

The Sacrament Can Help Us Become Holy

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Consider five ways to increase the impact and power of our regular participation in the sacred ordinance of the sacrament.

One of my earliest memories is of sacrament meetings held in our home in Warrnambool, Australia. Between 10 and 15 people attended our branch, and my father, one of three priesthood holders, regularly had the opportunity to bless the sacrament. I remember the feelings I had as he humbly and carefully read the words of the sacrament prayers. Often his voice trembled as he felt the Spirit. He sometimes had to pause to control his emotions before completing the prayer.

As a five-year-old, I could not understand the full meaning of what was being said or done; however, I knew something special was occurring. I could feel the calm and reassuring influence of the Holy Ghost as my father contemplated the Savior's love for us.

The Savior taught: "This shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you" (3 Nephi 18:11).

I invite all of us to consider five ways to increase the impact and power of our regular participation in the sacred ordinance of the sacrament, an ordinance that can help us become holy.

1. Prepare in Advance

We can begin our preparation for the sacrament well before sacrament meeting begins. Saturday may be a good time to contemplate our spiritual progress and preparation.

Mortality is an essential gift in our journey to become like our Heavenly Father. Of necessity, it includes trials and challenges that provide opportunities for us to change and grow. King Benjamin taught that "the natural man is an enemy to God, ... and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord" (Mosiah 3:19). Participation in the sacrament ordinance provides an opportunity to more fully yield our hearts and souls to God.

In our preparation, our hearts become broken as we express gratitude for Christ's Atonement, repent of our mistakes and shortcomings, and ask for the Father's help in our continuing journey to become more like Him. We can then look forward to the opportunity the sacrament provides to remember His sacrifice and renew our commitments to all the covenants we have made.

2. Arrive Early

Our sacrament experience can be enhanced when we arrive well before the meeting and ponder as the prelude music is played.

President Boyd K. Packer taught: "Prelude music, reverently played, is nourishment for the spirit. It invites inspiration."¹ "This is not a time," President Russell M. Nelson explained, "for conversation or transmission of messages but a period of prayerful meditation as leaders and members prepare spiritually for the sacrament."²

3. Sing and Learn from the Words of the Sacrament Hymn

The sacrament hymn is an especially important part of our sacrament experience. Music elevates our thoughts and feelings. The sacrament hymn has even greater influence when we focus on the words and the powerful doctrine taught. We learn much from words such as "Bruised, broken, torn for us,"³ "Let us remember and be sure our hearts and hands are clean and pure,"⁴ and "Where justice, love, and mercy meet in harmony divine!"⁵

As we sing a hymn in preparation to partake of the emblems, the words can become part of our covenant commitment. Consider, for example: "We love thee, Lord; our hearts are full. We'll walk thy chosen way."⁶

4. Spiritually Participate in the Sacrament Prayers (See Moroni 4–5)

Instead of tuning out the familiar words of the sacrament prayers, we can learn much and feel even more as we participate spiritually by considering the commitments and associated blessings included in these sacred prayers.

The bread and water are blessed and sanctified to our souls. They remind us of the sacrifice of the Savior and that He can help us to become holy.

The prayers explain that we partake of the bread in remembrance of the body of the Son, which He gave as a ransom to qualify all for resurrection, and we drink of the water in remembrance of the blood of the Son, which He freely shed so that we might be redeemed on condition of repentance.

The prayers introduce the covenants with the phrase “that they are willing” (Moroni 4:3). This phrase has so much potential power for us. Are we willing to serve and participate? Are we willing to change? Are we willing to address our weaknesses? Are we willing to reach out and bless others? Are we willing to trust the Savior?

As the promises are stated and as we partake, we confirm in our hearts that we are willing to:

- Take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ.
- Strive to keep all of His commandments.
- Always remember Him.

The prayer concludes with a sublime invitation and promise: “That they may always have his Spirit to be with them” (Moroni 4:3).

Paul wrote, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). Beautiful blessings and gifts are available to us as we keep our covenants.

5. Ponder and Remember Him as the Sacrament Emblems Are Passed

The reverent moments as priesthood holders pass the sacrament can become sacred to us.

As the bread is passed, we may contemplate that in the ultimate act of love for us, the Savior took “upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people” (Alma 7:12).

We may remember the glorious blessing of the Resurrection that “shall come to all, ... both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame” (Alma 11:44).

As the water is passed, we may remember the plea of the Savior:

“Behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; ...

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:16, 18).

We remember that He took “upon him [our] infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to

succor his people according to [our] infirmities" (Alma 7:12).

As we consider our sacrament experience, we might ask ourselves:

- What will I do this week to better prepare for the sacrament?
- Could I contribute more to the reverence and revelation that can accompany the beginning of sacrament meeting?
- What doctrine was taught in the sacrament hymn?
- What did I hear and feel as I listened to the sacrament prayers?
- What did I think about as the sacrament was passed?

Elder David A. Bednar taught: "The ordinance of the sacrament is a holy and repeated invitation to repent sincerely and to be renewed spiritually. The act of partaking of the sacrament, in and of itself, does not remit sins. But as we prepare conscientiously and participate in this holy ordinance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, then the promise is that we may *always* have the Spirit of the Lord to be with us. And by the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost as our constant companion, we can *always* retain a remission of our sins."⁷

I testify of the multitude of blessings available to us as we increase our preparation for and spiritual participation in the ordinance of the sacrament. I further testify that these blessings are available to us because of the love of our Father in Heaven and the infinite atoning sacrifice of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In His sacred name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

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