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STUDY GUIDE

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The Wedding Rehearsal

This chapter is based on Matthew 22:1-14. Take a moment to read the parable of the wedding feast in its entirety as you begin this study.

1. What are some reasons people might dislike closed Communion? (p. 20)
2. What do you think Shep means on page 20 when he says, “Closed Communion isn’t meant to keep folks from participating in the Lord’s Supper, but to get them to His Table where they can receive God’s gifts?”
3. In the parable, who is invited to the wedding feast?
4. Why do some make light of the invitation?
5. How is a café or an open buffet different from a wedding rehearsal dinner or from the Lord’s Supper? (pp. 22-24, 30)
6. What is the difference between being a spectator at a wedding and being part of the wedding party—especially the bride and groom?
7. Is it appropriate to go to a wedding rehearsal without RSVPing? Is it appropriate to go to the Lord’s Supper without RSVPing? What would RSVPing before going to the Lord’s Supper entail?

8. What do you make of it when Shep says, "Wedding guests don't just get to come as they are"? (p. 27) Are we entitled to the Lord's Supper?

9. In the parable the king invites everyone to the wedding feast and gives everyone the clothing needed to attend. What is the clothing? (p. 29)

10. Is Baptism necessary before receiving the Lord's Supper? Why? See Acts 2:37-42 and Exodus 12:48.

11. Discuss what Shep means when he says, "Closed communion is being honest at the rehearsal about what's to come." And with regards to open communion, "They're not exactly practicing for Heaven the way Heaven is... Open Communion encourages a false view of God and heaven; it welcomes people to practice something that isn't preparing for the event to come. A church that practices closed Communion is a church that invites anybody and everybody to Heaven and then prepares them to be welcomed at the Lord's marriage feast when he finally returns." (pp. 33-34)

12. What is the difference between invitation and preparation? How are Baptism, preaching the Gospel, and Communion different in terms of who they are for?

13. What does preparation for Communion entail? How do preparation, Baptism, repentance, and forgiveness of sins relate to each other?

Shut Out

Take a moment to read Matthew 25:1-13, the parable of the ten virgins, in its entirety as you begin this chapter.

1. Who are the ten virgins? What do they represent? (pp. 40-41)
2. Why is it that they are asleep?
3. Why are people shut out of the banquet hall? (p. 40)
4. What is the lamp? What is the oil? What are we given in Baptism?
5. How can faith evaporate? (p. 42)
6. What is it that feeds our faith?
7. How are the church and pastors sellers of oil?
8. Read Isaiah 55:1-3. To what is this speaking?

9. How are we made wise with Communion? (pp. 45-46.)

10. How is closed Communion preparation for the end when some will be shut out? (pp. 46-47)

11. How is God shutting out Adam and Eve from the garden preparation for closed Communion? (pp. 47-48)

12. Discuss the last paragraph on pages 48-49.

A Little History

1. Were you ever taught that closed Communion was the historic practice of the church?

2. Why would the clergy need to know the person communing? (p. 53)

3. What does it mean that a member is in good standing? (p. 54)

4. Have you ever experienced a practice in the Church where you had to have a letter in order to take Communion at another congregation?

5. What does *orthodox* mean? (pp. 55-56)

6. What do you make of the statement by Shep on page 57: “The Church wants what God wants, for everyone to receive the life-giving, faith-strengthening, grace-giving gift of Communion. If you’re a repentant, baptized believer who has confessed Christ before the world according to what Scripture says, then Jesus confesses you before his Father and you’re welcomed to the family table?”

7. What does *heterodox* mean? (p. 58)

8. On what things can a heterodox church be different?

9. How might the opinions of man end up being taught rather than the Word of God? (p. 59)

10. Why did the Church write the Nicene Creed in 325? (pp. 59-60)

11. What is a creed? Why do we have creeds now? (p. 60)

12. Why did the Church form the Apostles' Creed? (p. 61)

13. What do you make of the last sentence about closed Communion teaching the truth?

The Family Table

1. What are your thoughts on the Communion service that the narrator describes? (pp. 65-66)
2. Should taking Communion at a church where one isn't actually a member be a matter of personal decision? (pp. 66)
3. Should Communion be "individualized?" Explain your answer.
4. Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-22. How was Communion abused and "individualized in a horrible way?" (pp. 67-68)
5. Is it always rude to say "no?" Why does our culture think it is? (p. 69)
6. What do you make of Shep's statement, "The church doesn't have customers and is focused on remaining faithful to God?" Would people agree with that today? P. 70
7. What do you make of Shep's comparison of Communion to a family meal? Is it rude to expect to have Communion at a congregation to which you don't belong? (pp. 72-74)

8. What might Shep mean when he says, "Communion isn't for the entitled visitor. It's for the humble believer."? (p. 74)

9. On page 75, when talking about eating dinner at someone else's house, Shep says, "That's humility. That's recognizing that you're a guest and even though you're welcome among them, until you're a part of the family, until you're treated like another one of the kids, you act like a guest." Isn't this just common sense? Why would people need to be taught this about the Church today?

Allergies and Truth

1. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. What does St. Paul mean when he says, "Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes?"
2. What are two ways we can speak of the Gospel?
3. Do all denominations proclaim the Lord's death (the Gospel) in the same way? (pp. 80-81)
4. What does it mean to examine one's self?
5. Why is it necessary to have a pastor help in this self-examination? (p. 84)
6. What has been your understanding of a pastor's role in the church? Has it coincided with passages such as Hebrews 13:7; 1 Timothy 1:3, 6:3; Titus 1:9; and 2:10? (See also Luther's Small Catechism, "What Hearers Owe Their Pastors.")
7. What does Shep mean when he says we are allergic to what's not true? (p. 91)
8. What do you make of Shep's statement, "Closed communion assists people in discerning the truth"?

9. Read 1 Corinthians 10:15-21. What verse speaks to the fact that there is a unifying aspect to the Lord's Supper?

10. What does the people of Corinth taking part in the sacrifices in pagan temples have to do with fellowship? (p. 93)

11. What is the peanut allergy that closed Communion guards us against? (p. 940)

12. Shep says that closed Communion declares that not all churches are the same. How does this statement sound to people in our age of relativism?

The Medicine of Immortality

1. Shep mentions Ignatius of Antioch. How does our knowledge of such people support the truth of Scripture? (p. 98)

2. Why is “Medicine of Immortality” a fitting name for the Sacrament?

3. Why shouldn't some receive the medicine? (p. 102)

4. Do you agree with Shep when he says, “First, everything Scripture says is important. Second, you can't trust God in one article of faith and deny Him in another. The Bible's teaching is singular. God is everything in each article of the faith and all of them are united in Him.”? Explain.

5. How does the analogy of having instructions from the pharmacist relate to the Lord's Supper? (pp. 103-104)

6. How does what Shep says on page 104 explain the need for regular church attendance?

7. Why should pastors teach more about the Sacrament? (pp. 104-105)

8. How does the phrase, “We obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29) apply to pastors administering the Sacrament? (p. 105)

9. How is receiving the Lord’s Supper like a blood transfusion? (pp. 106-107)

10. Why would a pastor have to withhold Communion from a parishioner? (p. 108)

11. How does giving or withholding Communion relate to the office of the keys? (See John 20:22-23)

12. C.F.W. Walther said, “Rightly distinguishing the Law and the Gospel is the most difficult and the highest art of Christians in general and of theologians in particular. It is taught only by the Holy Spirit in the school of experience.” How does this apply to a pastor’s job of administering the Sacrament? (pp. 108-109)

Exercising the Faith Muscle

1. What are some reasons why the church doesn't have Communion every Sunday? (p. 112)

2. How is Communion related to Lord serving us in his incarnation and death on the cross? (pp. 112-113)

3. How does the fact that the Lord's Supper is a last will and testament affect our view of it? (See Hebrews 9:15-18)

4. What is pietism? How does that relate to replacing wine with grape juice? (p. 115)

5. When was non-alcoholic grape juice first used in the Lords' Supper? What danger does innovation bring to the Church? (pp. 117-118)

6. Do we receive Christ's flesh and blood under the bread and the wine?

7. Read John 20:24-29. Why did Thomas believe? What do Jesus words say about how we come to faith and stay in the faith? (pp. 119-120)

8. Christians are to be humble and trust God's word. How does believing the Lord's Supper is truly Christ's body and blood keep us humble and help us to trust in God's word? How does believing that the Lord's Supper is Christ's body and blood strengthen faith? (pp. 121-122)

I Am the Bread

1. What causes division? Is it God's Word or people's reaction to it? (See 1 Timothy 1:3, 6:3; 2 Timothy 6:3; and Romans 16:17. (p. 126)

2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. How does the true body and blood of Christ relate to the foolishness of the cross? (p. 129)

3. What is the distinction between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross and how does this apply to Communion and other ways that God works through His Word and Sacraments?

4. What other Biblical teachings, besides Communion, does the world see as foolish?

5. Is the heterodox person showing disbelief by not believing in the true presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament? What is the danger of that?

6. How is Communion the word of the cross? (p 132)

7. When it comes down to it, what's it all about? (p. 132)

8. Shep says on page 133, "It's about who we trust: God or ourselves. We either believe what He says or what we think." What are some of the other things we trust more than God's Word?

9. Would it be easier for us to believe if Jesus were right in front of us? (pp. 133, 136)

10. Read John 6:27-59. What does Jesus mean when He says, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." Who is doing the work? (pp. 134-135)

11. What does Jesus mean when He says, "I am the bread of life. The bread which I give is my flesh."? (p. 138)

12. How do we feed on Jesus?

13. After reading the entire book, is the last paragraph true? How so? (p. 143)