

# COVENANT MEMORIAL

## A Fresh Perspective on Real Presence

### Essay No 8

## Deepening Practice Without Blowing Up the Church

### A Teaching Philosophy for Covenant-Focused Leaders

#### Foundational Conviction

**You do not change a church by winning arguments.**

**You change a church by changing what people see God doing.**

This philosophy is built on the belief that theological depth spreads best through:

- **practice before polemic,**
- **retrieval before correction,**
- **framing before explanation,**
- **principle before detail.**

### 1. Lead with Scripture's Grammar, Not Your Conclusions

#### Principle

**Teach what the Bible does before explaining how theology explains it.**

Most church conflict happens when leaders begin with:

- theological labels,
- historical disputes,
- or corrective negations (“This isn’t just a symbol…”).

Instead, begin with:

- biblical narratives,
- scriptural patterns,
- covenant logic people recognise once they see it.

#### Application

- Teach **Exodus 12** long before mentioning “Real Presence.”
- Teach “**God remembers his covenant**” before teaching sacramentality.

- Let *zikkaron* logic do the lifting.

People accept frameworks that feel *biblical* long before they accept terminology.

## 2. Normalise the Language of Retrieval, Not Revision

### Principle

**Say “we are remembering something” more often than “we are correcting something.”**

Churches are destabilised by the sense that:

- “Everything we believed was wrong”,
- “Now we need to unlearn”.

They are strengthened by hearing:

- “This has always been here”,
- “Scripture has been saying this all along”,
- “The Church once spoke this way”.

### Application

Use phrases like:

- “Scripture gives us a deeper way to say this...”
- “The early Church often talked this way...”
- “We’ve sometimes narrowed this, but the Bible is broader...”.

This disarms defensiveness without diluting truth.

## 3. Change Practice Gently Before Changing Explanations

### Principle

**People often believe with their actions before they articulate with their words.**

Liturgical and sacramental practices carry theology quietly and powerfully.

### Application

- Introduce **slightly fuller Communion prayers** before teaching on presence.
- Add **a moment of silence or reconciliation** before the Table.
- Use **biblical words** (covenant, remembrance, thanksgiving) rather than doctrinal shorthand.

When people *experience* depth, they become curious rather than anxious.

## 4. Avoid Forcing Old Debates into New Teaching

### Principle

## **Most people don't need their ancestors' arguments—only their ancestors' wisdom.**

Many churches are internally peaceful until leaders revive:

- Reformation polemics,
- “Catholic vs Protestant” binaries,
- metaphysical explanations nobody asked for.

### **Application**

- Teach positively, not contrastively, in public settings.
- Reserve explicit comparisons (e.g. transubstantiation, Zwingli) for small groups or leadership training.
- In sermons, never teach *against* a view that hasn't actually been voiced in your congregation.

Depth does not require controversy.

## **5. Keep the Gospel Centre Explicit and Repeated**

### **Principle**

**Depth becomes dangerous when people fear the gospel is being displaced.**

Many evangelicals panic not because they hate theology, but because they fear losing:

- assurance,
- grace,
- the cross,
- clarity.

### **Application**

Constantly reaffirm:

- Christ's sacrifice is once-for-all,
- Forgiveness is not earned by ritual,
- Communion is gift, not test,
- Faith rests on Christ, not performance.

Say these things more often than you think you need to.

## **6. Treat Leaders as Theological Multipliers, Not Enforcers**

### **Principle**

**Pastors/elders shift culture; other leaders stabilise it.**

If leaders feel ambushed or confused, they will (consciously or unconsciously) slow, block, or distort change.

### **Application**

- Share theological rationale **with leaders first**, privately and patiently.
- Invite questions and concerns without rushing to correct them.
- Allow leaders to *translate* teaching into their own pastoral voice.

Unity of *trust* matters more than uniformity of *language*.

## 7. Make Space for Mystery Without Losing Anchors

### Principle

**Scripture is precise where it must be, and spacious where it can be.**

Trying to over-define presence, atonement, or sacrament often creates:

- brittle faith,
- unnecessary conflict,
- semantic traps.

### Application

Model language like:

- “Scripture says enough for us to trust, but not everything to control.”
- “We receive more than we can explain.”
- “God keeps his promises, even when we can’t map the mechanism.”

This reassures analytical minds while protecting reverence.

## 8. Measure Success by Fruit, Not Reaction

### Principle

**If holiness, unity, gratitude, and hope increase, you are teaching well—even if confusion remains for a while.**

Depth unsettles at first. The wrong metric is:

- “Did everyone immediately understand?”

The right metrics are:

- Greater seriousness at the Table,
- Less fear-driven spirituality,
- More reconciliation among believers,
- Deeper gratitude for grace,
- Increased confidence in God’s faithfulness.

These are covenant fruits.

## 9. Know When *Not* to Teach Something Yet

### Principle

## Timing is part of truthfulness.

Some things are right *but not ripe*.

### Application

Pause if:

- leadership trust is fragile,
- the congregation is in crisis,
- people are processing major transitions.

Depth requires stability. Jesus withheld truths until his disciples could bear them.

## 10. Summative Guiding Sentence for Leaders

If leaders need a single sentence to guide all of this, it would be:

**Teach people to trust what God is doing before teaching them how to explain it.**

That sentence alone prevents most theological explosions.

## Final Encouragement to Leaders

We are not pursuing *change for change's sake*.

It is:

- recovery of biblical fullness,
- healing of fragmented theology,
- deepening of practice,
- strengthening of faith.

If done patiently, humbly, and scripturally, it will feel less like “introducing new ideas” and more like **the church remembering who she has always been**.

Leaders are invited not just to collect ideas from this material; but to **test the weight**—seeing whether these threads genuinely cohere, whether they *bear weight* over time, Scripture, and pastoral reality. That kind of reflection can't be rushed, and it shouldn't be.

What has emerged is not a system that demands immediate application, but a **lens** leaders can quietly keep using as they reread Scripture, pray, and watch the church. If it's worthy, it will keep confirming itself without needing to be defended.

Good theological retrieval often deepens by **absence** first. Things you no longer feel pressured to say are just as revealing as things you want to say more clearly.