



FAITHFUL & AFIRE

Biblical Conversations Toward Greater Harmony
LCMS Circuit Bible Studies, 2007-2008

Participant's Guide

Participant Guides

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Biblical Conversations Toward Greater Harmony (1)
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What Constitutes Unity within the Church?

The Issues

What constitutes unity in the Church depends on whether its unity is being considered in terms of its essence before God (*coram Deo*) or in terms of its expression within the world (*coram mundo*).

1. Before God there is only one unity, the hidden unity of faith in Christ. It is visible to God but “invisible” to us. This is the “holy communion of saints,” the *Una Sancta*.
2. Within the world (*coram mundo*) the unity of the church is lived out in a variety of ways as a community of people gathered by the Word (in oral and sacramental forms):
 - a. Unity in Confession
 - iv. Preaching and teaching consistent with our confession of “the one true faith”
 - v. Practices (infant baptism, close[d] communion, polities, ceremonies, membership in synods, etc.) consistent with our common confession.
 - b. Unity in Love
 - vi. Pastor-Pastor: judgment calls about how best to confess the faith in particular situations.
 - vii. Pastor-People relationships: who’s the boss and calling the shots?
 - viii. People-People relationships: interpersonal conflicts.

Where does disunity exist within The LCMS today? Do we have doctrinal disunity? Does the diversity of adiaphora raise questions about unity in confession? Or is there a lack of trust in the pastoral judgments made by fellow pastors? Or is there a general lack of love among members as a result of a growing intolerance within society?

Scripture Search

1. Ephesians 4: 1-16.
2. 1 John 1:8-9; 2:18-25; 4:2-6.
3. 1 Corinthians 8:1-6
4. 1 Corinthians 12:7-8; 12-15; and 13:4-7.

Our Confessions Speak

1. "The church is not only an association of external ties and rites like other civic organizations, but it is principally an association of faith and the Holy Spirit in the hearts of persons." — Apology VII, 5 (KW, p. 174).
2. "Fundamental, enduring unity in the church requires above all else a clear and binding summary and form in which a general summary of teaching is drawn together from God's Word, to which the churches that hold the true Christian religion confess their adherence." "...it is necessary not only to present the pure, beneficial teaching correctly, but also to censure those who contradict it and teach other doctrines." (FC, SD, Rule & Norm, 1, 14; KW, p. 526, 529).
3. "In this very assembly we have sufficiently shown that, for the sake of love, we are not reluctant to observe adiaphora with others, even if such things may prove to be somewhat burdensome. We judge that the greatest possible public concord which can be maintained without offending consciences ought to be preferred to all other interests." — Apology XV: 51-52.
4. "In all families and communities harmony needs to be nurtured by mutual responsibilities, and it is not possible to preserve tranquility unless people overlook and forgive certain mistakes among themselves. In the same way, Paul urges that there be true love in the church to preserve harmony, to bear with (if need be) the crude behavior of the brothers [and sisters], and to overlook certain minor offenses, lest the church disintegrate into various schisms and lest enmities, factions, and heresies arise from such schisms." — Apology IV: 232 (KW, p.155).

"For harmony will inevitably dissolve when bishops impose excessive burdens upon their people or have no regard for their weakness. Dissensions also arise when the people judge the conduct of their teachers too severely or scorn them on account of some lesser faults, going on to seek other kinds of doctrine and other teachers. On the contrary, perfection (that is, the integrity of the church) is preserved when the strong bear the weak, when people put the best construction on the faults of their teachers, and when the bishops make some allowances for the weakness of their people." — (Apology IV: 233-234 (KW, p.155-56).

Points to Ponder

1. The church's unity before God is first and foremost a unity of faith created by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all its forms. It is made known within the world of human beings primarily through the confession of the faith and secondarily through lives of love for one another. Confession and love are interrelated.
2. The church's unity of faith *coram deo* is expressed in a common confession of the faith. Confession is the only way by which we know whether or not we've heard the same Word of God and hold that Word in common. It is also the only means by which we know that the Gospel we speak is in fact the Gospel of Scripture by which the Spirit gathers the church into one body in the spiritual unity of faith *coram deo*.
3. Brothers and sisters in a family did not choose each other for siblings. We find ourselves thrown together to bear each other's burdens and share each other's joys (whether or not we like each other). In a similar way, the Spirit gathered us into one body where we now find ourselves bound by mutual love and responsibility despite our differences. The lack of love brings the Gospel into disrepute and can produce schism and heresy.

For Conversation

1. Once upon a time, membership in a denomination identified a person's public confession and commitment (to abide in it till death). Now one is more likely to hear, "Oh, I don't believe what my church believes. I simply attend that church because I like its programs." What does this say about the importance of a common confession of faith? Does it mean that people no longer think in terms of communities and instead see themselves as free agents in charge of their own faith and faith commitments? What does this mean for the unity of a congregation or denomination?
2. How has the American value of radical individual autonomy affected pastors and congregations with regard to the mutual responsibility and accountability that they have to the wider church (synod, Lutheranism, etc.)? Are there things that individual members can do with other Christians that pastors, as public representatives of the congregation, cannot? Or are all members public representatives of the *corpus*? Are pastors and congregations increasingly adopting the attitude, "Just leave me alone"?
3. Does the synod (as a voluntary human institution/association of external ties) continue to play the same role or serve the same purpose for congregations today that it did in the early years of its existence? Or is the synod slowly becoming one para-church organization among others from which congregations purchase certain services and products? How might church unity look in a post-denominational world?
4. In a world in which more than 30,000 Christian denominations exist, how important is it for congregations to express their confessional unity with the "one holy Christian church" in time and space? What are the various ways by which a congregation/church can express its unity within the midst of these divisions?
5. What do you say when faithful Bible study participants bring up ideas from their neighborhood Bible study? After all, the leader of their Bible study has been studying the Bible for over thirty years. How do we equip people to engage in ecumenical conversation as they participate in interdenominational Bible studies?
6. Three kids from three different churches get killed in a car that could not quite beat the train across the crossing, or drown in a boating accident, and the two other pastors involved want a joint memorial service. A local LCMS pastor decides to participate in the memorial service. What factors would you take into account that would prompt you either to question the pastor's commitment to our common confession or would prompt you to give him the benefit of the doubt? What are the boundaries for legitimate disagreement?

As a small group, offer a prayer of thanks for the unity in the one true faith that the Spirit has bestowed upon the church through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and pray that we might be instruments for expression and furtherance of that unity within the church throughout the world.

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Church and Culture October, 2007

The Issue

"Many of the most difficult issues before the church today—from in-house debates over worship styles and the best way for church to grow, to calls for Christian activism to combat social evils, such as abortion, poverty, the decline of the family, the immorality of the media, political corruption, and the like—are actually questions about how Christians should relate to their culture." [Veith, Gene, "Two Kingdoms under One King" in *Christ and Culture in Dialogue*, p. 129]

The first, but almost impossible, task is to agree on a definition of "culture". There are hundreds of competing formal descriptions offered by academicians. Martin Marty suggests the following informal definition for the purpose of engaging in a meaningful discussion: "Culture is the sum total of the processes and products by which humans do anything and everything to nature (divine creation)." [Marty, Martin, "Articles of War, Articles of Peace: Christianity and Culture" in *Christ and Culture in Dialogue*, p. 57]

We belong to a dominant culture as well as to a myriad of sub-cultures in varying degrees. A sub-culture may be categorized by ethnicity, geography, religion, gender, age, profession, sport, hobby, fads, etc. Being a pastor in the LCMS places you into yet other levels of sub-cultures.

The best way to understand "your culture" is to explore it. For a few minutes reflect on how growing up where and when you did affected your view of the world. Consider the differences between your generation and those of your grandparents, parents, and children.

Another way to discover "your culture" is to intentionally experience another for an extended period of time.

Yet another way in which to perceive "your culture" is when people representing another culture—and it need not be a dominant but a sub-culture—encroach on your own.

For many, speaking of Christ and culture brings to mind H. Richard Niebuhr's book of the same title. Written in 1951 but still relevant, it assesses the ways in which various Christian traditions understand the relationship between the two. He suggests these five basic models:

1. Christ against culture (rejection): Christianity and culture in opposition
2. Christ of culture (affirmation): Christianity and the purest expressions of culture in agreement
3. Christ above culture (synthesis): both continuity and discontinuity between Christianity and culture
4. Christ and culture in paradox (dualism): paradoxical tension between Christianity and culture
5. Christ the transformer of culture (conversion): culture reformed for Christian purposes

To these Richard John Neuhaus adds another, namely,

6. Christ without culture: Christianity indifferent to culture and unconsciously adopting its patterns [Neuhaus, Richard, "The Public Square" in *First Things*, April 2007]

Focusing on the six types listed above, as a whole group, take some time to address the following questions:

- In your opinion, which best conveys the most appropriate interaction between Christianity and culture?
- Which most aptly describes what is actually happening in contemporary American society?
- Which best portrays the classic Lutheran understanding of the church's relationship to culture?

Scripture Speaks

The encounter—often clash—between the people of God and the culture(s) enveloping them is a recurring theme throughout the Bible. However, we will focus on three settings which offer insight into dealing with such confrontations.

1. After wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, the Israelites encountered an agrarian way of life upon entry into the Promised Land. From their new "neighbors," the Canaanites, they were compelled to learn how to build, farm, and trade. But adapting to a new culture without forsaking faithfulness to Yahweh proved to be impossible.
 - What did the covenant with Yahweh require of them? Ex 20:3; Dt 6:14-15, Lv 18:30; Lv 20:23
 - To what temptation did they succumb? What was the attraction? Judges 2:11; 10:6; 2 Kgs 17:15
 - How were the Israelites to treat their new "neighbors"? Ex. 23:9; Lv 19:34; Dt. 10:19; Nm 35:11-15. See also Is 56:6-7.
 - Referring to the six models listed under "The Issue," which best portrays Israel's relationship to culture?
2. During His ministry Jesus dealt with both the culture of Judaism and that of Roman occupation government. In both instances we see a clash between the Messianic Kingdom and an institution rooted in laws, traditions, and mores of human origin.
 - With respect to culture in general, what did Jesus actually teach? Jn 17:14-17; 15:18-19; Mt 6:24; 13:22; 16:26; Mk 12:30
 - How did Jesus deal with the political reality of His day? Jn 18:36-37; Mk 12:17
 - What was Jesus' reaction to the religious situation He encountered? Mt 15:8-9; 5:43-44; Mk 2:27
 - Referring again to the six models, which best portrays Jesus' teaching about relating to culture(s)?
3. After Pentecost and the subsequent rapid spread of the Gospel message throughout the Roman Empire, the early Christian church faced numerous challenges related to cultural interaction on many levels. Of primary concern was the inclusion of Gentiles into a "church culture" comprised predominantly of Jewish believers. Others were adaptation to a Greco-Roman way of thinking and the relationships between male and female and between slave and free.
 - What was the stance of leaders in the early church toward the dominant culture? Rm 12:2; James 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15; 1 Cor 5:9-11; Col 2:8; Phil 3:20; Acts 5:29

- What moved Peter to adjust his attitude toward the inclusion of Gentiles? Acts 11:4-11
- How did the early church resolve the problem regarding the inclusion of Gentiles? Acts 15:1-33 (especially note James' counsel in v. 19)
- What was Paul's approach to people of different cultures? Rm 1:14; 1 Cor 9:22; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; 1 Cor 1:23-25
- How did Paul personally deal with the Gentile issue? Gal 2:11-15
- Referring again to the six models, which best portrays the early church's interaction with culture(s)?

Our Confession

Though the Lutheran Confessions do not directly address the matter of cross-cultural conflict, it is important to note that they were written against the backdrop of the early Renaissance Period, a time of major cultural turmoil and change.

The following excerpt from Article XVI of the "Apology of the Augsburg Confession" provides insight into the thinking of the reformers regarding the "Political Order":

The writings of our theologians have profitably illumined this whole question of the distinction between Christ's kingdom and a political kingdom. Christ's kingdom is spiritual; it is the knowledge of God in the heart, the fear of God and faith; the beginning of eternal righteousness and eternal life. At the same time it lets us make outward use of the legitimate political ordinances of the nation in which we live, just as it lets us make use of medicine or architecture, food or drink or air. The Gospel does not introduce any new laws about the civil estates, but commands us to obey the existing laws, whether they were formulated by heathen or by others, and in this obedience to practice love. [Tappert, Theodore, editor, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), pp. 222-223]

The Constitution of the LCMS alludes to cultural influences in Article III.7. An objective of Synod is to "encourage congregations to strive for uniformity in church practice, but also to develop an appreciation of a variety of responsible practices and customs which are in harmony with our common profession of faith."

For Reflection

1. The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms affirms the differing cultures of which Christians are a part and offers a way to deal with the tension that arises when these cultures conflict.
2. True Christian unity is rooted not in a harmonization of all cultural expressions but only in the relationship we share through Baptismal grace. It is a unity for which we diligently strive here on earth but which we will only totally experience in heaven.
3. In witnessing to those of other cultures and sub-cultures, distinguishing what is biblical truth from what is a culture-based mindset is difficult. Too often we tend to think that "my way" is God's way.
4. Some feel that the disagreement over the style of worship plaguing the present-day church is as much a conflict of cultures as it is a theological disagreement, while others hold that there is a theological standard for worship which transcends cultural preferences. There seems to be no way to break the stalemate.

For Conversation

After dividing into groups of 4-5, proceed to the following case studies:

Case Study #1

Pastor J's children attended Lutheran elementary and high schools. They are now adults. The elder son and his family, seeking a Christian community that "meets its spiritual needs," have recently begun to attend a large, non-denominational church. The daughter married a Lutheran of another synod and has joined her husband's church. The younger son, now in college, just announced that he has left the church and adopted "an alternative life style."

- In what way, do you suppose, has this situation changed Pastor J's understanding of and attitude toward the culture(s) of which he is part?
- How might this upheaval in his "family culture" cause him to alter the focus of his ministry in the congregation he serves?
- How might Pastor J minister and witness to his own children?
- Invite and encourage anyone in the group who is concerned about his own child(ren) to share and to receive counsel and support from his brother pastors. See Gal 6:2.

Case Study #2

Trinity Lutheran Church, an old urban parish, is now in a community in transition. Once populated by ethnic Germans, the area has experienced an influx of immigrants from Africa and Latin America. In order to remain vital and relevant, the dwindling membership is faced with these choices: 1) Do nothing; 2) Sell and relocate elsewhere; 3) Make the congregation more appealing to "outsiders" by setting aside some traditions and practices; 4) Begin and sustain an ethnic ministry; 5) Offer space to another group for ethnic ministry.

- If you were pastor there, what would you advise? Why?

Time permitting, choose several of the questions and observations noted earlier for a more thorough discussion.

Close by praying for self, family, congregation, and all Christians seeking God's will in our ever-changing culture.

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Confession and Witness

How Can We Maintain Our Confession and Also Be Strong in Witness?

1. The Issues

We live in an age of choice, and we are constantly being asked to decide between alternatives. Republican or Democrat? PC or Mac? Coke or Pepsi? Paper or plastic? Again and again, forced choices are pressed upon us. The same insistent demand to choose, commit, and take up sides has found its way into the church. Some choices are necessary, even imperative: we cannot serve two masters, and faith in God excludes every rival allegiance.

But some alternatives are false alternatives, pitting competing goods against one another as if they were mutually exclusive opposites. One of the most unhelpful examples of forced choice between false alternatives is the tendency for us to polarize between our commitment to "confession" and our zeal for "witness." Some lay claim to the label "confessional" and give absolute priority to perfecting our doctrinal information. Others grow impatient with careful attention to doctrine because of the urgency of the evangelistic task.

A floor debate at the recent convention of the Synod centered around whether reaching the lost should be the priority or a priority (among other important tasks) for our life and work together. What do you think was at stake in that debate?

Does a passionate dedication to pure doctrine—to the accurate confession of the Gospel—have to push evangelistic witness to the sidelines? Have you seen examples of this?

Is doctrinal orthodoxy an obstacle to bold missionary zeal? Has this happened among us?

2. Scripture Search

Luke 24:44-49

John 20:19-23

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Colossians 4:2-6

Acts 18:24-28

3. Our Confessions Speak

“To obtain such [saving, justifying] faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel.” (Augsburg Confession, Article V. Kolb-Wengert, page 40)

“This we ask, both in order that we who have accepted it may remain faithful and grow daily in it and also in order that it may find approval and gain followers among other people and advance with power throughout the world. In this way many, led by the Holy Spirit, may come into the kingdom of grace and become partakers of redemption, so that we may all remain together eternally in this kingdom that has now begun.... All this is nothing more than to say” ‘Dear Father, we ask you first to give us your Word, so that the gospel may be properly preached throughout the world...’” (Large Catechism, Lord’s Prayer, Second Petition. Kolb-Wengert, page 447)

4. Points to Ponder

Forcing a choice between “confession” (doctrine) and “witness” (mission) is a false, unbiblical alternative.

The church’s mission grows out of Christ’s own mission to save sinners, and always involves an accurate and growing knowledge of Christ, drawn from the Scriptures.

Pure doctrinal information without bold witness is unfaithful to Christ, and is not a true confession.

5. For Conversation

“Any theology-minus-mission is simply false theology, and any evangelism-minus-theology is no evangel at all.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Is it possible to become too interested in theological study? Is it possible to be too focused on reaching the lost?

Is it reasonable when some worry that an emphasis on “missions” may compromise our confessional integrity? On the other hand, can preoccupation with doctrinal correctness handicap our gospel witness in the world? What can we do together to avoid these risks?

Pray together for God’s kingdom to come, guided by Luther’s comments in the Large Catechism quoted above. Pray together for your own faithful, daily growth. And pray that many others may hear the Word and be brought to saving faith in Christ.

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The Way We Worship What Scriptural values guide our worship?

The Issue

Pastor Jim arrived a year ago as the new pastor of Zion Lutheran Church. An experienced pastor with a heart for both liturgical worship and evangelism, Jim is being asked by Zion's leadership to begin what they call a "contemporary service." When Jim asks, "What does 'contemporary' mean?" the response is, "We'd like a more informal service with contemporary Christian music led by a praise band. You know, we want something close to Crossroads Church, the big non-denominational church in our neighborhood that's growing so fast." They add, "But we want it to be Lutheran, too."

When Jim asks, "Why do we need to change?" he gets all kinds of answers from "We want to appeal to the seeker" to "We need an alternative to our traditional worship." Jim struggles with what to do. He wonders if the alternative contemporary service his leaders want will compromise the Zion's theological and liturgical integrity. He questions whether worship should be designed for seekers who are not yet Christian. Jim also struggles with the consequences for his ministry if he refuses to act.

What would you advise Jim to do as he responds to this request?

Where might Jim go wrong?

In what sense is this a real opportunity, a teachable moment?

Scripture Search

The texts below provide foundational values for decisions concerning our theology and practice of worship. What values for worship do you find in each of these texts?

- Psalm 98
- Isaiah 29:13/Matthew 15:8-9
- Luke 4:14-21
- John 4:19-24
- Acts 2:42-47
- Romans 12:1-2
- Colossians 2:16-23
- Colossians 3:15-17
- Revelation 7:9-17

Our Confessions Speak¹

The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere. (AC 7, 1-3).

But just as the different lengths of day and night do not undermine the unity of the church, so we maintain that different rites instituted by human beings do not undermine the true unity of the church, although it pleases us when universal rites are kept for the sake of tranquility. Thus, in our churches we willingly observe the order of the Mass, the Lord's Day, and other more important festival days. With a very grateful spirit, we cherish the useful and ancient ordinances, especially when they contain a discipline by which it is profitable to educate and teach common folk and the ignorant. (AP 7, 33)

Nevertheless, we teach that liberty in these matters should be exercised moderately so that the inexperienced may not take offense and, on account of an abuse of liberty, become more hostile to the true teaching of the gospel. Nothing in the customary rites may be changed without good reason. Instead, in order to foster harmony, those ancient customs should be observed that can be observed without sin or without proving to be a great burden. In this very assembly we have sufficiently shown that, for the sake of love, we will reluctantly observe adiaphora with others, even if such things may prove to be somewhat burdensome. (AP 15, 51-52).

12 Points to Ponder

1. Spiritual worship encompasses our entire lives of sacrifice.
2. Public or corporate worship is at the heart of Christian community.
3. In worship we kneel in awe before our great God who has done mighty things.
4. God acts in worship through His means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
5. The Word of God is both the substance of worship and its dynamic power.
6. The historic Ordo of worship (Confession and Absolution, Praise, Scripture Readings, Sermon, Creed, Prayers, Thanksgiving, Communion, and Blessing) provides dynamic movement and a meaningful sequence for worship.
7. Public worship spans heaven and earth and space and time, moving a village church to global, universal concerns and placing it in the company of saints and angels.
8. Integrity and authenticity are to characterize our worship.
9. The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions allow for variety in worship practice and, at the same time, value the peace that comes from uniformity in practice.
10. Public worship may include a variety of musical genres and instruments.

¹ Quotations are from *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

11. In worship we teach and confess what we believe.
12. Caution needs to be given to the form, substance, and style of worship practice lest a church adopt a practice expressing false theology and values.

For Conversation

Spend time in groups of 3-5 conversing around any or all of the following:

1. Describe your congregation's worship practice and briefly explain why you worship the way you do.
2. Choose a statement from "12 Points to Ponder" above which you believe is most crucial right now in the on-going debate on the way we worship. Explain why you believe it is so important.
3. Now choose a statement from "12 Points to Ponder" with which you disagree in some sense. Share your point of contention.
4. What would a non-believer learn about your church from the way you worship?
5. In what specific ways are you sensitive to the visitor in worship?
6. Is there any genre of music that by nature should be disqualified from use in worship? Explain your response.
7. How important to you is uniformity in worship practice among churches in fellowship? Defend your response.
8. How do you think your people approach worship, more as individuals or as members of a body of believers?
9. Close with prayers, focusing on one another's needs and hopes for worship in our specific settings.

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WELCOME TO THE TABLE Who is worthy to commune at the Lord's Table?

The Issues

Who is worthy to commune at the Lord's Table? The policy of close(d) communion does not deal solely with the personal worthiness of the individual. It has other dimensions as well.

In this study we will discuss:

1. What is the Lord's Supper?
2. What is meant by "worthy to receive"?
3. What is responsible pastoral care (Resolution 3-08, 1989 Convention resolution)?
4. What is meant by "confessing the same faith"?

Scripture Search

1. What is the Lord's Supper?

1 Corinthians 11:23-25
Mark 14:22-25

Matthew 26:26-29
Luke 22:14-20

2. What is meant by "worthy to receive"?

1 Corinthians 11:27
Galatians 5:19-21

1 Corinthians 5:11 and 6:9, 10

3. What is responsible pastoral care (Resolution 3-08, 1989 Convention resolution)?

Matthew 11:22
1 Timothy 5:22

1 Corinthians 5:11-13

4. What is meant by "confessing the same faith"?

Jude 3
1 Corinthians 15:2, 3

1 Corinthians 1:10
Galatians 1:6

Our Confessions Speak

1. What is the Lord's Supper?

- "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and drink." (SC, VI)
- "...in the Lord's Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially present and are truly tendered with the things that are seen, bread and wine." (Ap. X, 59)
- "...are given and received not only by the godly but also by wicked Christians." (SA, VI, 1)

2. What is meant by "worthy to receive"?

- "...we have ascribed to repentance (or conversion) these two parts, namely contrition and faith...contrition is the true terror of conscience..." (Ap. XII (V))
- "...despisers of the sacrament should be exhorted to repentance..." (Ap. X XI 62)
- The basis for such repentance are the Ten Commandments – "Here consider your station according to the ten commandments..." (SC V 20)

3. What is responsible pastoral care (Resolution 3-08, 1898 Convention resolution)?

- "Therefore the bishop (pastor) has the power of the order, i.e., the ministry of word and sacraments; he has also the power of jurisdiction, i.e., the authority to excommunicate those guilty of open crimes and again to absolve them when they are converted and seek absolution." (Ap. XXVIII (XIV))
- "What Hearers Owe to Their Pastors:...Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account..." Hebrews 13:17 (SC (Appendix II))

4. What is meant by "confessing the same faith"?

- "And to the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments." (AC VII 2)

Points to Ponder

1. *What is the Lord's Supper?*

1 Corinthians 11:23-25

Mark 14:22-25

Matthew 26:26-29

Luke 22:14-20

- Are the words, "Christ is truly and really present," an accurate statement in agreement with these Scriptures?

2. *What is meant by “worthy to receive”?*

1 Corinthians 11:27
Galatians 5:19-21

1 Corinthians 5:11 and 6:9, 10

- What does it mean to be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord?
- Who is meant by the word “brother” in 1 Corinthians 5:11? Identify what these passages have to say about worthy/unworthy eating and drinking.

3. *What is responsible pastoral care (Resolution 3-08, 1989 Convention resolution)?*

Matthew 11:22
1 Timothy 5:22

1 Corinthians 5:11-13

- Matthew 11:22 -- Discuss the application of this scripture in Pastoral care.
- 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 -- Discuss these Scriptures and apply them to responsible pastoral care.
- 1 Timothy 5:22 -- What does this say about indiscriminate admission to the Lord’s Supper?

4. *What is meant by “confessing the same faith”?*

Jude 3
1 Corinthians 15:2, 3

1 Corinthians 1:10
Galatians 1:6

- What is a different gospel?
- Is the Lord’s Supper Gospel?
- If there is no agreement on the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, does this affect the unity of the church?

For Conversation *(questions developed by the Faithful & Afire Editorial Team)*

1. Describe your congregation’s current policy and practice regarding admission to Holy Communion.
2. In a few sentences make your case for your policy and practice being in accord with the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and LCMS doctrine and practice. Wherever possible, refer to the material above.
3. Where do you see commonality regarding the Lord’s Supper in the LCMS? Where do you see diversity?
4. What for you is the confessional aspect of participating in the Lord’s Supper? In other words, on what must we agree to commune together?
5. What do you do in your church to teach the meaning and efficacy of the Lord’s Supper?
6. Pray for one another, keeping in mind your responses to the above questions and one another’s personal and pastoral needs.

Rev. Dr. George Wollenburg
Former President, Montana District
Former 4th Vice President, LCMS



FAITHFUL & AFIRE

Biblical Conversations Toward Greater Harmony
LCMS Circuit Bible Studies, 2007-2008

Participant's Guide

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

What roles may women take in the life and ministry of the church?

THE ISSUE

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27-28). “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve...” (1 Tim. 2:12-13).

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). “As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. If anyone thinks he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:33-37).

Each of these passages was written by the same divinely-inspired author, the apostle Paul. If we believe—as we do—that Scripture does not contradict itself, how do we reconcile the contrasting messages conveyed in these passages? Still more challenging, how do we *apply* these truths to specific questions about the service of women in the church today?

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

What principles emerge from the following sets of passages that apply to this issue?

1. Genesis 1:26-28; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Galatians 3:26-29
2. Matthew 19:4; Ephesians 5:21-33; Philippians 2:3-11
3. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 1 Corinthians 14:33-40; 1 Timothy 2:8-15
4. Acts 21:7-9; Romans 16:1-6; Acts 18:24-26; Phil. 4:2-3
5. Luke 22:24-27; Ephesians 4:1-16; Colossians 3:12-17

OUR CONFESSIONS SPEAK

How do the following passages from the Lutheran Confessions speak to this issue?
(Note: All citations are drawn from the Tappert edition [Public Domain] of *The Book of Concord*.)

Augsburg Confession VII, 1-4

1] Also they teach that *one holy Church* is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.

2] And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and 3] the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. 4] As Paul says: *One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all*, etc. Eph. 4, 5. 6.

Smalcald Articles Part III [7], 1-3

1] The keys are an office and power given by Christ to the Church for binding and loosing sin, not only the gross and well-known sins, but also the subtle, hidden, which are known only to God, as it is written in Ps. 19, 13: *Who can understand his errors?* And in Rom. 7, 25 St. Paul himself complains *that with the flesh he serves the law of sin*. 2] For it is not in our power, but belongs to God alone, to judge which, how great, and how many the sins are, as it is written in Ps. 143, 2: *Enter not into judgment with Thy servant; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified*. 3] And Paul says, 1 Cor. 4, 4: *For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified*.

Augsburg Confession V, 1-4

1] That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted*. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, 2] the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear 3] the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake.

4] They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.

FC SD IV, 9-12

9] Therefore, of works that are truly good and well-pleasing to God, which God will reward in this world and in the world to come, faith must be the mother and source; and on this account they are called by St. Paul true *fruits of faith*, as also of *the Spirit*. **10]** For, as Dr. Luther writes in the Preface to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: *Thus faith is a divine work in us, that changes us and regenerates us of God, and puts to death the old Adam, makes us entirely different men in heart, spirit, mind, and all powers, and brings with it [confers] the Holy Ghost. Oh, it is a living, busy, active, powerful thing that we have in faith, so that it is impossible for it not to do good without ceasing*. **11]** Nor does it ask whether good works are to be done; but before the question is asked, it has wrought them, and is always engaged in doing them. But he who does not do such works is void of faith, and gropes and looks about after faith and good works, and knows neither what faith nor what good works are, yet babbles and prates with many words concerning faith and good works. **12]** [Justifying] *faith is a living, bold [firm] trust in God's grace, so certain that a man would die a thousand times for it [rather than suffer this trust to be wrested from him]. And this trust and knowledge of divine grace renders joyful, fearless, and cheerful towards God and all creatures, which [joy and cheerfulness] the Holy Ghost works through faith; and on account of this, man becomes ready and cheerful, without coercion, to do good to every one, to serve every one, and to suffer everything for love and praise to God, who has conferred this grace on him, so that it is impossible to separate works from faith, yea, just as impossible as it is for heat and light to be separated from fire*.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Both man and woman were created in the image of God. They are equal in their relationship to God as Creator and in relationship to the rest of creation.
2. Both men and women are redeemed through the blood of Christ. Through faith in Christ, they have equal standing before God, their gracious Father. Baptized by one Spirit into the one body of Christ, men and women are fully equal members of the church, the priesthood of all believers.
3. Equality does not imply sameness. Distinctive identities for man and woman in their relationship to each other are a part of God's "very good" design for his creation. These distinctive identities are not erased by Christ's redemption, and should be reflected in the church.
4. Headship and subordination, when applied to the relationship of men and women in the church, do not imply superiority or inferiority. As in the relationship between the Father and the Son, these realities imply orderliness and unity.
5. According to the New Testament, the creational design of male headship requires that women not serve in the divinely-instituted office of the public ministry (the pastoral office).
6. The New Testament does not apply the principle of male headship to other (humanly-instituted) offices and positions in the church. In these areas, decisions about the service of women must be made on the basis of the functions of these offices and what best serves the unity and ministry of the church.
7. The Biblical principles of headship and subordination can easily be misunderstood and abused. It is crucial to bear in mind that both men and women, in their various vocations and positions in the church, are called to serve God and others in love for the sake of Christ's mission.

FOR CONVERSATION

1. Over twenty years ago *Time* magazine raised some eyebrows by naming as its 1975 "Man of the Year" twelve *women*. "Across the broad range of American life," said the article, "from suburban tract homes to state legislatures, from church pulpits to army barracks, women's lives are profoundly changing, and with them, the traditional relationship between the sexes" (*Time* [Jan. 5, 1976]: 8). What further changes—for better or for worse—have taken place in the last twenty years in "the traditional relationship between the sexes?" How have these changes affected the life of your congregation and your ministry as a pastor?

2. A parishioner says: "God's Word does not change. How could the Synod change its position on issues like woman suffrage and women serving as congregational president without changing its attitude towards God's Word?" Your response?
3. Discuss the following statement: *Placing unscriptural **restrictions** on the service of women in the church has the effect of **undermining** the Synod's position that, according to Scripture, women may not serve as pastors.*
4. Among those whom Paul greets and thanks in Romans 16, how many are women? Name specific women in your congregation who play a key role in supporting and sustaining the mission and ministry in that place.
5. Discuss this scenario: Different congregations in your circuit have differing practices with regard to woman serving in various leadership roles in the congregation. Can there be true "unity" in this situation? Does unity in doctrine require uniformity in practice? Where there are tensions or disagreements in this regard (within or between congregations), how might they be addressed in ways that promote trust, harmony, and integrity?
6. Pray for one another's life and ministry. Include a prayer for God's power and blessing for all men and women who serve in the church.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES (available on the Synod's web site at www.lcms.org)

1. *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* (1932).
2. *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice* (CTCR, 1985).
3. *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices with Guidelines for Congregations* (CTCR/President's Task Force, 2005).
4. "Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices" in *CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent (2004-2006)* (CTCR, 2006).

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Participant's Guide

PASTORAL FORMATION

How does God make a pastor?

1. The Issues

“Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio Faciunt Theologum”—“Prayer, meditation, and temptation make a theologian.” Luther’s phrase is familiar and makes sense to most of us. But is it exactly what we want when we’re talking about making a *pastor*? Do these categories fit when we consider the witness of the Scriptures on how God forms and shapes a pastor for service in the church and in the world? Consider the following statement and respond to the questions below:

Luther proposed an evangelical pattern of spirituality as reception rather than self-promotion. This involved three things: prayer (*oratio*), meditation (*meditatio*), and temptation (*tentatio*).¹ All three revolved around ongoing, faithful attention to God’s word. The order of the list is significant, for unlike the traditional pattern of devotion, the study of theology begins and ends here on earth. These three terms describe the life of faith as a cycle that begins with prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, concentrates on the reception of the Holy Spirit through meditation on God’s word, and results in spiritual attack. This in turn leads a person back to further prayer and intensified meditation. Luther, therefore, did not envisage the spiritual life in active terms as a process of self-development but in passive terms as a process of reception from the Triune God. In it self-sufficient individuals became beggars before God.¹

How is one’s relationship with God foundational to any discussion of the making of a pastor?

How does this relate to one’s baptism? One’s vocation?

What are the ways that God goes about forming a pastor for service to church and world?

In what ways do Luther’s categories capture what life is like as one of God’s pastors generally? For you personally? What would you add to them?

*Where do you turn for comfort in your ministry when *tentatio* seems to be the prevailing experience?*

¹ John Kleinig, *“Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes a Theologian?”* 66 (July 2002): 262. The article may be found in its entirety in electronic form at <http://www.ctsfw.edu/library/files/pb/896>.

2. Scripture Search

- 1 John 3:1-3
- 1 Peter 2:9-10
- 2 Timothy 1:5-7
- Ephesians 4:9-16
- 1 Timothy 3:1-7
- Colossians 1:3-8
- Acts 15:36-39
- Psalm 133:1-3/ Ephesians 2:12-22
- Hebrews 12:1-2

3. Our Confessions Speak²

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ's merit, when we so believe (*Augsburg Confession*, Art. 5).

The opponents do not consider the priesthood as a ministry of the Word and of the sacraments administered to others. Instead, they consider it as a sacrificial office, as if there ought to be in the New Testament a priesthood similar to the Levitical priesthood, which offers sacrifices for the people and merits the forgiveness of sins for other people. We teach that the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross was sufficient for the sins of the entire world and that there is no need for additional sacrifices, as though Christ's sacrifice was not sufficient for our sins. Therefore, human beings are justified not on account of any other sacrifice except the one sacrifice of Christ when they believe that they have been redeemed by that sacrifice. Thus priests are not called to offer sacrifices for the people as in Old Testament law so that through them they might merit the forgiveness of sins for the people; instead they are called to preach the gospel and to administer the sacraments to the people (*Apology*, Art. 13, 7-10).

Peter ... means that in human relations love is not obstinate, harsh, or intractable; instead, it overlooks certain mistakes of its friends and puts the best construction on even the more offensive conduct of others, just as the common proverb admonishes, "Know, but do not hate, the conduct of a friend." It is not without reason that the apostles speak so often about this responsibility of love, which the philosophers call "fairness." For this virtue is necessary for preserving public harmony, which cannot last long unless pastors and churches overlook and pardon many things among themselves (*Apology*, Art. 4, 240-243).

² Quotations are from *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

4. Points to Ponder

- God has called, gathered, enlightened, and sanctified His whole Christian church on earth. He does this through all of his servants as they carry out their given vocations. He does this in a particular way through His pastors.
- Luther's principle of *simul justus et peccator* applies to pastors as much as it does to all people.
- All ministry, however great or small, has its beginning, continuation, and fulfillment in Christ. Every pastor, however great or small, has his beginning, continuation, and fulfillment in Christ.
- A church without a pastor and a pastor without a church is not God's desire.

5. For Conversation

- Reflect on your own life as one of God's baptized children.
- Discuss with your brothers when and how you first felt God tugging you toward the ministry? In what ways are your experiences similar to your colleagues? In what ways are they unique? Do you still feel that tug?
- Which of the three—*oratio*, *meditatio*, *tentatio*—seems to have characterized your ministry? Where do you find yourself right now? Given your location, how might your experience help your fellow pastors in similar circumstances? How might your situation be helped by your colleagues?
- Discuss times of conflict with colleagues in the ministry? How did you handle things well? How did you handle things poorly? What lessons did you learn?
- The bottom line: What makes a good pastor?

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Participant's Guide

What Kind of Leader?

What is the proper relationship between church and pastoral leader?

The Issue

A Scenario

After returning home at nearly eleven p.m. from a Church Council meeting, Rev. John has this to say:

"I've had it with Hank! He doesn't have a theological bone in his body. He has no vision whatsoever! His engineering background must keep him from even imagining a project for the church beyond the current one, and his influence is so strong that no one will speak up when he obstructs every last long range plan I suggest! Tonight he actually stated that he had talked to over 100 members and they said...but I believe he persuaded them...that they would withhold their contributions if the church council decided to move the organ console even one foot! And the idea is only to allow more space in the choir loft so that we can expand the choir! Do you know that not one person spoke up while he threatened to hold back money just to keep control!"

"I'd just write this off as a bad night, but already I was told that he and others have started a phone campaign to get all like-minded members to come to the Voter's Meeting next Tuesday night to stack the deck. That's when we're supposed to vote on the three-year plan to expand our ministry. The leadership and I have been working on this for nine months. His ilk will manage to stop the whole congregation from moving ahead. I'm just sure of it."

In Lutheran Churches pastors are called to serve as public servants in the midst of their congregations. But often there is a wide disparity between what the pastor believes he is to do and what the congregation wants him to do. What is the relationship between pastoral leaders and congregation to be like? Is the pastor above the congregation, and therefore the congregation is to do his bidding, not just in matters of faith and doctrine, but also in the organizational aspects of the church? Or are the members above the pastor, and therefore he is to take orders from them—serve them as they want him to serve them? Or are they co-equal? And if so, on what basis?

There are two sides to this issue; namely, the side of the congregation and the side of the pastor. It is not unusual for a pastor to hear members state, "You just preach and teach, Pastor, and we'll run the church." Is this the right relationship? Is the role of the pastor only spiritual? Is the role of the people only organizational?

Let's start by examining the Scriptures.

Scripture Search

1. Any understanding of the relationship between pastoral leader and congregation must start by addressing ownership. Whose church is it anyway? Read Matthew 16:18. What does this statement imply for both pastor and congregational members?
2. The ownership of the church is now clear. The next question, however, is, "To whom has the ministry of the Gospel been given?" (Note: The Lutheran Confessions use the term "ministry of the Gospel" more often than "means of grace.")
 - Look up John 20:22-23. To whom is Jesus speaking? Whom do they represent?
 - Also check out Matthew 18:18-20. What is the ecclesiastical truth in the words, "Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them?"
3. If the ministry of the Gospel is given to the church, then how does a pastor obtain the right to administer it as a public servant/leader?
 - First read 1 Corinthians 4:1. Note the word, "entrusted." What does that mean?
 - Also Titus 1:7. Once again the word "entrusted" is used. Who entrusts whom?
4. What **MUST** a pastor do by divine right (*jure divino*)?
 - Look up 1 Timothy 4:13. Three things are required. What are they?
 - This is not a complete list. What needs to be added?
5. What **MIGHT** a pastor do by human right (*jure humano*)?
 - 2 Timothy 4:5, "...The duties of your ministry" is rather nebulous. What might be included?
 - From whom might a list of "duties" come?
6. What kind of pastor does it take to properly lead the church of God? Models from the New Testament are abundant, for example, the models of Paul or Barnabas, or those of Peter or John. Most often, however, pastors want to model their ministry after Jesus.
 - One model is given in Matthew 20:25-27. From this passage we get the term "servant leader." What characteristic(s) of a servant leader can be identified in these verses?
 - Another model is set forth in John 10:3-4, that of a shepherd leader (Jesus' use of this model is reminiscent of the shepherd kings of the Old Testament). Review carefully the characteristic(s) of a shepherd leader that can be identified in this passage.
 - Also check out 1 Peter 5:2. What two terms are used for pastors here? What are the implications of each?

Relational Essentials

Before continuing, consider the truth that both the pastor and the congregation can correctly understand the theological and ecclesiastical aspects of this matter and yet have a contentious and even calamitous relationship with each other. Good relationships are seldom established by right understanding of theology or church governance (although without these a church can even cease to be a church!) but by godly disposition, attitudes, and behaviors toward one another. What disposition, attitudes, and behaviors of both congregation members and pastor build healthy relationships?

It starts with mutual respect, but check out the following three passages for additional insights:

- Philippians 1:7-8: How does Paul describe his feelings for this church?
- John 10:3-4: What word describes the feelings of the sheep toward the good shepherd?
- Ephesians 4:32: Select three words that describe the proper relationship between congregation and pastor as well as pastor toward members?

Our Confessions Speak

The Reformers answered the question, “To whom belongs the church?” by declaring who had the power to ordain. If only the bishops could ordain, then the authority of the ministry of the Gospel resided in them and not in the church local, that is, with the baptized. *The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* (65-69), speaks directly to this:

But the distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right, it is manifest that ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine right...For where the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists.

This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says, “When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men” (Eph. 4:8, 11-12). He enumerates pastor and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and he adds that they are given for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ. Where the true church is, therefore, the right of electing and ordaining ministers must of necessity also be...

Finally, this is confirmed by the declaration of Peter, “You are a royal priesthood” (I Pet. 2:9). These words apply to the true church which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of electing and ordaining ministers.”

Points to Ponder

The only priests in the New Testament are the baptized people of God. The role of mediator as a special class of people between God and man is over. Yet men are to be set aside to lead congregations in the public sense—that is, officially such as a notary public has authority in behalf of a state. To quote Francis Pieper, “For this office is nothing more than a public service, which is delegated to one by the whole congregation, though all of them are priest together” (*Christian Dogmatics*, Volume III, p. 442).

Ponder what it means that you as a pastor have been entrusted with a public authority not owned by you but belonging to the congregation you serve; yet the congregation, in turn, has been entrusted with it by God.

For Conversation

St. Paul sees the metaphor of Christ and his church as declaring his relationship with his people. Lutheran theologian, Francis Pieper, states, “The Church and its ministers have the same relation to each other as employer and employee or owner and steward.”

- Discuss how you feel about this analogy.
- What other metaphors could be used to describe the relationship between a pastor and the church? Have fun discussing!
- Allow time to pray together.

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FAITHFUL & AFIRE

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Participant's Guide

Boundaries

What boundaries shape and limit our practice of the ministry?

1. The Issues

From his interaction with over 100 congregations, church consultant Howard Friend has identified six factors which impede a healthy relationship of trust between clergy and congregations. One factor involves the establishment of boundaries. Friend writes:

Whatever the psychological motivation, many older pastors have allowed themselves to be thoroughly accessible. Unable to say no to almost any demand, they stick their fingers in every pie and teeter on the constant edge of burnout. Often they and their families smolder with quiet resentment. But in a younger generation the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. One parishioner put it strongly: "Pastor has made clear the four or five things in his life that have priority importance, but I don't think the church made the list!"...Overstating these boundary concerns has, in some situations, implied that being a pastor is merely a job, a clock to punch...It is difficult to build a spirit of partnership with a pastor who seems to regard himself as a mere employee. (Howard E. Friend, "The Failure to Form Basic Partnership," *Congregations* [September/October 2002], pages 23-24.)

Establishing boundaries which appropriately regulate one's professional and personal responsibilities is challenging. In what areas of the practice of ministry does a pastor need to establish boundaries? Why do you think some pastors fail to establish appropriate boundaries in the exercise of their ministry? Why do other pastors err in the opposite extreme by setting up boundaries which are too rigid and contrary to a servant attitude? How does one establish a healthy balance?

Why are boundaries important for the pastor in the following areas: family life, work load, accountability, friendships, sexuality?

2. Scripture Search

Proverbs 25:28

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

1 Timothy 3:1-5 (cf. Titus 1:6)

2 Timothy 1:7

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

3. Our Confessions Speak

“...Christ gave to his apostles only spiritual authority, that is, the command to preach the gospel, to proclaim the forgiveness of sins, to administer the sacraments, and to excommunicate the ungodly without the use of physical force. He did not give them the power of the sword or the right to establish, take possession, or dispose of the kingdoms of the world.” (*Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*. Kolb-Wengert, 334.31)

“Therefore I have always taught that we should not despise or disdain this walk of life [marriage and parenthood], as the blind world and our false clergy do, but view it in the light of God’s Word, by which it is adorned and sanctified. Because of this Word it is not a walk of life to be placed on the same level with all the others, but it is before and above them all, whether those of emperor, princes, bishops, or any other. Important as the spiritual and civil walks of life are, these must humble themselves and allow all people to enter marriage as a walk of life, as we shall hear.” (*The Large Catechism*, The Ten Commandments: Sixth Commandment. Kolb-Wengert, 414.209).

4. Points to Ponder

The pastor regulates his functioning so that it aligns with the priorities which God has assigned to him through the call into pastoral ministry.

The pastor serves others, but that service does not mean reacting to all the expectations or demands of those being served and in fact involves some self-care.

The pastor establishes boundaries in his public ministry so that he may also give due attention to other significant vocations, foremost of which are being husband and father.

5. For Conversation

“The pastor is to organize his life according to the following priorities: first is God, second is church, third is family.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement, and why?

Reflecting on ministry, Henri Nouwen wrote: “My whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly being interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions were my work” (*Reaching Out*, Image [1986], page 52). How does a minister regulate himself so that he is appropriately accessible to his people but does not permit unlimited access to him?

“The office [of the public ministry] and its functions are called ‘public’ not because the functions are always discharged in public, but because they are performed on behalf of the church...Moreover, the word ‘public’ connotes accountability to those who have placed them into ‘public’ office.” (*The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*, CTCR, 1981, page 13) What boundaries must be established so that the pastor is appropriately accountable to those who have placed him in the pastoral office--namely to God and to the congregation? Is the pastor accountable to individual members of the church, and, if so, what boundaries inform this accountability?

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality” (1 Thess. 4:3). Which boundaries prevent a minister from falling into sexual sin?

Pray together that God engenders in you self-control, which is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23), so that you might lovingly serve His people with purity, integrity, calm, and courage.

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