

# The Bread of Life

God Nourishes His Pilgrim People through the  
Sacramental Practice of the Lord's Supper

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# INTRODUCTION

# Three Traditions

EVANGELICAL – we are nourished by the Word

**SACRAMENTAL** – we are nourished by the sacraments (Lord's Supper, baptism)

PENTECOSTAL – we are nourished/strengthened by the Spirit

*Why does the Church need all three?*

***Word, sacrament, and Spirit are necessary within the life of the church as “three distinct angles by which we might consider and live in the grace of the ascended Christ.” (Smith)***

# The Importance of Sacramental Practice

“The church is a church of human beings, psychosomatic creatures who learn through seeing, tasting, touching, hearing, and smelling. God is a gracious God who meets humans where we are, using the stuff of creation - stuff like bread and water - for spiritual purposes.” (Jones)



# What is a Sacrament?

A sacrament is a “visible sign of spiritual grace.” (Jones)

Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, instituted immediately (directly) by God, to represent Christ, and his benefits. There is, in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified. (WCF, 27:1-2)

*The “sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified” is an important relationship. Is it a mental/cognitive apprehension, a spiritual relationship, or a mystery to embrace? We will explore this more when we discuss Nevin.*

*On the Lord’s Supper, Calvin states, “I rather experience than understand it.” (Institutes 4.17.32 )*

*Baptism is a one-time sacrament of initiation; the Lord’s Supper is a continual means by which we are fed by God.*

# Different References and Names

We can understand the Lord's Supper with past, present, and future references:

As a remembrance of his death (1 Cor. 11:26)

As our present nourishment (John 6:53-58)

As an anticipation of our heavenly banquet (Rev. 19:9)

We can refer to the sacrament with different names:

(1) Eucharist – “to give thanks” (Mark 14:23; Matt. 26:27; Luke 22:17; 1 Cor. 11:24)

(2) Communion – “koinonia” (1 Cor. 10:16)

(3) The Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20)

(4) Table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21)

(5) Breaking of the Bread (Luke 24:35; Acts 2:42)

# Regarding Christ's Presence in the Sacrament

We do not believe it is a mere *memorial* (Zwinglian view).

We do not believe in *transubstantiation*, that the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ (Catholic view).

We do not believe in *consubstantiation*, that the bread and wine coexist with the body and blood of Christ (Lutheran view).

We believe that Christ is *spiritually present* in the elements (Reformed/Calvinistic view). What is a major contribution to this belief?

# Lack of Robust Sacramental Practice Today

(1) Individualism and personal faith - These may have lessened the importance of communal practices such as the sacraments. Some Christians believe they do not need to participate in corporate, embodied actions, they can nurture their own private faith in non-participatory ways.

(2) The revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - They may have given the impression that the Spirit is the primary mode of saving and nourishing people. The new means of stirring up one's faith possibly overshadowed the regular means of grace such as the Lord's Supper.



# Lack of a Robust Sacramental Practice Today

(3) Skepticism towards the theology and practice of the Roman Catholic Church - Its emphasis on the sacraments may have caused evangelicals to question the frequency and practice of the Lord's Supper.

(4) A still-pervasive Platonic dualism – “A dualistic concept of what it means to be human has creeping roots buried deep within us...We speak all the time as though the really important part of who we are is an immaterial, spiritual, or even purely cognitive thing.”

Body, physical = bad | Spirit, immaterial = good.

***Embodied, sacramental practice, by affirming the importance of our physical and communal nature as human beings, helps to correct this false dualism.***

# Overall Goal and Thesis

Why should we seek to recover a more robust sacramental practice?

*“The fullness of divine teaching is by Word and sacrament.” (Frame)*

*A more robust sacramental practice of the Lord’s Supper will help Covenant Church to better live into the nourishment God provides for his pilgrim people.*