Session 51 - Admission to the Lord’s Supper

*In the sacrament of holy communion, what is open and closed communion?*

1. Open communion means everyone is invited to partake indiscriminately.
2. Closed communion means that only certain people are admitted to Holy Communion.
   1. Closed communion requires a criterion or criteria for inclusion
   2. The biblical criteria is repentance which requires
      1. An understanding of the chief articles of the faith (this is necessary for one to be able to examine himself before partaking)
      2. An understanding, or at least submission to, the entire word/doctrine of God, as revealed in Holy Scripture.
      3. Repentance for sins
         1. Sorrow for sins (contrition)
            1. Is only known by the church through confession of open sins, and a general confession of sins.
            2. It is not for the church to measure the degree of one’s sorrow in order to grant admission to communion.
         2. Absolution (acknowledgement of Christ’s forgiveness)
         3. Amendment of life (a desire to do better)
            1. Amendment of life requires, for the sake of church discipline, an immediate ceasing of “living in sin”. Living in sin is openly and wilfully remaining in a context that is inherently opposed to God’s word.
3. Some congregations use different criteria than that given above.
   1. Some say that it’s okay if people deny other doctrines of the faith, so long as they believe in the trinity, their own sinfulness, and the benefit of the sacrament.
   2. Usually, in the LCMS, knowing the benefit of the sacrament requires confessing that it is Jesus’ true body and blood under the bread and wine.
4. Many congregations practice as though closed communion is simply putting people on notice about the seriousness of communion, but do not actually exclude anyone from communion. Rather they think that warning people about communion will provoke their self-exclusion.