

Church Membership 9:

The Means of Grace

Vow 5: To the end that you may grow in the Christian life, do you promise that you will diligently read the Bible, engage in private prayer, keep the Lord's Day, regularly attend the worship services, observe the appointed sacraments, and give to the Lord's work as He shall prosper you?

Fallen man receives all the blessings of salvation out of the eternal fountain of the grace of God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ and through the operation of the Holy Spirit. While the Spirit can and does in some respects operate immediately on the soul of the sinner, He has seen fit to bind Himself largely to the use of certain means in the communication of divine grace. The term “means of grace” is not found in the Bible, but is nevertheless a proper designation of the means that are indicated in the Bible. (L. Berkhof, ST,604)

Shorter Catechism, Q. 88: What are the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?

A. The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are, his ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

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Read the Bible
Private Prayer

LORD'S DAY

Attend worship services
Observe the appointed sacraments
Give to the Lord's work

BIBLE

I Peter 2:2

John 15:7

Psalms 119:10-11

John 17:17

“We mourn that religion has not been cultivated and practiced in our homes as it should have been. Parents have not felt in any adequate measure their responsibility for the salvation of their children; and in consequence, family worship, reading the Scriptures in the household, instruction in the accepted manuals of the faith of the Church, and pleading the covenant and promise of God on behalf of our seed, are mournfully neglected.” —Covenant of 1871

PRAYER

Larger Catechism Q. 178. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit; with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

WCF 21.3, “Prayer, with thanksgiving, being one special part of religious worship, is by God required of all men: and that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of His Spirit, according to His will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance; and, if vocal, in a known tongue.”

LORDS DAY

In normal circumstances, neither personal devotions nor family worship are to be regarded as proper substitutes for public worship. In addition to attending the scheduled services of public worship, the Lord's Day may be fruitfully observed through activities such as: personal Bible reading and study, meditation and prayer, discussion of the sermon, the enjoyment of physical rest, acts of mercy, spiritual fellowship, hospitality, instructing and catechizing the children and visiting the sick. —Directory for Public Worship

WORSHIP SERVICES

Why two services?

- 1. Pattern of morning and evening**
- 2. Means of grace: 104 services per year**
- 3. Helps keep the Lord's Day**
- 4. Opportunities as "training ground"**
- 5. Extra fellowship**
- 6. More personalized prayer & singing**

SACRAMENTS

Q. 162. What is a Sacrament?

A. A Sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his Church, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another; and to distinguish them from those that are without.

Q. 164. How many Sacraments hath Christ instituted in his Church under the New Testament?

A. Under the New Testament Christ hath instituted in his Church only two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

GIVING

(tithes/offering)

The presentation of tithes and offerings is warranted as part of worship. We are commanded to set aside our offerings on the first day of the week (I Cor. 16:1-2). God calls His people to return a portion of their substance to Him cheerfully, systematically, and as He has prospered them. The receiving of the offering may be preceded or followed by a brief prayer that joyfully gives thanks for God's provision and commits the gifts to the work of Christ's kingdom and the blessing of the Lord.

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