

# The Sacrament—a Renewal for the Soul

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The Spirit heals and renews our souls. The promised blessing of the sacrament is that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us].”

A group of young women once asked me, “What do you wish you had known when you were our age?” If I were to answer that question now, I would include this thought: “I wish when I was your age I had understood the significance of the sacrament better than I did. I wish I had understood the sacrament in the way that Elder Jeffrey R. Holland described. He said, ‘One of the invitations inherent in the sacramental ordinance is that it be a truly spiritual experience, a holy communion, a renewal for the soul.’”<sup>1</sup>

How can the sacrament “be a truly spiritual experience, a holy communion, a renewal for the soul” each week?

The sacrament becomes a spiritually strengthening experience when we listen to the sacrament prayers and recommit to our covenants. To do this, we must be willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Speaking of this promise, President Henry B. Eyring taught: “That means we must see ourselves as His. We will put Him first in our lives. We will want what He wants rather than what we want or what the world teaches us to want.”<sup>3</sup>

When we take the sacrament, we also covenant to “always remember”<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ. On the night before He was crucified, Christ gathered His Apostles around Him and instituted the sacrament. He broke bread, blessed it, and said, “Take, eat; this is in remembrance of my body which I give a ransom for you.”<sup>5</sup> Next He took a cup of wine, gave thanks, gave it to His Apostles to drink, and said, “This is in remembrance of my blood ... , which is shed for as many as shall believe on my name.”<sup>6</sup>

Among the Nephites and again at the Restoration of His Church in the latter days, He repeated that we are to take the sacrament in remembrance of Him.<sup>7</sup>

As we partake of the sacrament, we witness to God that we will remember His Son always, not just during the brief sacrament ordinance. This means that we will constantly look to the Savior’s example and teachings to guide our thoughts, our choices, and our acts.<sup>8</sup>

The sacrament prayer also reminds us that we must “keep his commandments.”<sup>9</sup>

Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”<sup>10</sup> The sacrament gives us an opportunity for introspection and an opportunity to turn our heart and will to God. Obedience to the commandments brings the power of the gospel into our lives and greater peace and spirituality.

The sacrament provides a time for a truly spiritual experience as we reflect upon the Savior’s redeeming and enabling

power through His Atonement. A Young Women leader recently learned about the strength we receive as we strive to thoughtfully partake of the sacrament. Working to complete a requirement in Personal Progress, she set a goal to focus on the words in the sacrament hymns and prayers.

Each week, she conducted a self-evaluation during the sacrament. She recalled mistakes she had made, and she committed to be better the next week. She was grateful to be able to make things right and be made clean. Looking back on the experience, she said, “I was acting on the repentance part of the Atonement.”

One Sunday after her self-evaluation, she began to feel gloomy and pessimistic. She could see that she was making the same errors over and over again, week to week. But then she had a distinct impression that she was neglecting a big part of the Atonement—Christ’s enabling power. She was forgetting all the times the Savior helped her be who she needed to be and serve beyond her own capacity.

With this in mind, she reflected again on the previous week. She said: “A feeling of joy broke through my melancholy as I noted that He had given me many opportunities and abilities. I noted with gratitude the ability I had to recognize my child’s need when it wasn’t obvious. I noted that on a day when I felt I could not pack in one more thing to do, I was able to offer strengthening words to a friend. I had shown patience in a circumstance that usually elicited the opposite from me.”

She concluded: “As I thanked God for the Savior’s enabling power in my life, I felt so much more optimistic toward the repentance process I was working through and I looked to the next week with renewed hope.”

Elder Melvin J. Ballard taught how the sacrament can be a healing and cleansing experience. He said:

“Who is there among us that does not wound his spirit by word, thought, or deed, from Sabbath to Sabbath? We do things for which we are sorry and desire to be forgiven. ... The method to obtain forgiveness is ... to repent of our sins, to go to those against whom we have sinned or transgressed and obtain their forgiveness and then repair to the sacrament table where, if we have sincerely repented and put ourselves in proper condition, we shall be forgiven, and spiritual healing will come to our souls. ...

“I am a witness,” Elder Ballard said, “that there is a spirit attending the administration of the sacrament that warms the soul from head to foot; you feel the wounds of the spirit being healed, and the load being lifted. Comfort and happiness come to the soul that is worthy and truly desirous of partaking of this spiritual food.”<sup>11</sup>

Our wounded souls can be healed and renewed not only because the bread and water remind us of the Savior’s sacrifice of His flesh and blood but because the emblems also remind us that He will always be our “bread of life”<sup>12</sup> and “living water.”<sup>13</sup>

After administering the sacrament to the Nephites, Jesus said:

“He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled.

“Now, when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled with the Spirit.”<sup>14</sup>

With these words, Christ teaches us that the Spirit heals and renews our souls. The promised blessing of the sacrament is that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>15</sup>

When I partake of the sacrament, I sometimes picture in my mind a painting that depicts the resurrected Savior with His arms outstretched, as if He is ready to receive us into His loving embrace. I love this painting. When I think about it during the administration of the sacrament, my soul is lifted as I can almost hear the Savior's words: "Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me."<sup>16</sup>

Aaronic Priesthood holders represent the Savior when they prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament. As a priesthood holder extends his arm to offer us the sacred emblems, it is as if the Savior Himself were extending His arm of mercy, inviting each one of us to partake of the precious gifts of love made available through His atoning sacrifice—gifts of repentance, forgiveness, comfort, and hope.<sup>17</sup>

The more we ponder the significance of the sacrament, the more sacred and meaningful it becomes to us. This was what a 96-year-old father expressed when his son asked, "Dad, why do you go to church? You can't see, you can't hear, it's hard for you to get around. Why do you go to church?" The father replied, "It's the sacrament. I go to partake of the sacrament."

May each of us come to sacrament meeting prepared to have "a truly spiritual experience, a holy communion, a renewal for [our] soul."<sup>18</sup>

I know that our Heavenly Father and our Savior live. I am grateful for the opportunity the sacrament provides to feel of Their love and to partake of the Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (1997), 283.

2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.

3. Henry B. Eyring, "That We May Be One," *Ensign*, May 1998, 67.

4. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.

5. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 26:22 (in Matthew 26:26, footnote c, and in the Bible appendix).

6. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 26:24 (in the Bible appendix); see also Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:15–20.

7. See 3 Nephi 18:7, 11; Doctrine and Covenants 20:75.

8. See “How Do I Keep My Covenant to Always Remember the Savior?” *Come, Follow Me* Sunday School curriculum; [lds.org/youth/learn/ss/ordinances-covenants/remember](https://www.lds.org/youth/learn/ss/ordinances-covenants/remember); *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 147–48.

9. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.

10. John 14:15.

11. Melvin J. Ballard, in Melvin R. Ballard, *Melvin J. Ballard: Crusader for Righteousness* (1966), 132–33.

12. John 6:48.

13. John 4:10.

14. 3 Nephi 20:8–9.

15. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.

16. 3 Nephi 9:14.

17. I’m grateful to Ann Madsen for her insight on this principle.

18. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 283.

