

IMPROVING WORSHIP #3: The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper has both an individual and collective component. When we gather and partake of the Lord's Supper, we remember it has a common importance. Jesus died on the cross at Calvary for the remission of our sins. We partake of the Lord's Supper, looking back at that event. We also show our faith that He arose from the dead, and will one day come in the air to receive the redeemed, both living and dead, to live with Him forever in heaven. But, we are each as individuals to examine ourselves and partake of the emblems in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord. At the very least, we must realize that "manner" means focusing our thoughts on the events upon which the supper is based.

On the night Jesus was betrayed, he instituted His supper with unleavened bread to represent the memorial emblem of His body that would hang on the tree for us, and the fruit-of-the-vine representing the blood He would shed for the remission of our sins. The pertinence of the supper is manifested in its simplicity; to change it in any way is outside the realm of man's authority. Neither does the Lord's Supper need the emotive innovations of man to augment its observance or stir up the heart of the worshipper. If the partaker's heart is not stirred by the significance of the events upon which it is based, any actions such as dimming auditorium lights or singing during the observance is properly a sham.

The above being said, there are some things (primarily four) that we can do to make sure the Lord's Supper holds for us the meaning it is supposed to have. One of these has to do with the song leader. The choice of a proper song prior to the observance can help the members to place their focus on the Lord's Supper. Two helpful things can be done by the men presiding at the Lord's Table. First, one brother, and for convenience sake, it might be the one who is to offer the prayer for the bread, can read a relevant passage or make some remarks about the night the Lord instituted the supper, His betrayal by Judas, the agony He endured, or some other significant facts fitting this important observance. Please note that this is not parallel to singing while partaking of the Lord's Supper, because it happens before it, not during it.

The second helpful suggestion for those helping at the table has to do with the prayers that are offered. We have probably all heard prayers at the Lord's Table which included thanking God for the rain, petitions for the sick, and everything else imaginable. Such prayers have the tendency to take the worshippers' minds away from the observance of the Lord's Supper and allow them to wander to everything from what's for Sunday dinner to the twelve o'clock kick off of the NFL game. One leading a prayer at the table needs to realize how important his prayer can be in assisting both himself and everyone else to keep their minds where they are supposed to be. Consequently, keeping those prayers short and on the subject at hand is most helpful.

The preceding paragraph leads us to the fourth suggestion that has to do with each of us individually. We each have the responsibility to focus our attention on the cross where Jesus died. The most practical advice I can think of to make sure we do that, is to simply put forth the effort to do it. It can be helpful to read a related passage or give some thought to the Lord's Supper at home before ever leaving for the place of worship. There may also be something said for preparing beforehand just what one's thoughts will be when partaking of the bread and fruit

of the vine that morning. The preacher prepares what he will say in the sermon; why not prepare the thoughts upon which you will dwell when it comes time to observe the solemn feast?

The Lord's Supper is one of five acts of worship we are authorized to offer up to God on the first day of the week. Some people have the erroneous tendency to single it out as though somehow believing that as long as they are present for the Lord's Supper, they have secured their soul's salvation for the week. Consequently, when the Lord's Supper is observed prior to the sermon, and they have plans to go somewhere they leave immediately after the observance. I would suggest that action demonstrates a misunderstanding of worship in general, and the supper in particular. That being said, the Lord's Supper is a very important act of worship, because it calls our attention to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. That sacrifice makes it possible for us to have salvation and a reason to worship God, anticipating the joyful prospect of one day being reunited with all the saints in the beautiful home where the crown of righteousness shall be graciously bestowed.

© 2009, Charles Dale Pogue

Permissions Granted:

You may print, copy, distribute, and publish this article free of charge so long as the article is unchanged and is credited.