

# STUDY GUIDE: WATER FOR YOUR SOUL

(with special thanks to Priscilla Circle, Holmen Lutheran Church)

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*The author grants permission to small groups and encourages them to use this study guide for his book, **Water for Your Soul**. The study guide is adaptable, probably most suited to three chapters at a time for ten sessions or six chapters for each of five sessions, but one chapter a time will work too. The choice is yours. With fewer sessions, questions will need to be omitted. To supplement the questions on each chapter, a Bible reference is added which, along with thinking about the haiku, could lead a group from discussion into prayer. See the book's Introduction and Appendix for more ideas for using the book alone or with others.*

## 1. Water for the Soul

1. What are the ways water is important in our lives?
2. What is water's significance in baptism?
3. The author says baptism gives benefits enough to spend a lifetime learning them. What does he mean?
4. Read John 10:10b. How would you connect this verse to this chapter?
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 2. The Inheritance

1. How can we remember our baptism even if we were infants at the time?
2. What inheritance did we receive at our baptism?
3. What gifts do we receive at baptism?
4. Read John 16:15. How does it speak to our inheritance?
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 3. Along for the Ride

1. In Colossians 2:12 and 3:3 we read that we were buried with Christ in baptism and were raised with him from the dead. What does "with" mean?
2. Read and discuss the story on pages 12-13 with reference to this "with."
3. Read St. Patrick's prayer, then pause, and share what you received from it.
4. Thoughts about the haiku

## 4. Always a Gift

1. About baptism: what about "getting it done," or baptism as a "right?"
2. Why do baptism and discipleship go together?
3. What is the difference between wanting to be baptized and wanting the life of the baptized?
4. Read Matthew 28:19 in relation to this chapter's theme.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 5. God Gets Physical

1. If you saw or read *The DaVinci Code*, how did you react to it?
2. How does the author contrast the spirituality of baptism with Gnosticism?
3. How would you feel about baptism by immersion? Are there any advantages?
4. Note in John 3:5 the links of physical and spiritual.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 6. Dress Rehearsal

1. What is the white gown's significance at baptism?
2. How are the church community and the liturgy gifts at baptism?
3. In what ways is the worship service (and its parts) a dress rehearsal for our vocation in the world?
4. Read Romans 12:1-2 thinking of worship as dress rehearsal.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 7. Safe in the Waters

1. Do you think about dying? Have you ever come close to dying?
2. What meaning and value does the author find for us to "die and rise with Christ in baptism?"
3. In what sense does baptism make us "safe?"
4. Read Colossians 3:3 with the previous question in mind.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 8. New Every Day

1. What is the baptized life like – at its heart – according to the author?
2. Read paragraph four on confession and forgiveness, and share your thoughts.
3. What do you think about practicing the face-washing ritual on page 30?
4. Read Isaiah 1:18 for the promise of God.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 9. God Slept Here

1. The author describes our whole life as a response to baptism. "First God acts, then we respond." How does he think the world tries to change that?
2. Another thought: if God acts first, then maybe we should pay more attention to where God is at work in us and in the world. Where is God at work in you?
3. What keeps us/people from taking "the first step" (last paragraph)?
4. Joshua 24:15 asks for a decision, but do we remember what happened first?
5. Thoughts about the haiku

#### 10. What the Waters Reveal

1. Describe one or two ways you have experienced the power of water.
2. The author writes on page 36: “The waters of baptism help us see both our need and the promise of life in God.” Give examples of each.
3. Referring to the story on page 37, why do you think the touch of water from the font felt so good to Joe?
4. Read Psalm 51:2 and think about when you have experienced that.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

#### 11. Sleeping and Waking

1. Is there something that is keeping (or has kept) you awake at night?
2. “Falling asleep is a form of dying.” What would you say about this?
3. What practices for falling asleep are helpful to you?
4. Read the first verses of Ecclesiastes 3 in relation to this chapter.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

#### 12. Looking into the Darkness

1. What does Luther’s picture of looking into the darkness and there seeing Christ mean to you?
2. Is there someone who has been a light in the darkness for you?
3. If “light is our vocation from God” (p. 43), how do you see that working out in your life?
4. Read Matthew 5:16 related to question 3.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

#### 13. Making the Sign

1. What were your first thoughts about making the sign of the cross?
2. How can the ritual of making the sign of the cross on our bodies have such a powerful and positive effect on us?
3. What are three reasons for making the sign of the cross?
4. Read I Corinthians 1:18 for Paul’s words on the cross.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

#### 14. Jesus Never Comes Alone

1. What does the author mean by “There is no baptism without a community?”
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the church’s role in baptism as “carrying the child.” What does this mean?
3. Read together the verse from Bret Hesla’s song.
4. Relate Galatians 3:27-28 to this chapter.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

15. In the Name

1. What is the value in knowing God's name?
2. Why does the baptism of infants make good sense?
3. What does the author say is baptism's wonderful freedom?
4. Read Matthew 28:18 about the name.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

16. The Rhythms of Prayer

1. Pray the Prayer of St. Francis, slowly, rhythmically. How did you feel?
2. In lines 2-8 of this prayer, where have you experienced the challenge and the movement from death to life?
3. When we say, "It was a time I received more than I gave," how is this like baptism – or the last two lines of the prayer?
4. Read John 12:14 for the promise of Jesus.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

17. The Rite Gift

1. What is your personal experience with making the sign of the cross?
2. How can you see yourself making the sign of the cross – privately or publicly, or with children or grandchildren?
3. What could be a personal blessing in making this sign?
4. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 for the use of a ritual in Israel.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

18. Real People

1. What does this author mean by "real people?"
2. What kinds of real people are a challenge for the church? For you?
3. "Baptism takes priority over my personal feelings about someone." Do you agree? How can this change things?
4. Read Romans 5:6-8 about God and real people.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

19. Are We There Yet?

1. How are we like children asking "Are we there yet?"
2. How is an understanding of Holy Saturday helpful for our lives as the baptized?
3. What help do you find in this chapter to live your "in between" times?
4. Think about the speaker of Mark 9:24 and this chapter's theme.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

20. Through the Waters

1. Tell of a time when you felt you were going through the Red Sea to something new.
2. Do you identify with any people in this chapter who had to change in order to lead?
3. Where is God when we are going "through the waters?"
4. Read Exodus 14:21-24 related to question 3.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 21. Amazing Beginnings

1. What was the point of Sean's story from the Baldacci novel?
2. Can you think of a time when God gave you a new beginning when you didn't expect it? What's to be learned?
3. Is God faithful when our future is different from what we imagined?
4. Think of the photo and Bible verse on page 74 as related to this theme.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 22. Dying to Change

1. What makes change difficult in the author's three examples?
2. What three factors are needed for us to change (mid. par., p. 77)?
3. How are Christians served by Christ in times of needed change?
4. Think of Philippians 4:12-13 related to the preceding question.
5. Thought about the haiku

## 23. Letting Go

1. Which of the stories of letting go speaks to your own heart?
2. What is a letting go you have experienced?
3. Why do you think we hang on to things even harmful to us?
4. Consider the words of the song "Borning Cry" related to this chapter.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 24. More Than Our Decisions

1. What center does baptism give us for our life and decisions?
2. As we the baptized grow in Christ and his body the church, what do we develop?
3. Can you name a time when what you did was affected by who you are?
4. Read Colossians 3:12 as a commentary on the previous question.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 25. What the World Runs On

1. Think of times you have been filled with wonder or appreciation for water.
2. What does the author mean that "water is a gift, given twice" (p. 85)?
3. How does water call us into the world? Where does it call you?
4. Read Genesis 1:10 for God's word about water.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

## 26. Spirit Blessed

1. What does it mean to you that you received the Holy Spirit when you were baptized?
2. What are clues to the Spirit's entry (par. four, p. 89)?
3. How would you describe marriage as connected to baptism?
4. Read about the Spirit and baptism in I Corinthians 12:13.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

### 27. A New Holiness

1. Without referring to this chapter, what does being holy mean to you?
2. How does the author challenge certain understandings of what it means to be holy?
3. If I Peter 2:10 were our mission statement, how might we be changed?
4. Thoughts about the haiku

### 28. The Front Line

1. How do you react to the first sentence as a key part of baptism: “Your orders are to report for duty at the front line.”
2. Is the fact that “his baptism pitched Jesus into battle with Satan” helpful in thinking of your own baptism?
3. Name the battlefields the author includes and add others you’re know about.
4. Consider the baptismal imagery in Ephesians 6:10-11.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

### 29. Thinking Differently

1. What’s going on with us when we say, “The devil made me do it?”
2. Give examples about how we the baptized can think differently in a helpful way?
3. Why is this new thinking not just a version of pop psychology? (par. four, p. 98)
4. Memorize Romans 6:11.
5. Thoughts about the haiku

### 30. Into the World

1. If baptism is “ordination for all Christians,” what does that mean for you?
2. What are the ways God calls you into the world?
3. Read Mark 10:45 for what Jesus said about his calling.
4. Thoughts about the haiku

### 31. Restless Hearts

1. Do you agree with the author that the lure of waters in our lives may contain an echo of God’s call?
2. What are reasons to pay attention to the restlessness we feel within us?
3. Read Psalm 42:1 for how the psalmist compares us to a deer.
4. Thoughts about the haiku