

The Lord's Supper is one of two ordinances (the other being Baptism) instituted by Jesus Christ, to be exercised by the church until He returns (Matthew 26:26-29, Matthew 28:19). Both serve as outward signs of an inward reality, demonstrating to the church and a watching world our new life and hope in the finished work of the Savior. Our participation in either of these ordinances does not bring salvation; this comes only by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 2:16).

The Lord's Supper plays a prominent role in the corporate life of our church. We make it our aim to celebrate it, on average, more than once per month in our weekly worship services. We are aware of the danger of turning the Lord's Supper into meaningless routine, and are committed to guarding and preserving it as means of grace in our lives.

The following information is offered as an aid to participating in The Lord's Supper at Sovereign Grace Church. Please contact a pastor if you have further questions.

1. What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

There are many things symbolized in the practice of this ordinance. Christ death, our participation in his death, spiritual nourishment, and the unity of the believers. We also see Christ affirming his love for us and an assurance of the blessings of salvation.

Another meaning imbedded in this practice is our corporate and personal affirmation of faith in Christ. When we eat and drink we are saying "Yes, I believe."

2. Why should we participate in the Lord's Supper?

Obedience is an obvious motivation but going further, each time we approach the table we anticipate God meeting us in a manner distinct from other moments in our life as individuals and as a church. This is a spiritual meal, taken together for the edification of our souls.

3. Who should participate in the Lord's Supper?

All those who affirm faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and the salvation of their souls are welcome at the table. Guests of our church who can do the same are welcome as well.

The regular order of the ordinances is baptism first, the Lord's Supper second. However, we welcome believers who have not yet been baptized but will be so soon to participate in the Lord's Supper with us. Anyone not ready or willing to be baptized should refrain from participating in Lord's Supper.

4. When should a believer not participate in the Lord's Supper?

There are few reasons for an individual to refrain from participating, limited usually to a person currently subject to church discipline. The Lord's Supper is an excellent time to examine yourself and where confession and repentance is necessary, to do so with ex-

pedience. As many have said, "just be sure confession hits your lips before the bread and the wine."

The Apostle Paul's writings in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 should be noted here as well. He warns the early church that "who ever eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself." We understand this to mean that for one to properly participate in the ordinance, the person's relationship to the church should be characterized by the same truths we are professing in the meal, namely unity and self-sacrifice. Each person should examine themselves prior to participating in the Lord's Supper and where necessary seek forgiveness, reconciliation, and change as quickly as possible.

5. What instructions would you provide for parents and children?

Special consideration should be made to ensure all young believers are able to enjoy this ordinance. As parents and pastors, we want to gently plead with them to be reconciled with God. We are eager to see them believe and repent and when they do, to welcome them to the table.

However, a child is by nature immature and impressionable. We'd encourage you to involve others in assessing your child's spiritual condition. This might even be a good opportunity to encourage conversation between the young person and a pastor.

Just as with adults, baptism should precede or come soon after a young person's initial participation in the Lord's Supper. If the child is not ready to be baptized, he or she is not ready to participate in the Lord's Supper and parents should instruct their children to refrain from partaking of the elements. Use these moments of waiting as opportunities to proclaim the gospel to them. Remember, the Lord's Supper is a powerful testimony of God's grace and love for our children. Nothing is lost on them as they observe us eat and drink.