

Study Guide

Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. *The Spirituality of the Cross, 3rd Edition*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2021.

page 1 of 4

Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. "Introduction: The First Evangelicals." *The Spirituality of the Cross, 3rd Edition*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2021, 17-27.

In his introduction, Veith describes much of life, and even the way we experience church, as "mundane." That flies in the face of the Christian message of a faith which transforms lives. Somehow he hoped to find a vibrant and lively faith which could reach to all of life. This is what he found in the Lutheran tradition. The Lutheran Reformation was based on a renewal of interest in the Gospel of Christ rescuing sinners and enabling them to live a life of hope. Veith distinguishes between spirituality and theology, and concludes they need to be held together. In his opinion, what he has found in Lutheran faith and practice serves to focus the Christian on the Gospel which transforms lives.

Read "Introduction: The First Evangelicals" pp. 17-27.

Discuss the difference between spirituality and materiality. Why are both necessary to the Christian life?

Veith briefly refers to the disappointment of mysticism and activism. Why are both inadequate?

"Evangelical" means "centered on the Gospel." What is the heart of the Gospel?

What happens if we have spirituality "without" theology?

What happens if we have theology "without" spirituality?

Why is "without" in quotation marks in the two questions above?

What are some of the benefits of having a vibrant, lively Christian faith that transforms lives?

Study Guide

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page 2 of 4

Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. "Chapter One: Justification: The Dynamics of Sin and Grace." *The Spirituality of the Cross, 3rd Edition*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2021, 29-47.

Veith considers our desire for perfection in terms of moralism, speculation, and mysticism, all ways in which we try to perfect aspects of ourselves. In the end, all are futile because we will never reach perfection by what we do. From a theological standpoint Veith proposes we consider God's Law in its "spiritual use," by which it reveals our imperfection to us. This shows us our need for forgiveness, restoration to God. In Christian theology, the term "Gospel" is used to describe God's work for the forgiveness of all who believe Jesus' death was for their sin and that he gives them new life. While we are still imperfect, Christ declares us to bear his perfection.

Read Chapter One, "Justification: The Dynamics of Sin and Grace" pp. 29-47.

Why would we want to strive for perfection?

Describe moralism in terms of perfect conduct.

Describe speculation in terms of perfect understanding.

Describe mysticism in terms of perfect oneness with God.

Find examples of moralism, speculation, and mysticism in your current world.

How does the Gospel describe Jesus, perfect, and us? Consider especially Romans 3:10-11 and John 14:6.

Study Guide

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page 3 of 4

Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. "Chapter Two: The Means of Grace: The Presence of God." *The Spirituality of the Cross, 3rd Edition*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2021, 49-79.

Veith describes a view of God's Word as bearing sacramental power. It accomplishes God's will. The Word of God is considered a means of grace for this reason. Likewise, baptism may be taken to concretely bring us into Jesus' death and resurrection through the means of God's Word and the water. In a similar way, through the objective actions of communion, we are fed with heavenly food which strengthens us in the faith. In Word and Sacrament God is present for His people.

Read Chapter Two, "The Means of Grace: The Presence of God" pp. 49-79.

Veith describes a spirituality centered on Jesus receiving the consequences for all sin and also giving credit for all the good he himself did to the Christian. Compare this with the forms of Christianity you have witnessed.

What role does our will have in conversion?

If we consider God's Word to be a means of grace, what do we say it does and how does it do that?

Many in our society reject God working through physical means such as water, bread, or wine. Why is this? How do we answer such a charge, if we answer it at all?

What does baptism do? Why do you say that?

What do we receive in communion? Why do you say that?

Where do you look to find God?

Study Guide

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page 4 of 4

Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. "Chapter Three: The Theology of the Cross: The Hiddenness of God." *The Spirituality of the Cross, 3rd Edition*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2021, 81-99.

In chapter three Vieth discusses God's hiddenness. By this he means that God doesn't always accomplish his will through signs we would find striking. He often uses things like his Word and the sacraments of baptism and communion to make radical changes in our lives and in the world. By their nature these signs don't bring us attention, what would be called a "theology of glory," but they show a "theology of the cross" in which Christ, our suffering savior, intervenes in our world.

Read Chapter Three, "The Theology of the Cross: The Hiddenness of God" pp. 81-99.

Discuss the concept of being hidden versus being absent.

Veith discusses a theology of [man's] glory versus a theology of the cross. How do his examples show the difference?

How does God being hidden relate to the theology of the cross?

Think of what the sign of the cross or a cross decoration says.

Discuss a Christian view of suffering.