



Sacraments and Ordinances

Understanding the Biblical practices that unite believers in worship and obedience to Christ

What We'll Explore Together

This module examines the sacred practices Christ established for His church. We'll explore the theological foundations, biblical mandates, and practical applications of baptism and the Lord's Supper from an Evangelical perspective grounded in Scripture alone.

01

Biblical Foundations

Examining Scripture's teaching on church practices

03

Historical Development

How Protestant Reformers recovered biblical teaching

02

Theological Framework

Understanding ordinances in Evangelical theology

04

Ministry Application

Implementing these practices faithfully in local churches

Defining Our Terms: Sacrament vs. Ordinance

Sacrament

From Latin *sacramentum*, meaning "oath" or "sacred thing."
Historically used to describe rites conveying God's grace through the physical elements themselves.

This term carries implications of **ex opere operato** ("from the work performed") — suggesting the ritual itself effects grace.

Ordinance

From Latin *ordinare*, meaning "to order" or "command." Emphasizes obedience to Christ's explicit commands and symbolic commemoration.

This term highlights that these practices are **ordained by Christ** as acts of obedience and remembrance, not channels of saving grace.

- ❏ Most Evangelical Christians prefer "ordinance" because it better reflects the symbolic and commemorative nature of these practices while avoiding sacramental theology that suggests grace is mediated through physical elements.



The Principle of Sola Scriptura

Our understanding of church practices rests on the Protestant Reformation principle that **Scripture alone** is the final authority for faith and practice. This foundational commitment shapes how we approach baptism and the Lord's Supper.

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

— 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)

Therefore, we recognize only those practices explicitly commanded by Christ in Scripture, rejecting traditions developed apart from biblical warrant.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Christ's Clear Commands

Jesus established two specific ordinances for His church, each with clear biblical mandates. These practices unite believers across cultures and centuries in obedience to our Lord's explicit instructions.

The Great Commission

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

(Matthew 28:19)

The Upper Room

"And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me'" (Luke 22:19)

How Many Ordinances?

Protestant Christians recognize **two ordinances** based on Christ's explicit commands and apostolic practice recorded in Scripture. This stands in contrast to other Christian traditions that recognize additional rites.

1

Baptism

The initiatory ordinance symbolizing union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection

- Commanded by Jesus (Matthew 28:19)
- Practiced by the apostles (Acts 2:41)
- Symbolizes spiritual reality (Romans 6:3-4)

2

The Lord's Supper

The ongoing ordinance commemorating Christ's sacrifice and anticipating His return

- Instituted by Jesus (Luke 22:19-20)
- Observed by early church (Acts 2:42)
- Proclaims the gospel (1 Corinthians 11:26)

- ❏ While some Evangelical traditions practice foot washing based on John 13:14-15, most do not classify it as an ordinance but rather as an act of humble service that may be practiced occasionally.



 PART 1

Christian Baptism

The Outward Sign of Inward Faith

Defining Christian Baptism

Baptism is the **initiatory ordinance** of the Christian church, commanded by Christ, in which a believer is immersed in (or water is applied to) the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as an outward declaration of faith in Jesus Christ.



Symbolic Act

Represents spiritual death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ



Public Declaration

Testifies to the believer's faith before the witnessing church community



Covenant Sign

Marks entrance into the visible covenant community of God's people

Biblical Foundations for Baptism

Scripture presents baptism as a crucial practice established by Christ Himself and faithfully observed by the apostolic church. The New Testament provides extensive teaching on both its practice and meaning.

1

Christ's Command

Jesus commissioned His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). This is not optional but a direct command.

2

Christ's Example

Though sinless, Jesus submitted to baptism "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), modeling obedience and identifying with those He came to save.

3

Apostolic Practice

The early church immediately obeyed, baptizing converts: "Those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

4

Theological Teaching

Paul explains baptism's rich symbolism: "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

The Meaning of Baptism

Baptism is **symbolically rich**, pointing to multiple spiritual realities accomplished in the believer's salvation. Understanding these meanings helps us appreciate the profound significance of this simple act.

Union with Christ

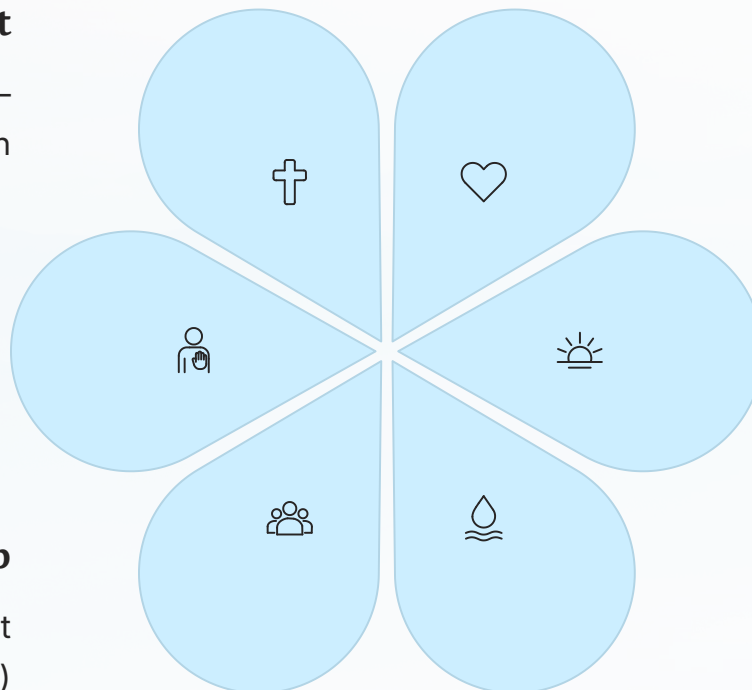
Baptized "into Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:3) — identifying with His death and resurrection

Public Testimony

Declares faith before witnesses, confessing Christ openly (Matthew 10:32)

Church Membership

Marks entrance into the visible body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13)



Death to Sin

Symbolizes dying to the old self and being "buried with him" (Colossians 2:12)

New Life

Represents resurrection to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4)

Spiritual Cleansing

Pictures the washing away of sin through Christ's blood (Acts 22:16)

Does Baptism Save?

This question requires careful biblical clarity. Evangelical theology affirms that baptism is **essential for obedience** but **not essential for salvation**. We are saved by grace through faith alone, not by any work or ritual.

Key Scriptural Principles

- **Salvation is by faith alone:** "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- **Faith precedes baptism:** "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16) — condemnation comes from unbelief, not lack of baptism
- **The thief on the cross:** Jesus promised paradise to the believing thief who had no opportunity for baptism (Luke 23:43)
- **Baptism pictures salvation:** It symbolizes what has already occurred spiritually through faith

❏ **Important distinction:** While baptism doesn't save, it is the normative, expected response of genuine faith. Deliberate refusal to be baptized raises questions about true discipleship.

Who Should Be Baptized?

Evangelical Christians hold two primary views on the appropriate subjects of baptism. While believers may differ on this issue, both positions seek to be faithful to Scripture's teaching.



Believer's Baptism (Credobaptism)

This view holds that **only those who have personally professed faith in Christ** should be baptized. This is the majority position among Baptists, Pentecostals, and many non-denominational churches.



Biblical Pattern

Every baptism in Acts follows belief: "Those who received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41)



Personal Faith

Baptism symbolizes the individual's own faith and repentance, not another's faith



Order Matters

The New Testament pattern consistently shows faith before baptism (Acts 8:36-37; 16:31-33)

- ❑ Advocates of believer's baptism argue that infant baptism lacks clear biblical precedent and that "household baptisms" in Acts likely included only those old enough to believe.

Infant Baptism (Paedobaptism)

This view, held by Presbyterians, Reformed, and some other Evangelical traditions, maintains that **children of believing parents** should be baptized as a sign of God's covenant promises, with personal faith confirmed later.

Covenant Continuity

Just as circumcision marked covenant children in the Old Testament, baptism marks them in the New Covenant (Colossians 2:11-12)

Household Baptisms

Several New Testament accounts mention entire households being baptized (Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Corinthians 1:16)

Jesus and Children

Jesus welcomed children and said "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14)

- ❏ Paedobaptists emphasize that baptism doesn't guarantee salvation but signifies God's covenant promise, with the expectation that covenant children will later personally embrace faith.

Mode of Baptism: How Should It Be Done?

Evangelical Christians also differ on the proper method of baptism. The three primary modes each claim biblical and historical support.

1

Immersion

Full submersion under water, practiced by Baptists and many others. Argues this best pictures burial and resurrection (Romans 6:4) and reflects the Greek word *baptizo* meaning "to dip" or "immerse."

2

Pouring (Affusion)

Water poured over the head, common in Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Points to Old Testament cleansing rituals and the "pouring out" of the Holy Spirit.

3

Sprinkling (Aspersio)

Water sprinkled on the head, also used in some traditions. References Old Testament purification ceremonies using hyssop branches.



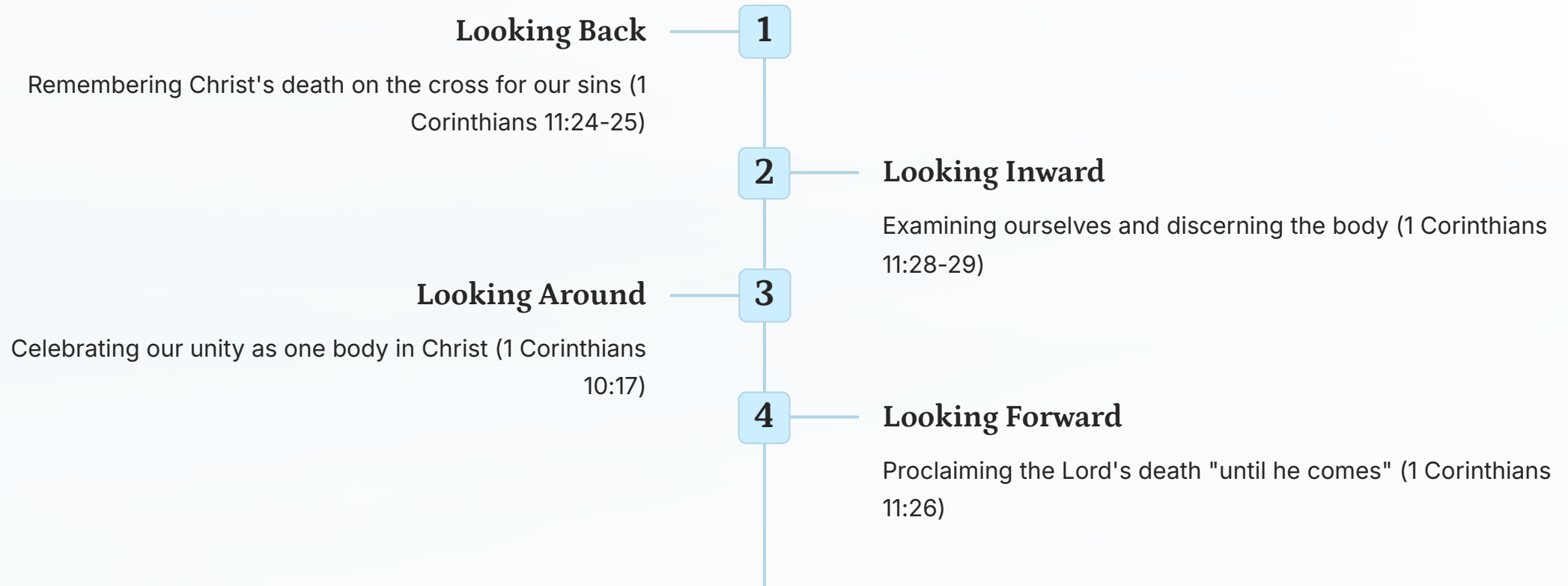
🍞 PART 2

The Lord's Supper

Remembering Christ's Sacrifice Until He Comes

Defining the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper (also called Communion or the Eucharist) is the **ongoing ordinance** of the church in which believers partake of bread and cup in remembrance of Christ's atoning sacrifice, in celebration of present fellowship with Him, and in anticipation of His return.



Biblical Foundations for the Lord's Supper

Jesus instituted this ordinance during the Passover meal on the night before His crucifixion. The New Testament provides rich instruction for understanding and practicing this sacred observance.

Institution by Christ

"And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood'" (Luke 22:19-20)

Early Church Practice

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). The early church regularly observed the Lord's Supper as central to their worship.

Apostolic Teaching

Paul provides extensive instruction on proper observance in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, addressing both the meaning and the manner of participation.

The Meaning of the Elements



The Bread

"This is my body, which is given for you" (Luke 22:19)

The bread represents Christ's physical body, broken and sacrificed on the cross. As we eat, we remember that His body was wounded for our transgressions.

The single loaf also symbolizes the unity of believers: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).



The Cup

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20)

The cup represents Christ's blood shed for the forgiveness of sins, establishing the new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Jesus declared, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). His blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Views on Christ's Presence

Evangelical Christians hold different views on how Christ is present in the Lord's Supper. Understanding these positions helps us appreciate both our unity and diversity on this important practice.

Symbolic Memorial (Zwinglian)

This view sees the Lord's Supper as primarily a **memorial act of remembrance**. The bread and cup remain ordinary elements that symbolize Christ's body and blood. Christ is present spiritually among believers gathered in His name, but not uniquely in the elements themselves.

Common among Baptists and many non-denominational churches.

Spiritual Presence (Calvinist)

This view affirms Christ's **real spiritual presence** in the Supper. While the elements remain bread and wine, believers truly feed on Christ spiritually by faith. The Holy Spirit lifts believers to commune with the ascended Christ.

Held by Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

Sacramental Union (Lutheran)

This view teaches that Christ is present "in, with, and under" the elements. Communicants receive Christ's true body and blood along with the bread and wine, though the elements don't change substance.

Distinctive to Lutheran theology.

- ❏ What unites these Evangelical positions is the rejection of transubstantiation and the affirmation that the Supper is a means of grace through which believers experience fellowship with Christ.

Who May Participate?

Churches practice either **open communion** or **closed communion** based on their understanding of church discipline, unity, and preparation.

1

Open Communion

Welcomes all professing Christians who have examined themselves and are in good standing with Christ. Emphasizes the universal body of Christ.

2

Closed Communion

Restricts participation to baptized members of that local church or denomination. Emphasizes church discipline and doctrinal unity.

3

Close Communion

A middle position welcoming baptized believers from like-minded churches. Balances openness with accountability.

The Importance of Self-Examination

Paul provides serious warnings about participating in the Lord's Supper unworthily. Proper preparation is essential for blessing rather than judgment.

"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself."

— 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 (ESV)

- **Examine your faith**

Are you trusting in Christ alone for salvation?

- **Examine your relationships**

Are you at peace with fellow believers, or do you harbor unforgiveness?

- **Examine your life**

Are there unconfessed sins that need to be brought before God?

- **Examine your understanding**

Do you discern the significance of Christ's sacrifice represented in the elements?

 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

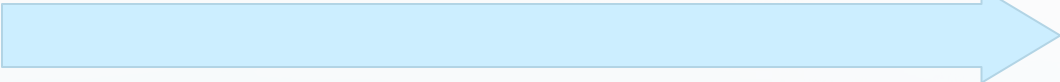
The Protestant Reformation

Recovering Biblical Teaching on the Ordinances



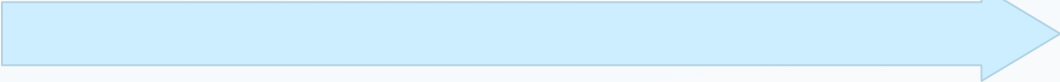
Why the Reformation Mattered

The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation marked a crucial return to biblical authority on the ordinances. The Reformers challenged teachings and practices that had developed over centuries without clear scriptural warrant.



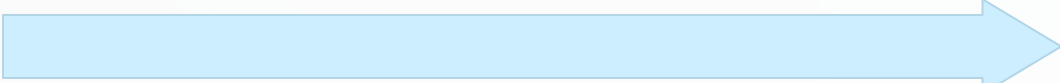
Medieval Development

By the late Middle Ages, the church had developed elaborate sacramental theology, recognizing seven sacraments as channels of grace necessary for salvation.



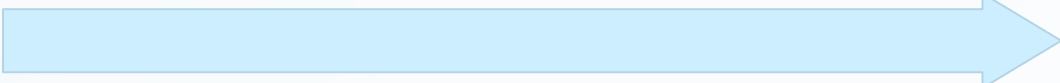
Simplicity Restored

Protestant churches reduced the sacraments to the two ordained by Christ, emphasizing their symbolic and commemorative nature.



Scripture Rediscovered

Reformers like Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli returned to Scripture as final authority, questioning traditions lacking biblical foundation.



Gospel Clarity

The Reformation clarified that salvation comes through faith alone, not through participation in rituals or sacraments.

Key Reformation Principles

The Reformers established foundational principles that continue to guide Evangelical understanding of the ordinances today.



Sola Scriptura

Scripture alone is the final authority. Only practices explicitly commanded in Scripture should be observed as ordinances. Human traditions, no matter how ancient, cannot be placed on equal footing with biblical commands.



Sola Fide

Justification is by faith alone. Baptism and the Lord's Supper do not save or convey saving grace. They are responses to grace already received through faith in Christ's finished work.



Simplicity

Worship should be characterized by simplicity and clarity. Elaborate rituals and ceremonies that obscure the gospel message should be removed in favor of straightforward obedience to Christ's commands.

What the Reformers Rejected

Understanding what Protestant theology rejects helps clarify what we affirm. The Reformers opposed several teachings that they believed contradicted Scripture.

Ex Opera Operato

The idea that sacraments work automatically "from the work performed," conveying grace through the ritual itself apart from faith. Scripture teaches that faith must be present to receive God's grace.

Seven Sacraments

The medieval church's recognition of confirmation, penance, marriage, holy orders, and extreme unction as sacraments. Scripture provides clear warrant for only baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Transubstantiation

The doctrine that bread and wine literally become Christ's body and blood. While views differ, Evangelicals agree the elements remain bread and wine, serving as signs and symbols.

Baptismal Regeneration

The teaching that baptism itself causes or effects salvation. Scripture presents baptism as a response to salvation already received through faith, not the means of obtaining it.

Understanding "Means of Grace"

Evangelicals use the term "means of grace" carefully to describe how God blesses believers through the ordinances without suggesting these practices convey saving grace.

What We Affirm

- God graciously meets with believers through the ordinances
- The Holy Spirit strengthens faith as we obey Christ's commands
- Participating by faith brings spiritual blessing and growth
- These practices serve as occasions for deeper communion with Christ
- God uses ordinary means to convey extraordinary spiritual benefits

What We Deny

- The ordinances do not cause or effect salvation
- Grace is not automatically conveyed through the ritual
- The elements themselves do not possess spiritual power
- Participation is not necessary for justification
- Missing the ordinances does not forfeit salvation

The Ordinances and Church Unity

Despite theological differences on mode and subjects, baptism and the Lord's Supper serve as powerful expressions of Christian unity. They transcend cultural, ethnic, and denominational boundaries, pointing all believers to our common faith in Christ.



One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism

Paul's words in Ephesians remind us that baptism unites all true believers in Christ, regardless of our secondary differences on its administration.

"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

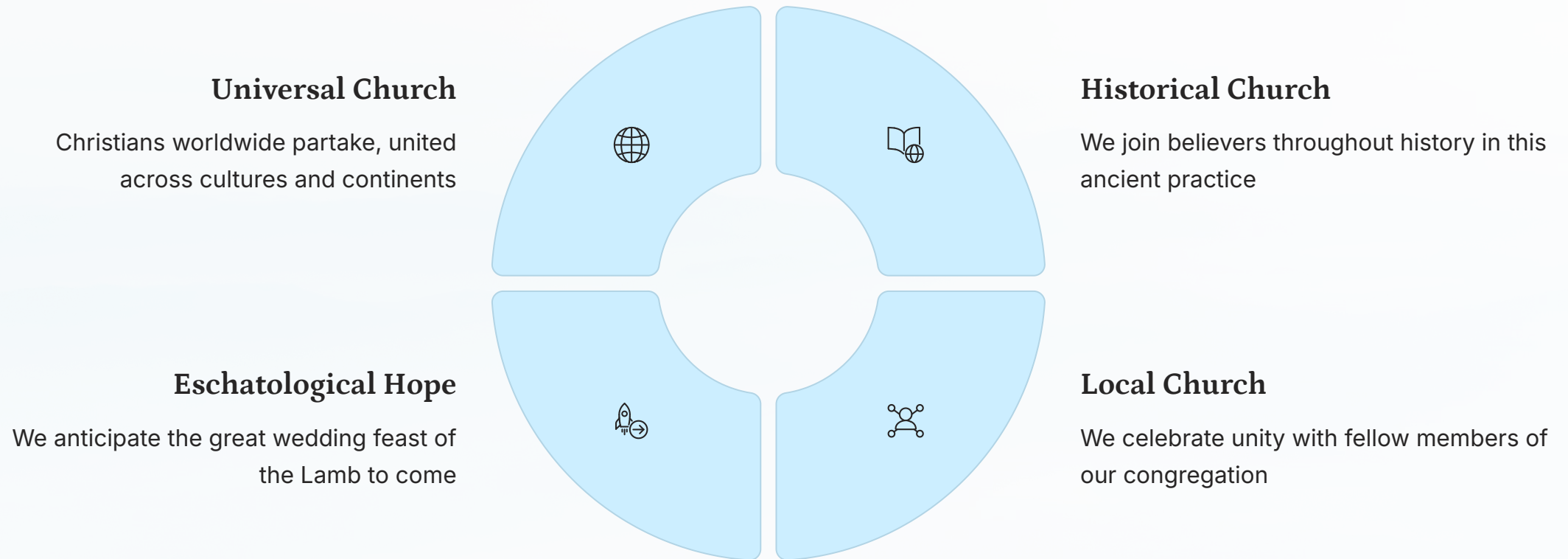
— Ephesians 4:4-6 (ESV)

This passage emphasizes the **unity** baptism represents more than the specific mode of its administration. While we may hold different convictions on baptismal practice, we share one Lord and one faith.

- 📌 Churches should hold their convictions firmly while extending grace and fellowship to believers who practice baptism differently, recognizing that all who call on Christ's name are our brothers and sisters.

The Lord's Table as Unifying Meal

The Lord's Supper powerfully demonstrates the unity of Christ's body. As we share one loaf and one cup, we proclaim our oneness in Christ despite our diversity.



MINISTRY APPLICATION

Implementing the Ordinances Faithfully

Pastors and church leaders bear the responsibility of administering the ordinances with biblical fidelity, theological clarity, and pastoral sensitivity. Wise implementation honors Christ and edifies His people.

Administering Baptism Well

Baptism is a sacred trust that requires careful preparation, clear teaching, and joyful celebration. Churches should approach baptism with both reverence and delight.

01

Teach Biblical Foundations

Provide clear instruction on baptism's meaning, significance, and practice before candidates are baptized

02

Interview Candidates

Meet with those seeking baptism to ensure they understand the gospel and are making a genuine profession of faith

03

Prepare the Service

Make baptism a significant congregational event with worship, testimonies, and celebration

04

Emphasize the Gospel

Use baptismal services as opportunities to proclaim Christ's death and resurrection clearly

05

Welcome into Fellowship

Formally receive newly baptized believers into church membership with prayer and encouragement

Practical Considerations for Baptism

Timing and Frequency

While some churches baptize immediately after profession (like Philip and the Ethiopian), most benefit from a brief period of instruction. Schedule regular baptism services rather than waiting for arbitrary dates.

Public vs. Private

Baptism should normally occur before the gathered congregation, as it is a public declaration of faith. Private baptisms may be appropriate for special circumstances but shouldn't be the norm.

Children of Believers

Churches must develop clear policies on baptizing children raised in Christian homes. Ensure young people understand the gospel and aren't simply conforming to family expectations.

Rebaptism Questions

Develop thoughtful policies for those baptized as infants or before genuine conversion. Focus on the candidate's current understanding and faith rather than judging past experiences.

Observing the Lord's Supper Well

The Lord's Supper deserves careful administration that honors its sacred significance while making it accessible and meaningful to the congregation.

1 Regular Observance

The New Testament suggests frequent practice ("as often as you eat this bread," 1 Corinthians 11:26). Whether weekly, monthly, or quarterly, maintain consistent rhythm that prevents familiarity from breeding indifference.

2 Meaningful Elements

Use unleavened bread to connect with Passover symbolism. Churches differ on using wine versus grape juice—both can be administered faithfully with proper teaching.

3 Clear Instruction

Don't assume understanding. Regularly teach the meaning, proper preparation, and significance of the Supper, especially for new believers and children.

4 Call to Self-Examination

Lead the congregation in thoughtful self-examination before partaking. Provide time for silent reflection, confession, and preparation of heart.

5 Gospel-Centered Focus

Keep the emphasis on Christ's sacrifice. Read the institution narrative, proclaim the gospel clearly, and maintain a tone of grateful reverence.



Teaching the Ordinances to Your Congregation

Many church members have limited understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Pastors must be intentional about comprehensive teaching that builds theological depth and practical wisdom.

1

Sermon Series

Preach through relevant biblical passages (Romans 6, 1 Corinthians 11, etc.) dedicating sufficient time to develop theological understanding

2

New Member Classes

Include substantial teaching on the ordinances in membership preparation, clearly explaining your church's positions and practices

3

Special Teaching Events

Offer seminars or workshops specifically focused on understanding and appreciating baptism and the Lord's Supper

4

Resources for Families

Provide materials helping parents teach their children about the ordinances appropriately for different age levels

Common Pastoral Questions

Church leaders frequently face practical questions requiring wisdom, biblical discernment, and pastoral sensitivity. Here are some common scenarios and guiding principles.

1

Communion for Children

At what age should children participate in the Lord's Supper? Many churches welcome children who can understand and articulate the gospel, typically around age 7-10. Others wait until formal church membership. Whatever policy you adopt, focus on understanding rather than age.

2

Visitors at the Table

Should visiting Christians from other churches participate? Most Evangelical churches practice open communion, welcoming all believers. Clearly communicate your policy and the call to self-examination.

3

Baptism After Conversion

How long should new converts wait before baptism? While baptism should follow faith promptly, brief instruction ensures understanding. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized immediately (Acts 8), but some preparation honors the seriousness of the commitment.

4

Those Under Discipline

Should members under church discipline partake of communion? Scripture teaches that unrepentant sin disqualifies participation (1 Corinthians 5:11-13). Churches must exercise discipline lovingly but firmly, protecting the Table's sanctity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Essential Truths to Remember

As we conclude our study, let's review the core principles that should shape our understanding and practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Scripture Alone

The Bible is our final authority on the ordinances. We recognize only practices explicitly commanded by Christ and practiced by the apostolic church.

Symbolic, Not Salvific

The ordinances are powerful symbols pointing to spiritual realities, but they do not save or convey saving grace. Faith in Christ alone justifies.

Commanded by Christ

These are not optional traditions but direct commands from our Lord to be obeyed joyfully as acts of worship and discipleship.

Unity in Diversity

While Evangelicals differ on secondary issues of mode and subjects, we unite around the gospel these ordinances proclaim.

Means of Grace

God graciously meets with His people through faithful observance. The Holy Spirit uses these practices to strengthen faith and foster communion with Christ.

Personal Application for Ministry Leaders

How should this study shape your pastoral practice and ministry philosophy? Consider these action steps as you lead God's people in faithful observance of the ordinances.



Examine Your Theology

Review your church's doctrinal statement and practices. Ensure they align with biblical teaching and clearly articulate your convictions on the ordinances.



Prioritize Teaching

Commit to regular, substantive teaching on baptism and the Lord's Supper. Don't assume your congregation understands these foundational practices.



Cultivate Reverence

Lead with an attitude that takes the ordinances seriously without becoming legalistic. Model the balance of joyful celebration and sacred respect.



Build Unity

While holding your convictions firmly, extend grace to believers who practice differently. Emphasize what unites us in Christ over secondary differences.

Looking Forward: Until He Comes

Every time we observe the Lord's Supper, we proclaim Christ's death "until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). The ordinances keep our eyes fixed on both historical reality and future hope.

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

— 1 Corinthians 11:26 (ESV)

Baptism declares our union with Christ in His death and resurrection—a reality we will experience fully when He returns. The Lord's Supper anticipates the marriage supper of the Lamb when we will feast with Christ in His kingdom. These ordinances are temporary measures, beautiful bridges connecting Calvary's cross to the coming kingdom. One day, baptism will be unnecessary because we will be with Him. Communion will give way to the wedding feast. Until then, we obey joyfully, remember faithfully, and anticipate hopefully.

Conclusion: Faithful Obedience to Christ's Commands

The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are precious gifts from our Savior to His church. They are not burdensome duties but joyful privileges—tangible ways to proclaim the gospel, remember Christ's sacrifice, and experience fellowship with Him and His people.

Our Calling

As pastors, teachers, and ministry leaders, we have the sacred responsibility of administering these ordinances with biblical fidelity and pastoral wisdom. May we do so with:

- **Theological precision** that honors Scripture
- **Pastoral sensitivity** that shepherds souls
- **Gospel clarity** that exalts Christ
- **Joyful reverence** that worships authentically



May the Lord grant us grace to lead His people in faithful observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper, practices that unite believers across time and space in proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

- ❏ **To God alone be the glory** — for it is His grace that saves us, His Spirit that empowers us, and His Word that guides us in all things, including the beautiful ordinances He has given His church.