Why We Serve the Lord’s Supper Weekly  
By Alan Carter

Sometimes we are asked why we serve the Lord’s Supper each week. Let me try to answer that for you.

First of all, we believe that it conforms to New Testament practice. In Acts 20:7 the Bible says, “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread . . . .” Compare Acts 20:11 and 2:42.

Second, although this language is descriptive of the practice of the early church, it is not normative. It does not specify what the practice of each church must be. That is to say, we do not believe that the Bible requires us to serve the Lord’s Supper each week; and because of this fact, there is some freedom in regard to frequency. Therefore, we do not look down upon our former practice of serving the Supper monthly, or upon other churches which have a different practice. However, we are to take the Supper “often”, or “frequently” (see 1 Corinthians 11). The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America says, “The Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is to be observed frequently; . . .” (58-1).

Third, serving the Lord’s Supper each week keeps everyone focused on Christ and the gospel. The preacher much stay focused on Christ, because he must lead the congregation to the Lord’s Table. Believers will be kept focused on Christ and the gospel as they partake of the sacrament, and they need Christ and his gospel every time they worship. Finally, non-believers will be forced to answer the question “What will I do in response to the gospel offer that has been made to me?” So, serving the Supper each week helps keep everyone focused on the pearl of great price. And that is good.

Fourth, rather than diminish, cheapen, or make common place this sacrament, we believe that weekly communion will help us to lay aside some of the harmful mystical views of the Supper that prevail in some hearts and minds. The Lord’s Supper is a special means of grace, but it is not a means of special grace. By that we mean that there is only one grace to be received by any of the means of grace; and that grace is Christ himself. Often, when the sacrament is served, some people say or think, “Now we are coming to the most sacred or solemn part of the service.” That cannot be. We get Christ in the Word read and proclaimed, and we get Christ in the sacrament received by faith. Partaking of the sacrament cannot be more sacred than the Word because the Word is primary: without it we could not make sense of the sacrament. The sacrament is the Word made visible. The Word is considered primary in our teaching and understanding; the sacrament is secondary because it depends on the Word. Word and sacrament are God’s one-two punch to beat the gospel into our lives.

Fifth, it is difficult - if not impossible - to satisfactorily answer the question, “Why do we need the grace of God in the gospel read and proclaimed each week, and not the grace of God in the sacrament served each week?” We need the grace of God daily. Weekly is not too often to feed on Christ by faith in the celebration of the sacrament. We need the grace of God in the Word each time we worship. Each time we worship we should hear the gospel and renew our covenant with Jesus. And each time we worship we should receive the grace of God in the sacrament. There is no more danger in partaking of the gospel in the sacrament each week than in hearing the gospel in the Word each week.
Sixth, for reasons evident above, we do not believe that weekly communion will increase unworthy partaking. Unworthy partaking, as presented in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, consists in failing to apply the gospel to our relationships with others in the church. That is to say, the faith the Corinthians professed in a vertical relationship with God did not get expressed horizontally as it should have been in their relationships with one another. There were some in Corinth who professed Christ, came to worship and the sacrament, but then ate and drank excessively while their brothers and sisters went hungry and thirsty. Paul said, when you act like that “it is not the Lord’s Supper which you eat.” (1 Corinthians 11:20). He takes seriously the horizontal outworking of our vertical faith in God’s Son, Jesus.