

# Why the Lord's Supper?

*3-Year Bible Reading Plan*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 1:18  
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Tonight, I want to encourage you very briefly to turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Corinthians 1. Now as you're turning to 1 Corinthians 1, I'm sure that many of you are well aware that as we gather tonight, we are doing so for a very specific reason. Yes, we have sung the truths of God's word through hymns and spiritual songs, yes, we've had the privilege of giving of our tithes and our offerings even as the early church did in its infancy, and now as we gather, we're leading as a group, we're leading ourselves toward a culmination of the service. It's a time that we often refer to as the Lord's Supper. Here is why this is so important and significant for our lives tonight. I'm sure many of you have a variety of experiences when it comes to church. I've been in large churches, I've been in small churches, I've been in what we might call uber Pentecostal churches, and I've been in sit-on-your-hands kind of churches. I've been in all types of worship experiences both on this continent and others. I've been in churches where I don't speak the language that's being spoken, yet have enjoyed just the Spirit moving in spite thereof around me. And the reason that is important is because what we're gonna participate in tonight, it goes above the language that is spoken, the size of the congregation or the geographical location. In fact, as you look even in your Bible, there's a lot of different churches in the Bible, in fact, the letter to the Galatians says to the churches in Galatia, even in that area there was a multiplicity of local bodies of believers. Yet whether it was a large congregation such as Ephesus or a small one such as Smyrna, whether it was one 2,000 years ago or even this very night, the Lord commissioned his people, his commissioned his body no matter their size, what their language or what their location to have two things in common. Now we call them ordinances. That's what the Bible word is for them and it is the ordinance of baptism and it is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

Now allow me to share real briefly their differences and then their one commonality. When we talk about baptism and we have the privilege here of witnessing that almost on a weekly basis in one of our worship hours, someone who is a believer in Jesus Christ allows themselves to be submerged under the water as a picture of the death and the burial of Jesus Christ of which they have called out to the Lord to apply to their lives and their eternity. Baptism is a one-time event. That's why here at least on our campus particularly with our young people but even with our adults, we want to spend a significant amount of time talking you through the why, the what, the when, and the where because there's only one time that this needs to happen in somebody's life, there's

only one time where they stand before friends, strangers and even their family and declare that, "I am a believer in Jesus Christ." The difference is the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is to be taken throughout one's Christian life. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 11, the Apostle Paul said that we are to do this until the Lord returns. As you gather, there is no prescription or really description in the Bible for how often or how frequently that the Lord's Supper is to be taken and there's a lot of different traditions and perspectives and such, but the main difference is the Lord's Supper is taken by believers as a time to remember the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on a somewhat regular repetitive basis.

So baptism takes place once, the Lord's Supper numerous times but here's the one common thread, that both of them are to be participated in after one is a believer in Jesus Christ. Not before. We're not baptized to be saved. We don't take the bread and the juice to be saved. We are baptized as a display to others that we're already saved, and we take the Lord's Supper to remember what the Lord did to save us in some days past. So even though baptism is a one-time event and the Lord's Supper is a numerous event, both of them are for those who are already believers in Jesus Christ.

This is important because in 1 Corinthians 11 it gives us warning, it says that some have become ill and they've even fallen asleep, which is the Bible word for death, because they've taken the Lord's Supper unworthily. In other words, this is an expression of faith that should be taken seriously. We don't just come by happenstance, in fact, a lot of people ask me, "Why don't we do the Lord's Supper on Sunday morning?" Well, other than the fact that logistically it is difficult but we can overcome that, it's because I don't want people showing up on Sunday morning after fighting with their family in the car on the way going, "Oh, that's right, Lord's Supper today, got this." The reason we announced it this morning and we've been talking in advance is because we want to prepare our hearts for tonight so that we take it properly.

Tonight before we celebrate the Lord's Supper, though, I want to take you back to 1 Corinthians 1, a part of our Bible reading this week as a family of faith, a single verse in verse 18. It's just one of those verses that even though I promised I'm not gonna take it out of context, it just kind of leaps off the page. It says, "For the preaching of the cross," that's what we're about to celebrate, "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." What that says in verse 18 is this, that when it comes to the message of the cross, that Jesus Christ was willing to shed his blood for the sins of humanity, and more specifically yours in particular, there are two responses that we can have: we can either say it is foolishness or it is the power of God.

Now think about that and my family will testify to you there are times that we receive information or maybe we read a news story or hear a story that's taken place, and I will commonly say, "That's just foolishness. It doesn't add up. It's not proper. It should've never taken place." You see, when we speak of the person of Jesus Christ, his sinless life, his sacrificial death and his miraculous resurrection, there's only two options: you can either say it is foolish and not worth entertaining, or it is the power of God.

Now when we say the power of God, we're saying that it is able, it is capable of taking that which we cannot eliminate ourselves, our sin, our poor decision, our bad judgment, and that he alone is able to forgive, and he alone is able to save. You see, when you say that the cross of Jesus is foolishness, you're saying you've got this, you can handle it on your own, and you will just vouch for yourself. When you say it's the power of God, you're saying there's no amount of education, there's no amount of wealth, there is no amount of networking that I can do to overcome this problem in my life.

Those are the two options: Jesus and what he did on our behalf on the cross, it's either foolishness or it's the power of God. Those are the two responses, but notice the two results: those who declare it's foolishness will perish, those who declare that it is the power of God shall be saved. Now perish is one of those Bible words that Romans 6:23 makes clear, the wages of sin is death, to perish is to die, and more specifically John 3:16, "For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Now tonight because of the seriousness of what we're about to do, allow me to get real serious about that word. It's not popular. It's not politically correct even sometimes within the church, but can I take that word and really make it simply clear tonight? Those who declare Jesus and what he did on our behalf, if they claim it's foolish, the result is an eternity in a place the Bible calls hell. That's what perish is. I know that's a word we don't like to talk about. I know it's a word that makes us uncomfortable and I'm kind of glad it does. Hell shouldn't make us comfortable. Hell shouldn't make us feel like we're a part of the culture, so to speak. It should kind of rub us the wrong way because hopefully it's a destination and a place you have no desire to be. In fact, in Matthew 25:41 when condemning those on his left hand Jesus said, "Go into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

So one of the results is perishing when we declare it's foolishness but what's the other one? It says that those of us who think it's the power of God, we shall be saved. What that means is we find ourselves in a perilous situation that we cannot get out of our own and somebody else, Jesus in this context, comes in and removes us from that scenario by his power, his ability, because we cannot do it ourselves.

It's a simple analogy but I think we can all understand. Imagine you found yourself whether it be in a horrible car wreck or in a tragic fire or some type of scenario of life endangerment, and the authorities were called or maybe somebody caught wind and they came and they "rescued" you from that life endangering event, the news reporters came, they wanted you to recount the heroism, what would you say? You'd say the same thing we always hear, "They saved me." To be pulled out of a perilous situation into a place of safety. You see, when we declare that the life, the ministry, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the power of God, what we're saying is, "I was in a place I couldn't get out of. I was in a place of death. I was in a place of perishing but Jesus Christ came and pulled me out when I could not do it myself." You see, there's only two responses and there's only two results, either A, it's foolish, B, it's the power of God. We perish or we're saved.

Before we have the privilege of celebrating the Lord's Supper, allow me to express reason by one of the great minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a former agnostic/atheist turned Christian apologist, a man by the name of C. S. Lewis, probably known best for his children's literature with the thread of biblical truth woven throughout. When asked about the person of Jesus Christ, he said, you know, it's really simple, we've got three choices: he was either a liar, a lunatic or he's the Lord. Either A, he didn't know what he was talking about and we can just ignore it. B, he was crazy and should be avoided at all cost. Or C, he is Lord. And if he is Lord, how dare we call him foolish. If he is Lord, how dare we ignore or reject him. If he is Lord, we ought to confess our sins, bow down, worship him and ask him to save us.

You see, in just a few moments, we're gonna celebrate with the elements that which he was willing to do on our behalf. He was willing to sacrifice his body. He was willing to shed his blood so that we could be saved. What we're about to do are not for those who think Jesus was a liar or a lunatic, but for those who understand that he is their Lord.

You know, I think it's fitting tonight as we prepare to celebrate his death and eventual resurrection, that maybe you're one of those tonight who's never given serious consideration to this. Maybe you're here for a myriad of different reasons or motivations and so in just a moment we're actually gonna have a time of response, typically we call this an invitation, in just a moment I'm gonna pray with us and over us and then we're gonna stand and we're gonna sing a hymn of faith, and this is an opportunity, maybe tonight you walked onto our campus and you were not in a position to take the Lord's Supper because you weren't saved, but in just a few moments you can be in a position, you can call out to the name of the Lord and you can be saved, and wouldn't it be neat that your first Lord's Supper took place just a few moments after your salvation experience? In a moment after we pray and as we stand, we'll have folks here, if you need to talk with somebody, pray with somebody, we'd love the privilege of discussing this with you before we celebrate his death and his sacrifice.