

# Major Features of a Disciples Theology of the Lord's Supper

Mark G. Toulouse

1. The past is collapsed into the present (anamnesis); it represents an active demonstration of the present love and grace of God; it “inscribes the image of God upon the human heart”
2. Therefore, the emphasis is on the divine initiative and action of God first, and then upon the human response of faith—the supper proclaims that God forgives sinners, and that Christians need to understand themselves in relation to the love of God—in this way, the Supper lifts up the sacrifice of Christ in a way that enables us to understand ourselves as now standing directly in relation to God’s gracious action of forgiveness—this is an undeserved gift offered in the life and work of Christ
3. The supper acts to develop human character: the Holy Spirit communicates in a way that helps Christians come to terms with their identity—they learn who God is, who Jesus is, and who they are; there is both a personal (confront own participation in sin) and a social (recognize the need to participate in the healing of creation) response to participation in the supper
4. The importance of prayer: to offer thanksgiving, to call upon or to invoke (epiclesis) the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst, to focus on remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus, the anticipation of God’s victory, awareness of the presence of Christ with us, appreciation for the richness of meaning of the supper
5. That worthiness to approach the table is understood in somewhat the same way as John Calvin emphasized: salvation comes from God, not from our own actions
6. It is the Lord’s table
7. It is an open table
8. The supper lifts up the unity of all God’s children with one another—it brings all Christians into relationship with both God and all those who are the children of God, in all places and in all times.
9. The supper is an anticipation of what is to come (the reign of God): it looks forward to the joyful time when the whole of creation is healed and lives together in justice, harmony, peace, and joy
10. The assertion of the theological (as compared to pragmatic) centrality of the supper to all we do the assertion of the theological centrality of the supper in all we do, and how that centrality might be featured even in our order of worship (following preaching as the culmination of worship)