going to get into all of that. But I think that as a sidebar, you’re right.

Roger: There are people who are paved through our church.

Jordan: Sure.

Roger: You wouldn’t be able to pave me unless you were reviewed by the elders.

Jordan: So again, yes to that point. The session of our church—our elders—they guard the table. This is what they say. Because there are charges in Scripture which say that you can drink judgment to yourselves, they want to guard the table from people who may be doing that. And so what they ask at our church is that if you have not taken Communion with us before, you meet with the session. You give a profession of your faith. You kind of explain to them that you know what Communion is and why you’re doing it and why you’re taking it. And then at that point they will be glad to serve you the bread and the cup. But I’m not going to get into right or wrong, or whatever it may be. But that is how we do it.

Roger: I raise this because I remember traveling with my brother. We went to an RP church up in Pure Island or somewhere. There was Communion and we kind of got there late. And then the pastor politely skipped us.

Jordan: Yes.

Roger: Because we weren’t reviewed.

Jordan: And to that point I’ll speak for myself. My in-laws live in New York, and we’ll go to visit some of them only in the summertime. And if we just happen to be there on a weekend where they are celebrating Communion and we didn’t know about it, I will typically refrain from taking it, just because I found out at that moment oh, you’re celebrating Communion? I don’t believe I’ve prepared myself adequately to take this. That would be an instance where I’ll refrain from taking it.

I will say that here in our home church, when we know it’s coming, even if I felt like I didn’t do a good job preparing like I mentioned, trying to start the week before as a good practice. Even if I felt like I didn’t do it, I go back to this: Do I desire Christ? Do I truly desire Him? Have I repented of my sins? Do I want to flee from my iniquity? And if so, I realize that this is meant for weary pilgrims like me. And so I will, even if I felt that I didn’t prepare as well as I should have, if I still feel that way about my desire for Christ and I want to put away my sin, I will still partake. Go ahead.

Roger: The last thing I want to say is that it’s true that I didn’t like it when we couldn’t take it. But I wasn’t prepared like you said. But it seems like it raises the bar to try to keep people who really shouldn’t be partaking from doing so. I think that some churches—and they have to speak for themselves—are too open. It’s like anybody can come, and these words in 1 Corinthians really don’t matter.

Jordan: Yeah.

Roger: Everything is covered by the blood, and all that sort of stuff.

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Jordan: Yes. Yes?

Gary: Can you comment on the frequency?

Jordan: You know, I’ll tell you what we do at our church. We do it monthly. You know, I don’t know that the Bible necessarily outlines any particular frequency; it says, “*as often as you do it.*” We didn’t used to do it monthly; we did it less frequently than that. It might have been bimonthly or maybe quarterly. I think though that when you realize the benefits that are there for you and that refreshing, I think it makes sense to do it maybe more frequently than less frequently.

But at the same time, so that you don’t abuse it or take advantage of it and not prepare yourself, I would say personally that if we were doing it weekly, there’s the potential where it starts to lose its importance, and it starts to lose some of the reverence that you should associate with it. But that’s just personal. Yes?

Mike: The refreshing. I think it’s probably good to dig in on that just for a moment. What would you say? How does that refreshing happen as you are examining yourself and looking at this and taking Communion?

Jordan: Yeah. Well, I think—

Mike: Exactly what is the refreshing?

Jordan: Yeah. I think it’s just the encouragement that I can overcome my sin. Christ has died for me. Maybe it’s that burden that you feel has been lifted because you have gone to Christ, and you realize that He has taken it off of you. In my mind I think that’s what it is. It’s feeling encouraged and feeling comforted by truly knowing what this is, by actually having gone to Christ, repenting of your sin, and putting off and putting on.

You know, we hear in the Psalms that David talks about that when he did not confess his sins his bones ached, right? There’s almost that physical thing when you’re sinning and you know you’re sinning, and you haven’t come to God. That almost weighs on you. And I think that refreshing removes that burden from you.

Mike: As we’re drinking the wine we’re to remember the blood of Christ that was shed for us. What I think about with the refreshing is that I can’t do it myself. I need the blood of Christ, shed for me. And it’s a great reminder that I need that blood of Christ, shed for me.

Jordan: Yeah.

Mike: Because I’m not God.

Jordan: Yes, definitely. Yes?

Michael: What I get about the refreshing is that it reminded me that at my former church one of the pastors used to go around and give Communion to the sick and the shut-ins. And that was a big deal; the senior saints looked forward to that. And if somebody happened to be forgotten, they would call. “Would somebody come and give me Communion?” We had our little kits and we would go and we would meet people. And we’d sit and talk to them, and it would just go into my ear. But there was a joyfulness in them receiving Communion.

Jordan: Yes.

Gary: Just in regard to refreshing, it reminds me of Romans 8:1: “*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

Jordan: Yeah. I’m trying to see in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, where they have the chapter on the Lord’s Supper. I’m curious to see it because they typically

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provide Scripture references for each of the things that they say. So let me see what they say for the refreshing part. It seems as though they are mostly referring to 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 that I had earlier on the slide. But anyway, anything else?

Okay. Well, I appreciate you bearing with me. I don’t do this often. If I’m being honest, I haven’t done this ever. *(Laughter) (Applause)* I appreciate your grace.

Why don’t I close us in prayer? Heavenly Father, we thank You for Christ and what He has done for us. We thank You that in addition You have given to us a sign and a seal that we can regularly participate in, with the promises and the benefits that You extend to us through Christ—His death, suffering and sacrifice on our behalf. We pray that You would help us, Lord, to be discerning that sacrament more diligently. We pray that You would help us to prepare ourselves more diligently as we participate in it, that ultimately, Lord, what it would be doing is driving us to Christ, That it would be helping us to see our need for Him, our desire after Him, and renewing our covenant with You, Lord, that we would be repenting from our sins. And so we pray that You would help us in this manner. We pray now, Lord, that You would be with us as we go. As we approach Your Lord’s Day on Sunday we pray that You would help to prepare us for that day, that we would treat it as it was intended: as a day of rest to worship You. And I pray this in Your Son’s name. Amen. *(Applause)*