

***Study Guide Questions for
Through Fire and Water***

by Elwood Yoder

Chapters 1 - 5

Discussion Questions for High School classes, Sunday Schools, youth groups, and other settings

Chapter 1 - The apostles build the church

1. Review the story of Pentecost in Acts 2. What was God's purpose in pouring out the Holy Spirit on that day?
2. How does one receive the gift of the Holy Spirit today?
3. Harry Loewen writes that people in the time of Jesus viewed him as a radical. List at least three reasons why people of Jesus' time might have felt that way about Him.
4. Why do think it has been an important Christian doctrine to affirm that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine?
5. By the year A.D. 300 there were many Christians in the Roman Empire. Estimates range from about 10% to as much as 50% of the people had become Christian. What do you feel are the most important reasons why Christianity spread so rapidly and became so popular in the Empire?
6. Why do you think that down through the many centuries of the church Tertullian's maxim has remained true: "the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church"?
7. How did the character of Christianity change after Constantine legalized Christianity in A.D. 313?
8. What are 2-3 directions that St. Augustine set for the church in the early 400s A.D.?
9. From the map on page 41, which are the five patriarchal cities in the early church?

Chapter 2 - The church gains power and wealth

1. Read the introduction, "Rich in things, yet poor in soul," page 42, and then read the story in your Bible from Acts 3:1-4:22. How do you think the story of Peter and John healing the crippled beggar demonstrates the power of the Holy Spirit moving among the believers in the early Christian Movement?
2. Read "The church defines right belief," then turn in your Bible to Matthew 16:13-20. Analyze Jesus' reply in verses 17-19. See the notes in your study Bible or a commentary for assistance. In your own words, what is the meaning of Jesus' answer to Peter?
3. How did the agreement by the bishops in Nicaea against Arius, with Constantine's support, demonstrate how the church was becoming formalized in the 300s?
4. Why did the bishop of Rome emerge as the most influential and powerful leader by the mid 400s?
5. What are four or five reasons why the Catholic Church split in two?
6. What were the factors that led to the emergence of the Monastic Movement?
7. Harry Loewen writes that "by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the church was in serious trouble." Write down four or five examples to support this contention.
8. Why was John Hus burned at the stake?
9. Why did the Catholic Church leaders persecute the Waldensians?

Chapter 3 - Reformers shake the church

1. How did 15th and 16th century feelings of nationalism in Europe help make the Reformation possible?
2. How did 16th century Christian Humanism help make the Reformation possible?
3. Read Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:16-17, and Galatians 3:11. What do you think the phrase "the righteous shall live by faith means"?
4. Why was Martin Luther so opposed to the sale of indulgences?

5. List the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. Which two did Luther believe were sacraments?
 6. Why did Luther refuse to back down from his beliefs and writings at the Diet of Worms?
 7. Why did Luther take the side of the nobles in the Peasant's War?
 8. How did the Peasant's War help the Anabaptists?
 9. What does Harry Loewen mean by the statement that "what Luther was for Germany, Zwingli was for Switzerland?"
 10. Analyze the interaction of Luther's followers, Zwingli's followers, and the Catholic Church. What were some of the methods they used to resolve their differences?
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Chapter 4, The Swiss Brethren break with Zwingli

1. State the birthdates for the Reformation and the Anabaptist Movement, some eight years later:
2. Who was the first Zurich radical to be baptized? Why was Conrad Grebel reluctant to baptize Blaurock and the others?
3. Where did Harry Loewen, our text author, get this story of the first Anabaptist baptism?
4. Review the section on Ulrich Zwingli at the end of chapter 3 and see pages 83-84. What seemed to be the most divisive issue between Zwingli and the Grebel/Manz circle of radical reformers?
5. Read Mark 16:16. Do you think the early Anabaptists had a legitimate argument for believers baptism based on this passage? How did the Anabaptists challenge the concept of corpus christianum?
6. In a sentence or two, explain why Felix Manz was drowned in the Limat River in January, 1527.
7. Why did the Zurich radicals write to Thomas Muntzer?
8. Why did the Grebel circle react against singing German hymns? What scriptures could

be used to counter their views?

9. Other than singing, describe the fundamental issues separating the beliefs of the Swiss brethren and Thomas Muntzer.

10. Why did a group of Anabaptists meet in Schleithem, Germany, in February, 1527?

11. A Confession of Faith states the overall basic beliefs of theology held by a particular Christian church or denomination. How does the Schleithem "Brotherly Union" differ from a regular confession of faith? Why did the Anabaptists radicals choose these seven points?

12. How did Menno Simons differ from Michael Sattler's beliefs regarding separation from the world?

13. What were the two charges against Michael Sattler at his trial in May, 1527?

14. Why did Anabaptism spread so rapidly among the masses?

15. What does Harold S. Bender believe were the primary contributions of the Anabaptists to American Protestantism and democracy?

16. In what way was the Anabaptist Movement a "restoration" attempt rather than a reformation?

Chapter 5, Anabaptism develops in Netherlands

1. Melchoir Hofmann was a charismatic leader, driven by an apocalyptic passion (look up the term "apocalyptic" in a dictionary). If you had lived in Emden in 1530, what kind of sermons might you have heard Hofmann deliver, in terms of style and content?

2. Chapter 5 describes the Anabaptist takeover of Munster, 1534-35. If most Anabaptists were nonviolent, in what way can the Munster radicals be classified as "Anabaptists"? In other words, what is the connection between the Munster Anabaptists and the Swiss Brethren?

3. What kind of a leader was Jan van Leyden? In what ways did his life and practice deviate from teachings in the Bible?

4. Can you think of any twentieth century leaders with similar characteristics to Jan van Leyden? Can you remember any tragedies in the twentieth century similar to the Munster

movement?

5. What effects did the Munster madness have on the larger Anabaptist Movement?
6. Name and briefly describe the 4-5 main issues/events which led Menno Simons to become an Anabaptist.
7. What gifts did Menno Simons bring to the beleaguered Dutch Anabaptist Movement in 1536?
8. Why did Countess Anna use the name "Mennist" in 1544?
9. While many Anabaptist leaders died a martyr's death, Menno Simons died a natural death in 1561. What seem to be the major reasons why he was never apprehended and executed for his beliefs?
10. Harry Loewen argues that Menno Simons task was more difficult than the other reformers because he worked to establish a different kind of church than the other believers. Explain Loewen's argument.
11. Looking back from our perspective today some would judge the Dutch Anabaptists for exercising the ban too harshly. From the vantage point of Anabaptists in Wismar or Emden, however, in the mid 16th century, why was the use of the ban such an important part of their community life?