

## Discussion Questions

### *Lesson One: An Introduction*

1. Furman says, "A perfect picture always includes imperfect people." Describe the significance of this statement in the context of this lecture.
2. In his book *Our One Great Act of Fidelity*, the Rev. Ronald Rolheiser writes, "There comes a point, even with God, when words aren't enough...Physical embrace is what's needed. It's why Jesus gave us the Eucharist." Describe the need for the Eucharist in terms of the physicality of receiving Holy Communion.
3. Furman calls the Eucharist a snapshot of God's love for us. If this idea resonates with you, discuss how the Eucharist presents you with a perfect image of God's love.

### *Lesson Two: The Word of the Lord*

1. Consider the details that occur during the Liturgy of the Word -- the ritual moments surrounding each element in this liturgy (e.g. facing the cross when the gospel is read, saying "The Word of the Lord" when the readings are done, etc.) These details might differ depending on which church you attend (e.g. some churches sing the psalm and others read it). Pick one or two that stand out to you and explain why these gestures or rituals are important to you.
2. Furman says that during the Liturgy of the Word, the congregation's role is active. We actively offer God our attention; we actively listen. What does it mean to listen actively as opposed to passively?
3. Describe the relationship, as you understand it, between the sermon and the Word of God. Is the sermon an extension of the Word of God? An interpretation of God's Word? Help with understanding God's Word? Something else? Discuss.

### *Lesson Three: Offering*

1. Discuss the differences between public and private prayer. In what category does the Prayers of the People fall? What good does praying the Prayers of the People do?
2. Why do you think the Book of Common Prayer places the confession of sins right before the Great Thanksgiving and Communion?
3. Furman argues that the offering is the first time that we have full control over what happens because we can decide how much power (in the form of money) to cede to the church. Respond to this idea. What stands out about it? Do you agree with the argument? Does this approach to the offering make sense to you?

### *Lesson Four: The Holy Communion*

1. How does your church dispose of leftover bread and wine post-communion? How does this approach make you think/feel about the consecrated bread and wine? Discuss.
2. What do you receive when you take communion? How does the act of receiving communion affect your activities outside in the world?
3. Having listened to Furman's lecture, examine the Liturgy of The Table section of the Eucharist. Meditate on the words of the Great Thanksgiving, the Sanctus, the Lord's Prayer, the post-communion prayer. What now most resonates with you? Are you seeing anything with new eyes? Discuss.

## The Takeaway

### *Lesson One: An Introduction*

Picture a perfect experience that you shared with someone you love—a photograph of a perfect moment. St. Paul wrote, "Jesus is the image of the invisible God." If Jesus is the image of God, the Eucharist is a photograph of God's love. At the Last Supper, Jesus knew his friends would betray him, but he invited them all to this celebration of God's love with Jesus. A perfect picture always includes imperfect people. It did then, and it does now. We don't deserve love; we are loved because God loves us. The Eucharist is the picture of the love that God has for us—for God's delight. We don't deserve it. It's a gift we celebrate together. God delights in our celebrating love—singing, sharing communion in Christ's name. The Eucharist takes place in two acts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Table. The priest calls us together, prays an opening collect that collects the themes of the lessons and the occasion. Then we sing and speak our praise for all the blessings in our lives that we experience through Christ.

### *Lesson Two: The Word of God*

As he is about to proclaim the 10 Commandments Moses says, "Hear, O Israel." This is an eleventh commandment. Israel must first listen and pay attention—and "Israel" includes us. If we are to struggle with the mysterious ways of God, we must listen. The lessons and the sermon are not passive events for the congregation. We offer God our attention. We actively listen to God's story in the past and the present. We hear from most of all 4 gospels over 3 years, as well as from the rest of the Bible. The preacher tells us the Good News as it is now. In a good sermon, you dive right in. The preacher must dive in first, immerse him or herself in the lesson, and beckon people into the gospel and lessons to swim with them. We then all stand together to affirm what we believe. We're sort of like the disciples with Jesus on the road to Emmaus—even if we don't quite get it, we are invited to join Jesus at a holy meal.

### *Lesson Three: Offering*

Worship is an active event for the congregation. We praise in song; we give God our attention in the lessons and sermon; we affirm our belief in the essence of God's story in the creeds. Then we pray to God—we name the things for which we are thankful or concerned. The prayers of the people let us express our gratitude, hopes, griefs, confusion. Our prayers help ourselves, not God—we align our attention with our intention in our prayers, so that we might live more nearly as we pray. We pray for people, places, and things over which we have no control on our own. Then we confess our sins. We have the freedom to affirm that we are not perfect. The priest reminds us that we are absolved. Then we make our offerings, when, for the first time, we have total control. We can choose how much to give. How much power are we willing to cede to God? Money is a measure of power. Money means choices, freedom, and the power to make a difference. We can participate in spreading God's kingdom. God hated slavery and freed the Israelites. Moses told the Israelites to remember where they had come from, and to therefore remember people who were suffering in their own time and to give freely. Jesus preached this teaching repeatedly, and he lived it. By the end of the liturgy, we have offered ourselves to God in many ways.

### *Lesson Four: The Holy Communion*

The Great Thanksgiving is our "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving." It's a sacrifice of time to be there. Going to church with other people to celebrate Eucharist is like going in for a heart transplant: There's nothing less convenient or more necessary to our health and strength and renewal. During the Great Thanksgiving, the priest copies what Jesus did. They take the bread, bless it, break it, and distribute it. The psalmist says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good"—and that is what we do during Communion. We taste the

## *The Takeaway*

sacrament and incorporate it, literally, into our bodies and souls. The prayer book says, "We are very members incorporate in the mystical body of Christ." Holy Communion is our holy incorporation – our holy embodiment of God's love. Jesus treats us like the disciples. We are sent out to love and serve others in Jesus' name. Christ is with us when we go. Our proof of Christ's continued presence is this perfect image of God's love, through which we bless God and then are dispersed into the world to serve. God uses these two methods – gathering in worship and going forth to serve -- to bless us. God blesses us when we gather to receive his body and blood in the sacraments. We encounter God in the least of God's people when we serve.

## *Your Notes*

# *An Instructed Eucharist With Furman Buchanan Participants Guide*

Welcome!

The depth, symbolism, and beauty of liturgical eucharistic worship has touch billions of Christians through the ages.

But any liturgy faces the danger of growing rote or stale. That's why Episcopal priest and author Furman Buchanan has put together this work on an Instructed Eucharist featuring four video presentations:

- Introduction
- The Word of the Lord
- Offering
- The Holy Communion

This course is ideal for those who are new to Episcopal worship, or those who have been worshipping for some time.

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