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## WHY WEEKLY COMMUNION?

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by David A. Sherwood, M.Div.

While the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper is not common in Protestant churches, we believe it to be the biblical and preferred practice for the following reasons:

**THE PRACTICE OF THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH.** Although we don't have any clear-cut command, the New Testament evidence does seem to point in the direction of weekly communion, especially if one understands "the breaking of bread" to be a reference to the Lord's Supper. (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-20; cf. 14:26)

**EVIDENCE FROM CHURCH HISTORY.** There are very clear and early (second century) allusions to the practice in the *Didache* and Justin Martyr's *The First Apology*. While the history of the Church does not have the authority of God's Word, it at least ought to interest us that the Christian community observed this practice, apparently without much discussion, so shortly after the time of the Apostles.

**CONSISTENCY WITH OUR USE OF OTHER ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP.** Why should the Lord's Supper be the only regular element of worship which does not find a place in each Lord's Day worship service? To be consistent, any argument against weekly communion would be an equally valid argument against weekly hymn singing, weekly preaching, etc.

**BRINGING US BACK TO BASICS.** Regardless of the sermon text or topic, the congregation is always brought back to the fundamentals: the death and resurrection of Christ.

**APPEAL TO THE WHOLE MAN.** Since the Lord's Supper is the only element of worship that appeals to all five senses, its weekly observance helps to prevent an "intellectualizing" of the worship service. If we don't celebrate the Sacrament frequently, we shouldn't be surprised when our folks leave Reformed worship for something more "stimulating."

**OPPORTUNITY FOR COVENANT RENEWAL.** The Lord's Supper is the ideal means of meditating on God's Word and renewing our faith and repentance so that we may serve the Lord in the upcoming week.

**PROVIDING ASSURANCE, PERSONALIZING THE GOSPEL.** Every week we receive tangible and visible assurance that Christ died for me.

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD. This Sacrament stresses the corporate dimension of the Church, thereby promoting unity and the restoration of broken relationships. Don't we need this every week?

CHURCH DISCIPLINE. One of the stages of discipline in many Reformed churches is suspension from the Lord's Table. One of the purposes of this is to make the unrepentant sinner aware of his sin that he might be restored. But how effective can this be if the Lord's Supper is not celebrated frequently? Even once a month would not seem to constitute effective suspension.

VISIBLE MARK OF A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST. Since there is always the need to distinguish believer from unbeliever, and since one of the primary purposes of the Sacraments is to make this difference visible, we should create this visible difference often.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL TO UNBELIEVERS. By setting forth so plainly the work of Christ on the cross, and especially by fencing the table, any unbelievers present are called to faith and repentance. Weekly communion thus provides a natural and regular opportunity to present the claims of Christ to visitors. Evangelistic proclamation. [Here we *proclaim* the Lord's death—its essential and central significance for us and for all for whom that blood was shed—until he comes. 1 Cor. 11:26]

SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT. Since the Lord's Supper is a means of grace, through faith it provides us with what we need to grow in grace. Thus, the frequent partaking of the bread and the wine for our spiritual nourishment is as necessary as the frequent partaking of food for our physical nourishment.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS. One of the problems with an infrequent celebration of the Lord's Supper is that it tends to produce unrealistically high expectations as to what should "happen." People expect something magical and exciting to happen at quarterly communion, but are often disappointed; they go away wondering what they're missing and why they're missing it. By celebrating the Lord's Supper each week our expectations become realistically high; we look forward to and enjoy it much as we do prayer, preaching, singing, etc.

*"Taste and see that the LORD is good!"*

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## ADDITIONAL REASONS TO CONSIDER

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THE EXPECTATION CREATED BY THE RISEN CHRIST. Jesus, in His post-resurrection appearances, taught the disciples to expect to meet him in the context of fellowship meals, Lk. 24:30, 31, 35; Mk. 16:14; Jn. 21:12 f. Here is established a pattern of anticipation, that Christ would be with them, be revealed to them, in the breaking of bread. This explains the practice of the early church. Acts 2:42, 46 ("day by day . . . breaking bread"); 20:7, 11 ("on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread. . . ."); 1 Cor. 11:18 ("when you come together as a church. . . . you eat the Lord's Supper").

ONLY TWO INSTITUTIONS BEAR JESUS' TITLE OF EXALTATION. The Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper (1Cor. 11:20; Rev. 1:10). Is there not a supreme fitness in seeing the recurrence of that Day and that Supper associated together in the life of the people that belong to the Lord, resting in Him and nourished in Him, and thereby fit for service to Him in the week ahead?