

Church,

I have been considering and thinking about Communion. We observe communion on the first Sunday of each month at 9am. We encourage all those who know the Lord as savior to remember Him around the table. Much can be said about the ordinance of communion. This is not meant to be a comprehensive teaching, but rather, an essay to highlight why we observe, how we observe, and to encourage us to participate fully. The final section, part 5, gives some practical guidance for preparing and participating in the remembrance meeting. I pray this will be a blessing to you.

Around The Table

It's a peculiar thing at first glance, from the outside.

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Matthew 26:26-28 ESV.

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." John 6:48-58 ESV.

Eat my flesh and drink my blood? What are you a talking about Jesus? Those are perfectly normal reactions to such statements. I would say that when many of us read those statements for the first time we thought: wow Jesus, that's a bold statement! Of course, as Christians we know the Lord was speaking of an important spiritual truth, while using the physical component to highlight the redemptive work He would do at Calvary.

We gather as Christians for the Lord's Supper. But why? It sometimes can become very easy for us to become complacent in the traditions of the church. We sing our songs. We hear the message. We take communion. We say hello. We enjoy some fellowship. We go to church. Most people who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, if they are

honest, will admit— there are moments, seasons, or maybe even years that they have fallen into a kind of go-through-the-motions and take-it-for-granted complacency.

Every year Christians put special attention on the birth of Christ. We preach an advent sermon series. We have a Christmas Eve service. It's great to remember His incarnation. But Jesus never asked his disciples to remember His birth. He did tell us to remember his death. The Lord Himself gave us two symbols by which we remember His death. These are baptism and communion. The Lord's Supper is an object lesson that represents a great spiritual truth for us. It's a simple act. It's a reminder. It's a symbol. It's a declaration of the truth.

Why must we do this? We observe the Lord's Supper because Jesus commanded us to remember. The instruction of Jesus is a very good reason to partake. Let us do that. As we observe that command, there is another practical reason for us personally and individually — we forget.

In the next installment: we need to remember

Part 2

Some years ago, I used to commute daily on Rt 15 from Wallingford to Stratford. Every day, twice a day, I went through the West Rock Tunnel. Sometimes I would get to Milford and think, 'I don't remember going through the tunnel'. Scary, am I right? It's very easy to put yourself on "auto pilot" and just go through the motions, never really thinking about what you are doing or how you got somewhere. How could I forget driving through the tunnel? Well, it's easy. It all became part of the routine.

For many years I have ministered in the Dominican Republic, leading groups for a week of Christian service and sacrifice to others in the bateyes and barrios of La Romana amongst poor and hungry people. Would you know as impactful, memorable, and meaningful as these times are, I am prone to forget. And I do forget. The fall comes. The winter comes. I do all the things that life brings like work and other activities, and I forget the power of those trips on others and on me. I need to be reminded. I need to hear from those in the DR and those who served with me.

*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;*

Communion in a very practical sense has the same dynamic. We forget! We must be reminded. The Lord knew we would forget. "Do this in remembrance of me" means more than simply partaking of the elements. It means remembering what the Lord has done.

*Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes,
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever,
With His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

The most important foundation of the gospel – that is how we are saved – is the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. By His death we are freed from slavery to sin by our penalty being placed on Him. By His burial we know He really died a physical death. By His resurrection, Jesus proved He had power over death. We can have

confidence that if we truly trust and obey Christ that He will one day raise us from the dead also.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. I Corinthians 15:17-19

We must remember what the Lord has done and declare it boldly and often. We can easily forget the centrality of the gospel – that Christ died, was buried, rose again, and took the penalty for our sin. This is the purpose for us (and for each other) in observing communion and remembering. At Liberty we observe the Lord’s Supper and remember what the Lord has done, the first Sunday of every month.

It is unfortunate that many Christians do not regularly partake of the Lord’s Supper. If you were to look across the evangelical church landscape, you would likely find various frequencies of observing communion, such as quarterly, periodically, or once a year, or even less frequent. Often the Lord’s Supper when observed, is done as some kind of “add-on” to a regular worship service of the church. My purpose of highlighting this point is not to nit-pick how others observe, but rather to highlight why and how *we* observe communion at Liberty. How we view the Lord’s Supper plays a big part in determining how and when we observe. That is certainly true for Liberty.

In the next installment: the history of our communion meeting

Part 3

Since our church first began meeting in 1996, there has been a regular communion service completely separate from the preaching service. I know that many of you enjoy our observation of the Lord's Supper, and for good reason. It certainly is one of the distinctive features of our church. I have been thinking more about our communion meeting over the past month. Just as it's easy to fall into a go-through-the-motions routine, to drive through the West Rock tunnel and forget you went through it (like I have done), of course this can happen to our "traditions" at church, for lack of a better term.

So then, why and for what purpose do we have a separate communion meeting every month? My reflections up to this point have been to get to this question! Our communion meeting is more specifically, a *remembrance* meeting with some unique features.

*This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

The model of this communion meeting comes from a Brethren tradition & pattern. Those were Christians in the England, Scotland and Ireland who in the 1800's desired to gather in New Testament patterned simplicity, not with elaborate ritual, and be an assembly (church) of Christians with a Biblical pattern of leadership by elders. They instituted a simple form of communion that is marked by active *participation* and *leading* of the believers in attendance. When Liberty was started, after consulting with some churches that meet in this manner, this model of a communion meeting with an active and spontaneous, Spirit-led participation of all in attendance was adopted early on in the life of our church and continues to this day.

This communion meeting is sometimes called the "remembrance meeting" or "breaking of bread". These are names given to the manner in which we observe communion, and they come from the Bible. Jesus told us to remember. The early church met together to break bread on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. The New Testament Church devoted itself to breaking bread, along with fellowship, prayer and teaching. These are all reasons we observe in the manner in which we do.

There are a couple practical reasons that are beneficial for us meeting in this way. First, you must make a concerted and obvious choice to participate. The meeting is at 9am. It is not part of the preaching service and music at 10am. It has been observed over the years that those at the 9am meeting are in many ways the center of the church and it's core.

Those in attendance know the reason we are meeting, and they want to observe the commands and pattern given to us by Christ. Those in attendance are not taking communion, as it were, "by accident", because communion was sort of added to what is typically viewed as the main church service at 10am. There are less concerns about guarding the table to ensure that only believers who have examined themselves partake of the table. The communion meeting as we observe it is the fellowship of the saints at Liberty celebrating in the presence of the Lord and each other. It is a central expression of our Christian unity. The true life of the church finds a deep expression in observing communion.

In the next installment: the priesthood of every believer

Part 4

If the Lord's Supper was observed merely just as sort of a personal individual "mental recollection" – something to think about for quick moment and then move on – then perhaps communion could be done every now and then and added on to a regular worship service. But we view the Lord's Supper as a God ordained means of grace in our lives *and* in the life of the church. Our desire as a church is to celebrate, participate, and importantly – remember – the Lord as an act of worship, together. Of course, we are Liberty *Community* Church. Community requires doing things with each other. What could be more important than this? When we understand what the Lord's Supper is and why God instituted it for us, then we won't merely view it as something to check off our to-do-list. Instead, we see it with joy and as an integral and necessary part of worship as a church.

*Give thanks with a grateful heart
Give thanks to the Holy One
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son*

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. I Timothy 3:16 ESV

PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER

Our confession and remembrance of Christ is central to our observation of the Lord's Supper. The overflow of our hearts in remembering the Lord by those in attendance is part of the remembrance meeting. The focus of our worship is not a sermon, or the music, or a liturgy. The gathering is not particularly focused on any one individual, any one church leader, except for the Lord Himself. We are focused on Christ. The table with the elements is the central focus of the room. This pattern is to purposefully lean into the involvement of all believers in attendance. We all come to the table with a common status.

While we may sing a song and, as has been our pattern, one of the elders will give a reflection or a short teaching or exhortation to *begin* the meeting – the purpose is not to directly lead the meeting, or to preach a sermon. No one person is presiding over this meeting. No one is the minister or the priest administering the sacrament. The pattern of our communion meeting particularly highlights the priesthood of every believer – that is that all believers, because of Christ, now have direct access to the throne of God through Jesus Christ our great High Priest. There is no division between clergy and laity in the church. There is no priestly class within the New Testament church whereby

the minister is closer to God than the parishioners. All the saints are equal before God. We all may minister to one another.

*You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house,
to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies
of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

*Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:5,9-10 ESV.*

The remembrance meeting where we observe communion is simple and spontaneous. God's people, exercising their priestly function, lead the worship in various ways: some in prayer, some in thanksgiving, some reading short portions of scripture and making a few remarks. We should be directing our hearts and our remarks to the Person and Work of Christ. Some gatherings of Christians who meet in this way would even give out a hymn or a song for all to join along to sing. However, I don't recall that happening at our communion meeting. But that would not be out of place if such were to occur. Maybe if we had hymnals that would be possible!

The New Testament portrays the Lord's Supper as breaking bread. Our communion meeting could appropriately be seen as a sacred family meal. All the saints can participate equally and openly as a family. When you think of it this way, the concept where many think of communion only as a sacrament to be administered by the church's ministers to the laity, begins to fade away.

*Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great High Priest whose name is love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart*

If we consider the pattern of this sacred meal observed by a family of believers who are priests unto God, we can see the beauty of remembering the Lord in unique and Spirit led ways. Two examples that come to my mind immediately are two members of our church family who went home to be with the Lord. For many years Linda Mercier, would write a poem reflecting on Christ and what He did on the cross and read that in our communion meeting. James Mason would often share the lyrics of a hymn that moved him to consider Christ. These spontaneous exercises reflected the closeness of

the local church body. They had not been pre-arranged. They were not part of a pre-planned order of worship. Yet it can be observed that communion as a remembrance meeting often comes together with beautiful order and harmony. This is the Holy Spirit working through His people.

Times of silence at the Lord's Supper are not a gap when we are "waiting for someone to share". They are important times of silent reflection and worship. Paul tells us to examine ourselves. We may do that in these times knowing that if we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleans us from all unrighteousness. Equally, the times of silence can also stir God's people to have a quiet waiting for the Holy Spirit to operate through His people in the meeting at the right time. It is a wonderful thing after a time of silence that another in the room would begin to minister to all those in attendance in a way that expresses the worship of all those in attendance.

In the next installment: how to prepare, and how to participate

Part 5

Our communion meeting is a remembrance. Each emblem is given thanks for by someone in attendance, as the Lord leads. The elements are taken together, when the time is right and after the church has ministered to one another. The cross and what Christ has done for us is on the forefront of our minds and hearts.

From the outside, this unique meeting could be observed as a simple and subtle witness of the character of our church. We are remembering the Lord Jesus, who we know personally. We don't know Christ just as an idea or a concept or a great teacher who once lived but is now a dim memory. We in fact know Christ. We know Him as the resurrected king seated at the right hand of the Father. We proclaim His death until He comes again. The Lord's Supper is a witness that Jesus is not a myth. There are people right here in North Haven who know Him and love Him and remember Him.

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

Part 5 of this essay on communion ended up being the longest part! Time to land the plane. The previous four reflections were about why we need communion, what the communion is, our role at the supper, and Who we are remembering. Now let's look at how practically we can prepare and participate.

HOW TO PREPARE & PARTICIPATE

So how should we prepare for Communion and what are some specific ways we can participate in the meeting? If we see the Lord's Supper as a family remembrance of the cross, it means we not only need to participate, but we need to *prepare* for the Lord's Supper. Are we prepared and what are we bringing?

Now, I can maybe read your minds: oh great, another to-do-list! But the items I'm going to share here are for our benefit and for our joy. The joy of remembering who the Lord is and what He has done for us. So, my hope is these things are some practical and biblical ways we might break out of the go-through-the-motions and take-it-for-granted complacency that sometimes we fall into with Communion. My goal of these encouragements are to help us (and in turn help the church as we meet together) remember the Lord.

Examination. The first preparation is examining yourself.

*Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
1 Corinthians 11:28 ESV*

The thought here is not of a test that we get graded on. The thought is of making a critical examination of something to determine its genuineness, to put something to the test. This is like the testing of a metal to ensure it's the real deal. You go to sell a gold ring. Is the gold really gold? Or is it contaminated with all sorts of impurities?

We too must not absorb all kinds of impurities. We must not cavalierly come to the Lord's table. This means we should sincerely take some time for introspection both before the communion meeting and during the communion meeting.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24 ESV

Let's have sincerity before the Lord. Do you have any unresolved, unconfessed sin in your life? Do you have a habit or a pattern of life that you have not laid bare at the foot of the cross? Do you trust that you are a new creation in all areas of your life? Are you obedient in your lifestyle, speech, conduct, and attitude? Also, if you have some beef, a problem, a bad attitude, or any form of partiality against another brother or sister, take the advice of Jesus found in the sermon on the mount and *first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

The examination before communion is a check of these things. We all fail at times in these areas, but we must be obedient to the commands of Scripture to examine ourselves. If we don't do that, we can make a mockery of the ordinance that the Lord established.

Think of it this way: communion should be a return to the cross for each of us. To be a Christian we must come to the cross of Jesus Christ and admit that we are sinners, fully trusting in His work on the cross to save us. Around the table we come back to that fundamental truth. Examining yourself is part of that return to the cross. By His grace we can examine ourselves and confess our sin.

*Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed ones of God
Be saved, to sin no more*

So don't just "roll" into the communion meeting. I have done this on more than one occasion. "Oops, it's the first of the month". That kind of preparation is not just less than ideal, the Bible tells us don't do that – examine yourself! Return to the cross before you come to the table. We should be thinking about the Lord before the meeting and we should examine ourselves and confess our sins, fully knowing and having confidence that He is faithful and just to forgive us. If you have not done this before the meeting, certainly take the silent time during the meeting to do this. Examination and confession in those times of silence is wholly appropriate.

*By His grace I am redeemed,
By His blood I am made clean;
And I now can know Him face to face.
By His power I have been raised,
Hidden now in Christ by faith;
I will praise the glory of His grace*

Bible reading. Because our communion meeting provides the opportunity for all of God's people to minister to one another, we prepare for communion by being in the Word. We must be in the Word. Interesting that in the wilderness the devil tried to tempt Jesus with bread. Jesus answered, "*It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'*". Being in the Word is our source of nourishment. We want to bring the Word to our remembrance of Christ around the table. How can we bring the Word to the meeting if we aren't in the Word?

I will give some suggestions about how we might share at the meeting towards the end of this essay. But let me say here, we want to use the Word of God in our prayers, in our reflections, in our readings at the communion meeting. Christ's redemptive plan appears throughout the whole Bible. Let me suggest in preparation for communion we look to the Word of God first in the Gospels and the life of Christ and His earthly ministry. We can also look to His redemptive plan found in the Old Testament, for example the Passover account in Exodus. Just as the blood of the lamb covered the doorposts, the blood of Jesus covers our sins. As New Testament believers, there is an even deeper meaning to it. Mediate and reflect on these truths, and share them.

Consider other all the places in Scripture that highlight the work of Christ, such as John the Baptist in the wilderness saying as Jesus approaches, *“Behold, the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sins of the world.”* Paul is even more direct in 1 Corinthians 5:7 saying, *“Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.”* The writer to the Hebrews says in chapter 10 states, *“every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God”*

These are just some of the many truths in the Word we can reflect on before communion *and* at Communion. When we come to communion each month, we can be ready by: 1.) being in the Word and 2.) making notes of the rich truths of our redemption through Christ. Note these things when you find them in the Word. We don't need to worry about appearing to be a Bible master. We should, however, have a hunger for Scripture and be ready to share what we have been reading as it relates to Christ.

How to enter the meeting

Preparation for communion also includes our *approach* to the remembrance meeting. We want to enter communion on Sunday with an attitude of expectation and anticipation. When the time comes to participate in the service, we will be ready to offer prayers of worship and remembrance, read scripture out loud, offer remarks that magnify Christ, declaring who He is and what He has done.

Because our communion meeting is simple and spontaneous, we should have some anticipation in how the church body would minister around the table. Because much of our communion meeting is not prescribed, we can have expectancy in the fact that all believers can participate equally and openly as a family. We know that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and God is with us in this meeting. What might the Holy Spirit bring to the focus of the hearts and minds of the believers in the room? There is a reverent attitude in the room because our hearts should be focused on Christ. But the mood never needs to be gloomy because Christ is not dead, He alive. Those around the table love the Lord and want to talk about Him and what He has done.

So enter our communion meeting not in a rowdy or boisterous way. Enter with contemplation, expectancy, and joy. There will be time to greet your friends and catch up in between the services. Right now, we want to focus our attention on the Lord. We want to start thinking about what He has done. We want to start thinking about how we might vocally magnify Him in this meeting.

Preparation in sharing & remembering.

There is too much to say about Christ and the cross to be contained in one hour. Think about it, it's normal that all the nice things usually said about a person are said at their funeral. If you have ever been to a memorial service for someone who was really loved, who has a great family, who was very involved with his community, and who everyone had wonderful memories to recall, you know what an uplifting and beautiful service such a memorial can be.

That is what we are doing around the communion table but on another level! In our memorial and remembrance of Christ, the person we are remembering is not dead. He is alive! So remember Christ in this meeting. Start thinking about this during the week or *at least* on Saturday! It is OK to think about what you might say in advance. It is OK to write down a few thoughts as they come to your mind while reading your Bible or praying. Some advance preparation or a note does not make any of this less spiritual!

Not many of us can (or should) come into any kind of meeting with no preparation, think about something for a few seconds, and be ready to say something publicly to a group of people. That's not a normal occurrence. When we think about doing that for someone as awesome as Christ, such a thought seems even crazier! Communion is a memorial service for a great person – the greatest of all of people. He is worthy of our praise, prayer, and public reflections. So, prepare, meditate, read, ponder, pray, and jot a note down in advance. It's ok – and it's good to do that!

How to participate around the table

Our communion remembrance meeting provides a special opportunity for the church to function in its priestly character. After a hymn is sung, one of the elders typically will begin the meeting with the first reflection. Afterwards, all of God's people have an opportunity to speak. The only guidance is that we would seek to focus our comments on Christ; that we keep silent when another is talking; that we save questions or comments about potentially divisive subjects for a later time; and those who minister would limit their words to 1 to 5 minutes so other saints in attendance would have an opportunity to speak. Also speak up so all may hear! We do this in a reverent manner from our seats around the Lord's table.

Spoken words don't need to be long. Some people can easily let the floodgates of their heart pour out and rattle off many things. Not everyone is built that way. Other people may not easily have many words and may feel it better to jot down a few thoughts when at the Lord's supper. These are both OK. Know which person you are. If you can talk for days, then it might be best to limit and focus your comments or prayers. If you

find it harder, or you are very reluctant to speak, it would be best if you make a note so you can remember what the Lord has put on your heart.

It can be hard to say something out loud in front a group of people. The first thing to note is that this is our church family. Don't be apprehensive. I fully know that the church wants the church to participate, so we should be inclined and encouraged to participate. The second thing to note is that the communion meeting is not a service in the traditional sense. We must participate. The communion meeting requires all of the church.

Also consider that we can prepare, but we must also leave room to share something that the Holy Spirit leads us to speak, after the comments of last person who spoke. Having a thought, prayer, reflection or scripture reading that comes to mind that builds upon the last speaker is a normal part of the ministering around the table.

I would like to encourage all those reading this to consider audibly sharing what the Lord has put on your heart during communion. We remember the Lord and we build up the church through this.

Ways to participate in the communion meeting.

At communion we can vocally participate in several ways:

Prayer: We can offer prayers around the table. We can communicate with God in His presence and in the presence of the church around the table. This is a time to offer a prayer or bear our hearts before the Lord and to magnify Him. Jesus prayed in the garden *not as I will, but as You will*. In keeping with remembering Christ, it's best to refrain from praying for prayer requests. We want our focus to be on Him. Prayers of adoration and thanksgiving are appropriate. We want to focus the meeting on the Christ, so while prayer is an opportunity to ask God for our needs, the communion meeting is not the best time to do that.

Thanksgiving: We can express thankfulness for who He is and what Christ has done. We have been given everything in Christ. Thank God for that truth, especially as it relates to the cross and His resurrection.

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. I Thessalonians 5:18-19 ESV

*Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!*

*At the cross, at the cross
Where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!*

Reading short portions of scripture: Reading a portion of scripture at communion that you feel will edify (build up) the church is part of the remembrance meeting. Some people just read a passage. Some people have read a passage and said a short prayer of thanks at the end. Either way is perfectly fine. Because communion allows this congregational participation, make sure you speak audibly so all can hear the text read.

*“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
Isaiah 55:10-11 ESV*

Making a few remarks. A thought or reflection to be shared to all is wholly appropriate at the communion meeting. This is a distinctive of our remembrance meeting. Communion is not a time for direct teaching or bringing up questions or making personal comments apart from focusing on Christ. But sincere reflections on the Lord, his ministry, His work on the cross are important things for the church to hear around the table.

We can often share what has happened to us, which is our testimony. But at the remembrance meeting, we should remember what He has done. But we want to magnify Christ in this meeting. Consider sharing thoughts about the rich theological truths of why and what Christ has done on the cross for us. Positionally, He has born the penalty for our sin. He is our propitiation. He is our substitute. He our substitutionary sacrifice to bear the curse that we deserve.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV

Topics and what to say at the meeting:

The communion meeting works best when we focus our comments on remembering Jesus. A couple of quick suggestions for topics and thoughts for organizing our participation and comments as the meeting goes along.

1. *Opening and Praise*- Praise God for who He is. This means we must know and highlight the attributes of God. Thank God for the simple reminder of communion.
2. *Worship*- Lift up God and glorify (magnify) Him. This means we must hold Him in great esteem and lower ourselves at the foot of the cross.
3. *Remembrance and the Cross*- Remember the redemptive work on the cross (explain, remember, pray, thank God for the gospel). We must remember He died in our place and that we are sinners in need of a savior.
4. *His Second Coming and Glory*- We frankly often overlook and ignore this part of communion. Christ will come again. Right now, He is sitting now at the right hand of the Father. *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* By observing communion, we look forward to His return. *"Behold I am making all things new"*. Has He not made us into something new? Will He not make the world new? Will He not make us new one day with new bodies and a new earth? This should encourage us that in the seeming chaos of the times we are in, that the Lord has all things under control, and He will return and make this sin filled world new.
5. *Closing and Encouragement*- Encourage the church when we give thanks for the bread and cup. We thank God for what each element means but let us also encourage one another for we are participating in something very special and remembering the King.

Taking of the elements

Some people believe that the bread and wine of communion are somehow transformed into Jesus' actual flesh and blood, or that Jesus somehow possesses the elements with His real presence. We understand (as do the majority of Protestants) that Jesus was speaking metaphorically about His flesh and blood and that the bread and wine are symbolic of our relationship created with Christ through faith.

We take the elements together after the congregation has ministered around the table. When the time is right one of the elders will open the containers that hold the bread and juice. We all then will come forward to take the elements, return to our seats. We take the elements together. First the bread. Someone will give thanks for the bread which represents the broken body of the Lord. Then we will take of the cup after someone gives thanks for the cup, which represents the shed blood of Christ for us. As Matthew writes in his account of the Last Supper, after the supper, *when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives*. We will typically close the communion meeting with a song of remembrance or expectancy.

Conclusion

When we gather around the table, we remember Him. Our worship is of simple, kindhearted sincere believers who remember Christ. Our act of eating and drinking is to be a symbol of our faith in Christ. Just as physical food gives earthly life, Christ's sacrifice on the cross gives us eternal life.

May we remember. May we participate fully for His glory and the building up of our church. I wrote this reflection on communion that you would be encouraged and that you would understand more about how and why we remember. I hope you will also be encouraged to prepare for and participate in the communion meeting.

This was way longer than I expected! Because at communion we want to remember, and the time is not focused on teaching, I thought it would be helpful to write out some of these things. Let me know if you have any questions. Be encouraged. Remember the Lord, and I hope to see you... *around the table*.