Weekly Communion

Q: Why do churches of Christ weekly partake of the Lord’s Supper?

A: Shortly after the establishment of the Church, congregations of Christians began to exert themselves in acts of worship, devotion, evangelism, and benevolent service. Acts 2.42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” That the breaking of bread here mentioned refers to the Lord’s Supper is evident, 1) by its connection with these other acts of spiritual devotion (a common meal would hardly have a place in this list), and 2) by the use of this expression to describe the Lord’s Supper in the earliest days of the Church (1 Cor. 11.16-17).

Thus, early Christians were “steadfast” and “continuous” in their observance of these ordinances and expressions of worship[[1]](#footnote-1). 1 Corinthians 11.26 states the Lord’s Supper was “often” eaten by the early Christians. But how often? Acts 20.7 provides the answer, “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” According to this record, “the first day of the week” was “when the disciples [the local congregation] came together to *break bread* [eat the Lord’s Supper].” This language implies a consistent practice or tradition[[2]](#footnote-2).

Because Acts 20.7 is the only New Testament example of “when the disciples came together to break bread,” and because it bears the authoritative stamp of apostolic approval and endorsement (Paul did this with them), there is no scriptural alternative to weekly communion. If the scriptures are to be considered a sufficient guide in religion, and we believe they are, then it follows that the Holy Spirit included this historical record (in part) to inform later generations of Christians “when the disciples [the local congregation]” should come “together to break bread [eat the Lord’s Supper].”

As to the issue of communing every week, Scripture gives reasons why this should be. The language used implies a weekly observance, harkening back to the language of the Sabbath in the Old Law. The Mosaic economy had a complex liturgical calendar composed of sacred days, weeks, months, and years. When commanding a monthly observance, the day of the month would be given. For instance, the Passover was observed on the 14th day of the first month (Lev. 23:5), and since every year had that day, it logically followed that the Passover was once a year, every year. There were other days God wanted observed monthly, Numbers 28:14 and 29:6 speak of offerings made on the “new moon”. Every month has a new moon, thus these observances were once a month, every month. Some days, like the Sabbath, that God wanted observed every week, and so he said to it was to be on the “seventh day”. Since every week has a seventh day that meant it was once a week, every week. Luke says, “Upon the first day of the week… the disciples came together to break bread,” thus, since every week has a first day, this would be a weekly custom.

1. The statement, “they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” simply means that they obeyed what the apostles taught. All the early church did was under the guidance and instruction of the apostles. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Those who allege that Troas gathered on Sunday as an incidental assembly for Paul’s convenience overlook the fact that, although Paul was “ready to depart” (Acts 20.7) and “hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost,” (20.16) the he and his company “stayed seven days” (20.6) in Troas. This assembly was anything by *convenient* for Paul! Thus, Paul’s prolonged stay must have been a conscientious decision not to miss a Lord’s Day assembly. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)