

What does God do in the Lord's Supper?
The sacrament is a means of grace.
Dr. Jerry Nelson

When we participate in the Lord's Supper, we often think of what **we** do; we remember, confess, and renew our commitment to Christ **but what is God doing?**

As we participate in the Lord's Supper God grants to us his grace in the moment by affirming the truth of Christ's cross-work for us, confirming our saving-relationship to Jesus and thus building our faith. When we come humbly seeking the Lord Jesus in faith, he comes to us in the bread and cup. And while he is not physically present he is very personally and really present. The bread and wine are physical realities symbolic of spiritual realities.

There is mystery in this but not magic. It is not as if by merely eating the bread and drinking the cup we are benefited. No, we must eat and drink in faith, trusting God, by his Spirit, to act on our behalf. In other words, by faith we are taking him in, trusting him, reaffirming our faith, declaring anew our belief and trust in him. And in that he ministers his grace enabling us to trust him more fully. There is a mysterious synergy that we cannot fully explain when faith and grace meet.

Until the day we see him face to face, there can be no sweeter, more intimate, fellowship with Jesus than what he offers us in the bread and cup. He comes to us - He joins our spirits to commune with us, reassure us, and strengthen us.

264 words

See several other views below:

Understanding Christian Theology by Swindoll and Zuck
RE. Baptism: "Christians who avoid baptism miss a great blessing. They also miss an opportunity to testify to others their identification with Christ. Faith is strengthened both in the life of the believer and in those who witness the event." 1153
(GLN – what "blessing? How is faith strengthened?)

Zwingli's "memorial view of the ordinance (of the Lord's Supper) prevails in most evangelical churches today. Primarily the Lord's Supper symbolized the Lord's death...We remember... Furthermore, the Lord's supper allows believers to give thanks for Christ's gracious sacrifice on the cross....In taking communion, Christians participate in the blessings of salvation. Though Christ is not present in the elements (GLN - contra both RC and Reformers), there is a sense of his presence among the faithful. Communion thus gives the church a great opportunity to worship God and to give thanks for the gift of salvation." 1154-55

Introducing Christian Doctrine by Millard Erickson

"There is a strong connection between baptism and our being united with Christ in his death and resurrection... While faith is possible without baptism (i.e. salvation does not depend up on one's being baptized) baptism is a natural accompaniment and the completion of faith. Baptism is then a powerful proclamation of the truth of what Christ has done; it is a 'word in water' testifying to the believer's participation in the death and resurrection of Christ." 362
(GLN – Erickson sees baptism as an outward symbol or indication of an inward change but seems to give it no place as a means of grace.)

Erickson holds to a Zwinglian view of the Lord's Supper and writes:
"We should look forward to the Lord's Supper as a time of relationship and communion with Christ. We should come to each observance of it with the confidence that we will therein meet with him, for he has promised to meet with us. We should think of the sacrament not so much in terms of Christ's presence as in terms of his promise and the potential for a closer relationship with him." 366
(GLN – this seem contradictory – not presence but relationship?)

Erickson does give a fairly good summary of the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper: "There is, then, a genuine objective benefit of the sacrament. It is not generated by the participant; rather, it is brought to the sacrament by Christ himself. By taking the elements the participant actually receives anew and continually the vitality of Christ. This benefit should not be thought of as automatic, however. The effect of the sacrament depends in large part upon the faith and receptivity of the participant." 365