

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to oakhillpca.com/wsc

Q. 96. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace.

Q. 97. What is required for the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

A. It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

The Sacraments are part of the means of grace God extends to us to help us "escape the wrath and curse" due our sin (Q. 91). We now turn our attention specifically to communion.

Jesus commands that all disciples should partake in this meal "in remembrance" of him (Lk. 22:19). The broken bread and the fruit of the vine are symbolic of his sacrificial death. He graciously reminds his people of their sinful insufficiency to save themselves and his all-sufficient atoning death that secures their redemption. We are forgetful people; we need "his death is showed forth" on a regular basis.

The Lord's Supper is not merely a remembrance, though. The Catechism explains that "by faith" in a spiritual manner we "are made partakers of his body and blood." In these words, the Catechism wants to distinguish our practice of communion from the Catholic and Lutheran practices, which believe that Christ is physically present in the meal.

What is the significance of spiritually partaking by faith of Christ's body and blood (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16)? By faith, we are united to Christ in his death. Our sin is nailed to the cross. We bear it no more. And, by faith, we are united to Christ in his resurrection. We are new creations in Christ. We walk in the newness of life. These spiritual realities are affirmed to us in communion.

And so, we speak about being spiritually fed in this meal. Partaking in the Lord's Supper empowers us to enjoy Christ and his sacrificial death all the more, and to be strengthened in our battle against sin, Satan, and the world.

Q. 97 speaks about the worthy receiving of communion. It is a reflection on 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. Communion is for genuine believers. Therefore, our covenant children wait to partake of communion until they profess faith in Jesus and we warn unbelievers not to partake in the meal.