



# FAITHFUL & AFIRE

Biblical Conversations on the Pastoral Ministry  
LCMS Circuit Bible Studies, 2006-07

## Leaders Guide

### Leader's Guides

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## Session 1 The Pastor as Preacher

### LEADER'S GUIDE

#### The *Fan into Flame* Series

*Introduce the series and the series theme, referencing the study guide. Future sessions will focus on other aspects of the pastoral task, including missional leadership, worship, balance of family and ministry, integrity, confessing pastors, equipping the saints, and the pastor's prayer and devotional life. Take a moment, too, to introduce the process – 30-45 minutes of guided total group Bible study followed by 30-45 minutes of conversation in small groups of 3-4.*

In 2 Timothy 1:6, the apostle Paul reminds Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” His inspired words signal the reality of fatigue and malaise in pastoral ministry and our need for God’s daily grace to remain faithful as pastors. This series of Bible studies and conversations for pastoral circuits in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is a resource for fanning the flame of the pastoral gift. Fired by the Word of God, pastors will study key aspects of pastoral ministry, seeking growth and greater effectiveness.

#### A Case in Point

*This “Case in Point” launching segment asks pastors to consider their own challenges or problems in preaching. It “primes the pump” for the study that follows. Read the little case study aloud along with the two questions that follow. Responses to the two discussion questions may be shared in the total group or already in small groups of 3-4. Try to keep this first conversation to 10 minutes.*

Pastor Bob takes his preaching seriously. He still translates his New Testament texts from the Greek. He works hard to get at the center of a text and make a connection with his listeners. He gets an array of positive comments at the door regarding his preaching. Like most preachers, he thinks he’s pretty good at it.

Not long ago at a pastoral conference, pastors were asked to list their problems in preaching – aspects of preaching in which they thought they could improve. At first, Bob balked, thinking, “Hey, my reviews are good.” Then, as he thought about it, his list of problem areas in his preaching began to grow. Here’s what he wrote down at the conference:

1. I need more time for preparation.
2. I seem to use the same language for the gospel in every sermon.
3. My sermon structure is the same almost every time: law, then gospel, then sanctification.
4. I think I’m too tied to my manuscript when I preach.
5. I don’t preach enough on Old Testament texts.
6. My illustrations don’t seem to get to the heart of the listener. I’m more cognitive in my preaching than affective, preaching more to the head than the heart.
7. I’d like to preach more sermon series, still honoring the lectionary as my guide for texts.

Once Bob had his list, he wasn't sure what to do with it. After some thought, he did three things. First, he bought two recent books on homiletics. He hadn't read a homiletics text since graduation from seminary. Second, he found two other pastors and began meeting every week for an hour and a half to talk about preaching and especially the coming Sunday's sermon. Third, he began intentionally putting more time into preparing the presentation of his sermon, that is, the delivery of the sermon. He actually spends an hour a week now just rehearsing the sermon's delivery.

### Getting the Conversation Going

1. We all need help with our preaching. Look at Pastor Bob's list of seven challenges. Which of the seven stands out most as one of *your* challenges? Circle it.
2. Share one thing you include in your sermon preparation that really blesses your preaching.

## The Scriptures Speak

***"The Scriptures Speak" is designed as a guided plenary Bible study. The circuit counselor, host pastor, or another designated leader may present the study. Each participant should have a study guide. For each question, additional material is provided for the leader and is printed in bold italics. Because of electronic transmission issues, Greek words and phrases have been transliterated into English.***

1. An Old Testament passage that gives a vivid picture of preaching is Nehemiah 8:1-12. The scene gives us God's returned exiles gathered on the Feast of Trumpets to hear the Word of God and worship. Note the following about the preaching in this passage:
  - (Vss. 2-3) ***The reading and exposition of the Scriptures lasted 5-6 hours, during which the preachers and listeners (men, women, and children) stood*** (vs. 7).
  - (Vs. 4) ***The rudiments of a pulpit were present.***
  - (Vs. 6) ***Preaching happens in the context of worship.***
  - (Vs. 7) ***Preaching was a priestly task, here presented by Levites.***
  - Vs. 8) ***The preaching included the following: reading aloud of the text, clarifying the text (perhaps translating it into a Targum or Aramaic idiom or perhaps a paraphrasing of the text), and an explanation of the text's meaning, its application to the listeners' lives.***
  - (Vss. 9-12) ***Listeners responded, showing the impact of both law and good news.***
2. ***The New Testament uses several words to capture the preaching task. Primary among them are the first two listed below (kerusso and euangelium). 95% of the English translations, "preach" and "proclaim," are based on these two words. Romans 10:15 and Galatians 2:2 use both.*** Here are some of the root words used for the preaching task in the New Testament, each with its own emphasis. Circle the one or two that come the closest to your own practice of preaching:
  - Kerygma – ***heralding of a proclamation*** (Mark 1:38-39; 3:14; 1 Cor 1:17)
  - Euangelium -- ***announcement of Good News*** (Acts 16:10; Rom 1:15)
  - Homilia – ***conversation or interactive discussion, talk among friends*** (Luke 24:14, ***"talked with each other;"*** and Acts 20:11, ***"after talking until daylight"***)
  - Logos – ***a reasoned message or saying*** (1 Cor 1:18)
  - Didache – ***teaching*** (Matthew 11:1, Acts 28:31, and Romans 2:21, and 1 Timothy 2:7 use a form of this word for ***"teaching" with "preaching" [kerusso]. So are they synonymous or different? It raises the issue of the role of teaching [today, catechesis] in our preaching. No doubt this will raise some issues among participants.***)
  - Lalia – ***speaking; a simple word for verbal communication*** (Mark 2:2)

3. Jesus' ministry, according to Matthew, was one of "teaching, preaching, and healing" (Matthew 4:23). Turn to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Just as his healing, Jesus' teaching and preaching were amazing to those who heard Him. As Matthew puts it, "...the crowds were amazed at his teaching because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (Matthew 7:28-29). We can learn much from Jesus' teaching for our own preaching. Find evidence of these qualities of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount:

- Using repeated phrases (not unlike the refrains of traditional African American call and response preaching or a preacher's repetition of a "hook" phrase): **5:3-11; 5:17, 21, 27, 31, 33 38, 43.**
- Engaging the hearer's imagination through the use of visual metaphor or narrative: **5:13-14; 6:19-24; 6:25-33; 7:6; 7:13-20;**
- Breaking open old truths from Scripture to extend or freshen their meaning and application: **5:17-47;**
- Using hyperbole or humorous exaggerated imagery to make a point: **5:29-30; 5:40; 7:3; 7:9.**

Are there other characteristics of Jesus' teaching that transfer well to our preaching task? **Elsewhere in the Gospels, Jesus uses story or the extended metaphor of a parable to make a point (Lk 15), sometimes more than one to make the same point (Mt 13:44-46). Repeatedly Jesus uses the Scriptures in His preaching (Lk 4:16-21; 7:24-28).**

4. Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2 offers a brilliant example of the church's first preaching. At work in this sermon are at least these crucial moves:
- **Clear and pointed law (Vs. 23)**
  - **Repeated use of Scripture** (Vss. 16-21; 25-28; 34-35)
  - **Full and clear gospel presentation: the Christ event, the benefits of the Christ event, and where they can receive these benefits** (vss. 38-39)
5. Paul's ministry of preaching is vividly recorded in the book of Acts. Sometimes we get a summary of his speaking and sometimes we get his very words. Note these insights on preaching from his visits in Thessalonica and Athens:
- In Acts 17:1-4, Paul's messages on three different Sabbath days are summarized with an amazing variety of words, showing the multi-faceted nature of preaching: The words what he did in the synagogue include the following:
    1. **"Reasoned"**
    2. **"Explaining"**
    3. **"Proving"**
    4. **"Proclaiming"**
    5. **"Persuaded"**
  - In Acts 17:16-34, Paul speaks to the Areopagus in Athens. While not technically a sermon, since it happens outside a worship setting, his evangelistic message offers these helps for preachers:
    1. **Paul is keenly aware of his audience, their values, longings, and limitations** (vs. 22).
    2. **Paul breaks open secular, even pagan notions, recasting them from a Scriptural perspective** (vs. 23), **using well-known Greek poetry** (vs. 28) **for his language.**

**3. (Vss. 23-28) Paul builds on what his listeners already know (God as creator) to what they do not know (God of the resurrection).**

- In both incidents (vss. 4-9, 32-34), it matters to Luke to record those whom God brought to faith as well as other responses to the preached Word. **There is an attention to remembering and recording those whom the Spirit graces with faith through the preaching of the Word.**
6. Paul's instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 is crucial for the preaching task. Note the following from this verse:
- **The Greek word translated here in the NIV here as "correctly handles" only appears outside the New Testament in the Septuagint's Proverbs 3:6 and 11:5, both showing the word's sense of cutting a straight path through a forest or desert, thus the KJV's "rightly divides."**
  - **Effective preaching is a matter of cutting a straight path through a text to Jesus Christ. The hermeneutic for that task? Law and Gospel. It is knowing how to rightly divide a text so that both law and gospel cut the way clearly to Jesus Christ.**

## Words from the Wise on Preaching

*The three quotes included here can be helpful as resources for the conversations to follow. Use them selectively or read all three.*

- The Lutheran Confessions on the real-time effects of law/Gospel preaching:

***The word "real" here ("real terror, regret, and sorrow in their hearts") shows the importance of the preached Word being in real time with real needs in mind. We do not talk about law and gospel. We do not aim for virtual judgment and grace. The Holy Spirit leads people to come under law and gospel in the very real moment of preaching.***

"Through these means (the preaching and hearing of the Word), God goes about his work and breaks our hearts and draws people, so that they recognize their sins and God's wrath through the preaching of the law, and feel real terror, regret, and sorrow in their hearts. Through the preaching of the holy gospel of the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ and through meditating upon it, a spark of faith is ignited in them, and they accept the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and receive the comfort of the promise of the gospel. In this way, the Holy Spirit, who effects all of this, is sent into their hearts."  
*(Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II. The Book of Concord. Kolb/Wengert, [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], p. 554.*

- John Bradford, 16<sup>th</sup> Century English reformer and martyr, on the power of the Word to bind us and loose us with law and gospel:

***These words from Bradford reveal not only the influence of the Reformation in England but also the challenge of rightly dividing the Word of God in preaching.***

"He that is ignorant of [the division of the places of the Law and of the Gospel] cannot, though he were a great doctor of divinity, and could rehearse every text of the bible without book, but both be deceived, and deceive others; as the experience hereof (the more pity) hath taught, nay, seduced the whole world....Therefore, I say, take to thee the glass of God's law; look therein, and thou shalt see thy just damnation, and God's wrath for sin, which, if thou darest, will drive thee not only to an amendment, but also to a

sorrow and hatred of thy wickedness, and even to the brim of despair, out of which nothing can bring thee but the glad tidings of Christ, that is, the gospel: for as God's word doth bind thee, so can nothing but God's word unbind thee; and until thou comest to this point, thou knowest nothing of Christ." (John Bradford, *The Writings of John Bradford*, "Preface to: The Places of The Law and of the Gospel by Petrus Artopeus" [Cambridge: The Parker Society, 1848; orig. 1548], p. 5.)

- C.F. Walther on the importance of the preacher's own genuine experience of law and gospel:

***Walther's words challenge the preacher to come under the judgment and consolation of the Word himself. That integrity of the applied Word is a crucial step in sermon preparation.***

*"Now, since a person under the pedagogy of the Holy Spirit learns rightly to distinguish the Law from the Gospel and to divide both, it follows that genuine Christians, be they ever so feeble otherwise, as long as they have experienced the force of the Law and the consolation of the Gospel or the power of faith, are best prepared to apply to others what they have experienced in their own lives. Accordingly, ministers who may be classed among the poorest intellectually not infrequently are found to be the best preachers."* (C.F. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* [St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House], p. 51.)

## **Conversation (Groups of 3-4)**

***You may want to ask a pastor in each group to serve as leader, whose primary task is to be sure everyone has an opportunity to speak. Participants may decide to focus on only 2-3 of the questions or to raise questions themselves. Be sure to encourage prayer for one another.***

1. Which of the words for the preaching task in No. 2 above best captures the character of your preaching? Share the word with your group and explain why you chose it.
2. What is the relationship between preaching and teaching? Does teaching have a place in the preaching task? Share your responses.
3. Jesus engaged his hearer's imagination through simile, metaphor, and the extended narrative metaphors of parables. Share a reference from one of your recent sermons when you did the same,
4. Is there a place for evangelistic preaching in the Lutheran tradition? If so, what cautions are attendant to such preaching?
5. In what sense(s) is preaching a matter of persuasion? If persuasion is part of preaching, just what is the goal of the preacher's persuasion? Share your responses.
6. How much self-revelation is too much in preaching? Where are the boundaries here?
7. What can a preacher do to be sure he himself has come under the influence of the law and the gospel in a Biblical text? Note the Walther quote above.
8. As a group come up with a cultural icon waiting to be "broken open" with new meaning from the perspective of law and gospel.
9. Close your group with prayer for one another's preaching ministries.

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## Session 2 The Pastor as Missional Leader

### LEADER'S GUIDE

#### The *Faithful and Afire* Series

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In 2 Timothy 1:6, the apostle Paul writes to remind Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” That little verse signals the reality of fatigue and malaise in pastoral ministry and our need for God's daily grace to motivate and grow us as pastors. This series of Bible studies and conversations for pastoral circuits in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is a resource for fanning the flame of the pastoral gift. Fired by the Word of God, pastors will look at key aspects of pastoral ministry, seeking fresh insights and continued growth.

#### A Case in Point

*This “Case in Point” launching segment asks pastors to consider their own challenges as missional leaders. It “primes the pump” for the study that follows. Read the little case study aloud along with the questions that follow. Responses to the discussion questions may be shared in the total group or already in small groups of 3-4. Try to keep this first conversation to 10 minutes.*

The phone call that Pastor Bob just received has placed him into a pensive mood. His brother, Pastor Bill, recently accepted a call to a new congregation. He has phoned Bob to ask for assistance and a little brotherly insight. Bill sees his new congregation as stuck in a rut. Attendance at worship services is slowly declining. The Adult Bible Class has grown a little bit since “the new pastor” arrived, but numbers are dramatically down compared to the congregation's heyday.

The Board of Elders is looking to Pastor Bill for a new vision. Several new elders are young business executives who believe that their church needs a comprehensive strategic plan complete with a matrix of measurable objectives. Some have even suggested a complete restructure of the congregation's governance system to reflect some of the new thinking going on in corporate America.

Both Pastors Bob and Bill consider themselves to be strong leaders. Yet their formal training in the disciplines associated with leadership and organizational management has been minimal. What they know about leadership they have learned through experience.

While experience has served them well, Pastors Bob and Bill would like to grow as both practically and theologically as leaders. Their list of questions includes the following:

- How will we consider visionary & strategic planning from a Biblical perspective?
- Where will we turn for help in understanding new models of church governance?
- What types of matrix or measurement systems are appropriate in the church?
- What can we in the church learn from corporate culture where leadership is concerned?

To tackle the leadership issues both face, these brother pastors have agreed to hold each other accountable for three commitments. First, they will read six books over the next twelve months, each book deals addressing an aspect of leadership or organizational management. A couple of their selected books are written by authors within the church world. They reflect thinking on leadership from a practical perspective within the church's culture. Two books are from a secular worldview. They reflect some of the best leadership thinking from within the corporate culture. They hope that these can be applied to their churches without compromising their doctrine and values. The last two books are strongly theological in nature. These wrestle with the differences between worldly or corporate understandings of leadership and leadership understood from a Biblical worldview.

Second, Bill and Bob have committed to subscribe to an audio club offered by a prominent church leader and former pastor. Each month, they will receive an audio resource on a leadership topic, listen to it, and talk about it.

Third, the brothers have committed to conversation. They will set aside an hour every other week to apply what they're reading to the congregations they serve. Both know that leadership is best learned through experience, yet they're convinced they'll benefit as leaders from their new commitments.

### **Getting the Conversation Going:**

1. Leadership in the church is difficult in our results-oriented culture today. Consider some of the challenges facing Pastor Bill had leadership challenges in his new congregation. What are some of yours?
2. Share with members of your group one or two leadership resources that you have found to be helpful in your ministry.

### **The Scriptures Speak**

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#### **I. Leadership Credentials**

In 1984, Tom Peters and Nancy Austin co-authored a book on leadership. Titled *A Passion for Excellence*,<sup>1</sup> the book summarized research on the characteristics, traits and credentials of America's most successful business leaders. Their book raises the question for the church: “What qualities and credentials does Scripture establish for the pastor as a leader?”

- A. 1 Timothy 3:1-7: Late in his ministry, St. Paul wrote to Timothy, instructing him regarding oversight of the church in Ephesus. In chapter 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul provides Timothy with a detailed list of the credentials necessary for one to serve as pastor. Note the following:
  - The attributes that make up this list of qualifications can be divided into two groups of seven (vs 2 and vss 3-6) with a concluding qualification in vs 7.

- (vs 2) The first qualification that Paul lists, *anepilempton*, means “irreproachable.” The term might be thought of as the over-arching introduction to the qualifications that Paul introduces here. The Greek word means, “not to be taken hold of” or “nothing left on his doorstep against him.” Paul is saying, “No failure at the negative qualities listed here should be able to be charged against an overseer of God’s church!”
- (vs 2) “Husband of one wife”: Paul begins with an emphasis upon sexual purity. The *episkopos* in the apostolic era came out of a culture rife with sexual immorality. Gross sexual immorality accompanied pagan temple rites. Homosexuality and promiscuity saturated the world in which the overseer served.
- (vs 2) “Temperate” and “*sophrona*” (of sober-mind). Paul indicates the need that for spiritual temperateness. The pastor must have a theological soundness of mind and judgment.
- (vs 2) “*kosmion*” (orderly): A pastor must be orderly in his mental life and in his habits. Note there is a quality of discipline here. In order to shepherd others, the pastor himself must be pastored or led by the Good Shepherd. Often this occurs as the pastor engages in a disciplined use of the Word in his own life.
- (vs 2) “*philoxenon*” (hospitable): In apostolic times this often meant two things. First, the pastor’s home was often the first stop for weary Christians seeking refuge from persecution. Second, most of the on-going people or community needs landed at the pastor’s doorstep. Those in poverty, sickness and need made their appeal to the pastor who is here being charged with the call to serve them.
- (vs 2) “*didaktikon*” (apt to teach): 1 Corinthians 12:29 suggest that not all Christians are gifted to teach. Here Paul suggests that pastors should have competence in their ability to lead others through the teaching of God’s Word.
- (vs 3) “Not violent but gentle”: Paul states that the pastoral office requires a man who is even-tempered. Martin Luther used the term. “*gelinde*” (yielding). This qualification might seem out of place in the cut-throat American marketplace, but it is essential to the office of the pastoral ministry.
- (vs 3) “Not a lover of money”: In his book, *The Shepherd’s Covenant*, H.B. London points out that too often pastors become fixated on the “4 P’s”: prestige, power, paychecks, and pensions.<sup>2</sup>
- (vs 4) “*prohistamenon*” (managing his household): The participle has the sense of superintending. The pastor guides and leads his own marriage and family spiritually. Failure to invest in these primary relationships will spell trouble not only for the pastor, but for the church he serves.
- (vs 7) “A good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s snare”: God’s adversary, the devil, works with extra diligence to ensnare pastors in a sin-trap. One terrible result of their falling into public sin is the damage to their congregation. Another is stumbling block they present to those outside the church.

B. Titus 1:1-9: Titus served as Paul’s companion during his third missionary journey. In this epistle, Paul addresses the need of the church in Crete. Titus has been left in Crete to “straighten out what was left unfinished” (1:5), namely, the appointment or placing into office of “*presbuterous*” (pastors). In vss. 1-9, Paul presents a list of qualifications for the office of pastor very similar to those found in 1 Timothy 3. Note the following:

- (vs 5) “*presbuterous*”: Note that this term is virtually synonymous with the word that Paul uses in 1 Timothy 3:1, ‘episkopos’. Both terms refer to the office of the pastoral ministry. “Overseer” indicates the task to be done, giving oversight and leading). The term, “elder,” carries the dignity attendant to the office.
- (vs 6) “*Anegkletos*”: An elder must be blameless. Note the similarity between this opening and that in 1 Timothy. In both cases Paul indicates that the pastor must

be above reproach in the qualities identified, from within and outside of the church.

- (vs 7) Note the similarities between the list of qualifications here and those given in 1 Timothy. Both texts address such issues as wine, temper, money, sexuality, judgment, and discipline.
- (vs7) Paul includes the pastoral task of teaching, "*didaskalia*." The pastor must be competent in teaching and capable in convicting and refuting those who oppose sound doctrine.

## II. The Servant Character of the Pastor as Leader:

In 1995, author Laurie Beth Jones wrote *Jesus, CEO*,<sup>4</sup> a book that captured significant attention in the secular workplace. The idea behind this book seems good: to move Biblical leadership principles from the church to the marketplace. The title, however, seems greatly out of place! If Jesus were to hang a title on His office door, it would not resemble those we see in corporate America today. Instead of titles like CEO, CFO, CAO, etc., one title represents Jesus' view on leadership best, the title, Servant! Without question, some of the most pointed Biblical texts on leadership emphasize the servant nature of the pastor/overseer in his congregation. Note the emphasis placed upon servanthood in the passages below:

- A. Matthew 20:20-28: In this account the issue of leadership is apparent. With Peter, James and John comprise Jesus' inner circle. Without question, their expectation is toward the establishment of an earthly Messianic Kingdom. Here their mother, Salome, states their request for the highest place of leadership in Jesus' Kingdom, to sit at His right and left. Instead of granting their request, Jesus redefines the very nature of leadership as it will unfold in His kingdom.
1. (vs 25) "*hoi archontes*": Jesus desires to contrast the concept of leadership in His Kingdom with that exercised in the realm of the Gentile politic.
  2. (vs 25) "*katakuriuousin*" (lord over) + "*katexousiazousin*" (exercise authority over). In both verbs, the prefix, "*kata*," indicates a form of abuse, a coming down on or up against those subject to them.
  3. (vs 26) "It is not so with you!": Leadership in God's Kingdom is set in opposition to leadership of lording over, which characterized the corrupted secular leadership of the Roman government.
  4. (vs 26) "*diakonos*" (servant): Leadership in God's Kingdom is qualitatively described by the word "servant". A *diakonos* focuses not on self but on the one being served.
  5. (vs 27) "*doulos*" (slave): Here the concept of leadership as servanthood goes deeper. The slave is the humblest and lowest of all servants. On this matter, C. Gene Wilkes writes, "Being a slave involves several things: the loss of property, separation from roots, loss of individuality, and the freedom to choose. Being a slave means giving up personal rights."<sup>5</sup> The implication is clear: leadership in the pastoral realm is qualitatively different than leadership in the secular realm.
- B. Philippians 2:1-11: This section of Paul's exhortation immediately follows his call, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves," (vs 3). Again, the essence of servant leadership in Christ's kingdom is qualitatively described in relation to the self-humiliation of Jesus, Himself.
1. (vs 5) "*phroneite*" (Be minded): This exhortation encourages the pastoral leader to set his mind, attitude and intention on a servant orientation.
  2. (vs 7) "*ekenosin*" (emptied): Jesus considers not Himself but the mission and work for which he has become human. He emptied himself in order to fill us, that

we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The servant nature of leadership is again underscored!

Note 1: In his book, *Descending into Greatness*, author Bill Hybels writes of this text, “The message of Philippians is this: If you want to be truly great, then the direction you must go is down. You must descend into greatness... Greatness is not a measure of self-will, but rather self-abandonment.”<sup>6</sup>

Note 2: J. Oswald Sanders writes, “True leadership is achieved not by reducing men to one’s service but in giving oneself in selfless service to them...”<sup>7</sup>

### III. Missional Framework for Leadership

In his book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, author John C. Maxwell suggests that one of the most important roles a leader can play is that of helping an organization navigate well. “Above all,” Maxwell suggests, “leaders must have a firm grasp of the mission they are on and the business that they are in.”<sup>8</sup> In similar fashion Pastor Rick Warren writes, “Nothing precedes purpose. The starting point for every church should be the question, “Why do we exist?” Until you know what your church exists for, you have no foundation, no motivation or direction for ministry.”<sup>9</sup> Without question, one of the key tasks for the pastor as a leader is the establishment of a clear, Biblical sense of the church’s mission. How do we, as Lutheran theologians, understand the mission of the church?

- A. In 1986 the LCMS, through its synodical convention asked the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to “initiate, facilitate, and develop a theological statement of mission.”<sup>10</sup> The problem at hand was confusion over the term, mission, both in the secular and theological domain.
- B. The CTCR document, *Theological Statement of Mission*, (1990) provides both a broad and narrow definition of the church’s mission. Here is a summary:
  1. Mission understood broadly, is “God at work seeking to restore His creation to Himself.”<sup>11</sup>
  2. In the narrow sense, mission is to be understood Christologically. Mission is “what God has done through the work of Jesus Christ to restore fallen creation to Himself.”<sup>12</sup>
- C. The creation of the church – a theology of Mission: Lutheran theologians teach that God has chosen to create the church in order to administer His means of grace through which He carries out His mission.
  1. Pastors (properly called) carry out the mission of the church when they publicly (for and in behalf of the congregation) proclaim the word of God and administer the sacraments.
  2. God involves individual saints in carrying out His mission in a variety of ways including:
    - o Vocation
    - o Service to neighbors
    - o Use of the service gifts
- D. This understanding of mission is certainly evident in the Bible’s “Mission Magna Carta,” Matthew 28:18-20.

- (vs. 19) *“poreuthentes”* (going): Note that this participle, going, accompanies the imperative, “make disciples,” the primary verb in the sentence.
- *“matheteusate”* (turn into disciples): This aorist imperative active verb forms the heart of Jesus’ charge to the disciples. As they go forth, they are to turn people of all nations into disciples of Jesus Christ. The pastor as leader does well to keep the intentional mission of making disciples at the forefront of the church’s mission. Note that
- (vs. 19) *“baptizontes”* (baptizing) and *“didaskontes”* (teaching): These supportive participles indicate the “how” of disciple-making. Both point to the reality of God working through His established means to make disciples. Indeed, it is through His Word and the Sacraments that God subjectively applies to people the objective benefits of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. As leaders, pastors must keep Word and Sacrament ministry at the center of all that happens in the church.

#### IV. Effective Leadership: Doing the Right Things!

- A. The New Testament utilizes several key words to describe the office of pastoral ministry. In Part I, two such words, *episkopos* and *presbuteros*, were identified. The first of these (overseer) provides some degree of insight into what the office of pastor was created to do. The overseer serves as a steward over Christ’s congregation. A third word, *poimen* (shepherd), is also useful in describing the leadership role of a pastor. Consider the following:
1. Jesus is depicted as the Good Shepherd.
    - The shepherd knows his flock and calls each by name. (John 10:3,14)
    - The shepherd seeks the lost sheep and rejoices upon finding it. (Luke 15:3-7)
    - The shepherd is prepared to lay down his life to protect His sheep. (John 10:11-13)
    - The shepherd will be struck down for His sheep. (Mark 14:27-28/Zechariah 13:7)
    - The shepherd oversees souls. (1 Peter 2:25)
  2. The title of “shepherd” is given to pastors in Ephesians 4:11. In this chapter Paul is making a distinction between various offices within the body of Christ. The words chosen to describe the office of the pastoral ministry are shepherd and teacher. In Pauline literature the office of pastor is to be understood in light of all the New Testament says about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The pastor is to function as an under-shepherd to Jesus. What Jesus considers important for Him to do for His sheep is reflected in the office and work of the pastor. In a sense, pastoral leadership could be described not only as servant leadership but also as shepherd leadership.
    - Note: This metaphor is also expressed in 1 Peter 5:1-4. Here Peter echoes the mandate that he personally received from Jesus (John 21:16): “Shepherd (NIV, “Take care of..”) my sheep!” The emphasis is on both relationship and task. The pastor is called to have a caring, shepherd/sheep relationship with the flock he has been called to oversee. Additionally, he is to focus his energy and efforts upon shepherd tasks! Effectiveness in pastoral ministry, doing the right things, can be measured by looking at the shepherd metaphor.

B. In his book, *Good to Great*, author Jim Collins provides insight into the question of what makes leaders “great.” Collins notes that one trait consistent among “great” leaders is the ability to be effective.<sup>13</sup> Effectivity is defined as the ability to do those right things necessary to help an organization meet its goals. Using the metaphor of pastor as shepherd leader, note these three “right-things” to be accomplished pastoral office:

1. The shepherd feeds: The New Testament consistently emphasizes the pastoral work of feeding. Two specific feeding tasks are preaching and teaching.
  - Mark 3:13-19: At the appointment of the twelve apostles the first emphasis for their work is upon preaching.
  - 1 Corinthians 1:17: Paul identifies preaching as primary to his call.
  - Romans 10:16-17: Conversion comes by preaching the Word.
  - Matthew 28:20: After baptizing, teaching is listed as a primary disciple-making activity.
  - 1 Timothy 4:11: Timothy is called to teach.
  - Titus 2:1-2: Titus is called to teach sound doctrine in a formative manner.
2. The shepherd meets needs: A second work essential to the pastoral office is caring for a flock’s spiritual (and sometimes physical) needs. A clear emphasis is placed upon providing for the Sacramental needs of the flock (baptismal and Eucharistic needs). Passages like Matthew 25:35, 43; Acts 15:36; and James 1:27 highlight the care-giving nature of the pastoral office.
3. The shepherd leads: Just as a shepherd is given charge to lead his flock, so the pastor as shepherd leader is called to give priority to leadership activities directly impact the spiritual life of God’s people. Of this C. Gene Wilkes writes, “The leader becomes servant to those who have joined him when he provides adequate vision, direction, correction, and resources to carry out the mission entrusted to the group.”<sup>14</sup>
  - Consider how John’s inspired words to the pastors and churches of Asia Minor in Revelation 1-3 identify these tasks of shepherd leadership:
    - √ Establish/re-establish the mission of the church.
    - √ Affirm the positive efforts of each congregation.
    - √ Offer specific “correctives” to each church.

## V. Efficient Leadership

If effectivity can be described as the art of doing the right things, efficiency can be described as doing the right things right. In his best-selling book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, author Stephen Covey points to the difficulty inherent in efficiency. Covey suggests that too often a leader’s quest for efficiency is undermined by distractions.<sup>15</sup> In pastoral ministry there are numerous variables that can negate workers’ efficiencies. Here are a few examples:

- Tyranny of the Urgent (responding to “urgent” but unimportant items)
- Failure of Structure (a poor organizational system capsizing efficiency)
- Failure to Delegate
- Improper Delegation

- A. Consider two scriptural texts that seem dedicated to the issue of efficiency through delegation:
- Exodus 18:1-27: The example of Jethro and Moses.
  - Acts 6:1-7: The disciple's selection of "The Seven".
- B. Consider how the "gift" passages of Scripture relate to the concept of delegation and efficiency! (See Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31; Ephesians 4:7-13; and 1 Peter 4:7-11 for the spiritual gift lists, highlighting the varied ministries within the church.)

## VI. Leadership Style:

Too often, the leadership literature of our culture today seems to suggest that in order to "succeed" in leadership, a Type A Dominant personality type is necessary! Scripture, on the other hand, provides descriptions of a variety of leaders, each with a different personality and style of leadership. Of this, C. Gene Wilkes writes, "No one temperament is superior for leadership among God's people...as we search the Scriptures we see that God chooses people with (different) styles."<sup>16</sup>

Consider the different styles of leadership represented in the following texts:

- Galatians 2:11-19: Saint Paul's "dominant style" of leadership is apparent. Gary Smalley might call Paul a "lion." (See Gary Smalley, *The Two Sides of Love*, Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1990, 34-36).
- Acts 9:23-28: The "influence style" of Barnabas is set forth in this story. Barnabas is more "otter" than "lion." (Gary Smalley).
- Genesis 12:1ff and Genesis 16:1-6 display Abraham's "steadier style" of leadership. Abraham looks more like a "golden retriever" in Smalley's nomenclature.
- Exodus 2:11-20: Here we see Moses' "conscientious style" of leadership. Moses, it seems is a "Biblical beaver." (Smalley)

## Words from the Wise on Leadership

The three quotes included here can be helpful as resources for the conversations to follow. Use them selectively or read all three.

- Martin Luther on the high view of the pastoral office in Scripture:
 

"The office of preaching the Gospel (Pastoral Office) is the highest among them all; for it is the true Apostolic office, laying the foundation of all other offices, on which it is proper to build all others, namely the offices of teacher, of prophet, of governors, and of those who have the gift of healing." Luther quoted in Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics Vol. III* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 462.
- C.F.W. Walther on the Mission of the Church:
 

"...Dear Brethren, we are assembled here not for our own sake. We are in the faith, and by this faith we hope to be saved! But there are still many millions who have no faith. This is why we are here – so that we might bring salvation to as many people as we possible can... Only for this reason does our gracious God allow Christians to live on earth, that they might bring others to the saving faith." C.F.W. Walther, "Essays for the Church" (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992) II: 262.

- LCMS Church Growth Strategy Task Force on the use of “ministerial reason”:

“The church is encouraged to be “in the world by making inquiry into the fields of sociology, psychology, and technology in so far as such might serve the church “mission’.” The Church Growth Strategy Task Force, *Toward Theological Basis, Understanding and use of Church Growth Principles in the LCMS.* (St. Louis: The Standing Committee Pastoral Ministry, 1991), Pt. II, p 7.

### Conversation (Groups of 3-4)

***You may want to ask a pastor in each group to serve as leader, whose primary task is to be sure everyone has an opportunity to speak. Participants may decide to focus on only 2-3 of the questions or to raise questions themselves. Be sure to encourage prayer for one another.***

1. Make note of the Luther quote above, (a high view of pastoral office). How is this view of the pastoral office often placed into conflict in the Hire/Fire mentality practiced within the American leadership culture?
2. “In what ways does the American leadership culture place pressure upon the pastoral leader to perform?”
3. Consider the Walther quote above, (Mission of the Church). How does our LCMS theology regarding mission shape the following leadership tasks often assumed by pastors?
  - Establishing a Mission Statement
  - Setting Vision
  - Developing Strategic Intent
4. Consider the quote regarding the use of ministerial reason. What aspects of “secular” leadership teaching seem to you to be appropriate for use in the church?
5. Consider the lists of leadership Credentials in Part I – Scripture Speaks. Which characteristics would you highlight as being particularly challenging for pastors today? Explain what makes these qualities so challenging.
6. Consider what Scripture has to say regarding the pastor as servant leader (Part II). How has the American mega-church given rise to pastoral expectations that contrast with this image? Are there aspects of the “servant/slave” role that are difficult for you? Explain.
7. Consider the Pastoral Tasks that are essential to the metaphor of the pastor as shepherd leader. Is it difficult to maintain these tasks as priorities in your ministry? Explain your response.
8. Consider Part V, “Efficient Leadership. What causes inefficiencies in your pastoral work today? As a group, compile a list of these causes and consider ways to address them.
9. Review Part VI, “Leadership Style.” How would you characterize your leadership style? What are the “strengths/weaknesses” of this style? How might you go about capitalizing on your leadership strengths? How can you strengthen aspects of your leadership needing improvement?
10. Close your group with prayer for one another’s ministries as pastoral leaders.

## Endnotes

1. Peters and Austin, *A Passion for Excellence* (New York: Warner Books, 1985).
2. H.B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, *The Shepherd's Covenant* (Regal, 1985).
3. Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus, CEO* (Laurie Beth Jones, 1995).
4. C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership* (Tyndale, 1998).
5. Bill Hybels and Rob Wilkins, *Descending into Greatness* (Zondervan, 1998).
6. J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Moody Press, 1967), 13.
7. John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Atlanta: Maxwell Motivation Inc., 1991), 33.
8. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Bondservant 1995), 81; 10).
9. Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the LCMS, *A Theological Statement of Mission* (St. Louis: The LCMS, 1990), 3.
10. *Ibid.*, 7, 12.
11. *Ibid.*, 10, 13.
12. Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (Harper Collins, 2001).
13. C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership* (Tyndale, 1998), 10.
14. Stephen Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*
15. C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership* (Tyndale 1998), 144.

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# FAITHFUL & AFIRE

Biblical Conversations on the Pastoral Ministry  
LCMS Circuit Bible Studies, 2006-07

## Session 3 Worship: Stewards of the Mysteries

### *LEADER'S GUIDE*

In 2 Corinthians 4:1-2 Paul tells the congregation at Corinth: “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.” Understanding pastors as “stewards of the mysteries” is foundational for all ordination rites in the church catholic for it describes with clarity what pastors do: they dispense the gifts of Christ’s flesh through the means of grace, the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Pastors represent Christ, speak His voice and deliver His gifts. As the one absolution in our liturgy so clearly states: “Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.” A key aspect of our pastoral ministry, and therefore of our pastoral care, is to recognize that the primary place for standing as stewards of the mysteries is in the worship of our church.

### **A Case in Point**

Nicholas was the best and brightest in Pr. Jacobson’s confirmation class. He was also a great athlete. One spring afternoon, while pitching his team to victory, Nick’s shoulder gave out. The diagnosis was bleak. Cancer, the ravenous kind, eventually took his shoulder, his arm, and finally his life. His young parents, in their early thirties, could hardly cope with the loss. Pr. Jacobson was with them all the way, even driving into New York City three times a week during that last month as Nick struggled at a famous cancer hospital. Nick’s parents leaned heavily upon him, and his pastoral care was well received.

In the afternoon following Nick’s funeral, his father said to Pr. Jacobson: “Thank you for you have done for us this past year, especially these last months of Nick’s life. I know you meant well in your sermon today, about how Nick is in heaven, but frankly, Pastor, that is no comfort to me. It’s not fair. Nick should not be heaven – he should be here, pitching in little league, going to high school. It is no comfort to me that Nick is in heaven, for he belongs here with us, on earth.”

Pr. Jacobson, recently ordained, did not know what to say. He left that afternoon completely devastated as to how he might comfort these young parents at the loss of their son.

And somehow, in the next day or two, he discovered what our liturgy means when it says: “therefore with angels and archangels and will all the company of heaven we laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you and saying . . .” He hurried back to those grieving parents and encouraged them to come to the Lord’s Supper that Sunday. He described the mystery of the sacrament, the mystery of what we believe about the person of Christ, always present according to his divine and human nature, that is, bodily, in his flesh, and that wherever Jesus is, there is heaven. And so there on the altar, at the mystery of the Lord’s Supper, are present in Christ the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. And that includes Nick, who is present with us “in Christ,” singing praises to the Lamb in heaven as we sing them

here below. That is why we can truly say that at the table of the Lord, heaven and earth come together in Christ. There is no greater mystery and no greater comfort than this.

That Sunday, Nick's parents came to church to receive Christ's body broken in death, his blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. As Pr. Jacobson gave them this mysterious gift of Christ's very body and blood, tears flowed down his cheeks, and so it did for Nick's parents and for many in the congregation who were also mourning his loss. As Nick's father greeted him at the door after the service, he said words to Pr. Jacobson that every pastor longs to hear: "Pastor, now I am comforted to know that Nick is in heaven with Jesus."

### Getting the Conversation Going

Over twenty years ago, William Willimon wrote a book entitled *Worship as Pastoral Care*.

- How many pastors see the liturgy as the primary means to provide pastoral care for their flock, e.g. the wedding service to counsel couples on what the Church believes about marriage, the funeral service about our understanding of death, life, and resurrection?
- In what ways does the historic liturgy, represented in the official worship resources of our church, help us teach our congregations that their most intimate communion with Christ occurs through his bodily presence in Word and Sacrament?

## The Scriptures Speak

### 1. Jesus' ministry of preaching and miracles in bringing in the new creation

Jesus' sermon in the synagogue in Nazareth is programmatic for His ministry and for the worship life of the church (Luke 4:16-30). In this sermon, the evangelist gives us the structure of the synagogue service which formed the basis for the liturgy of the Word in the Christian worship services:

#### The reading of the Word

Torah

Psalm

Prophets

Psalm

[Historical Writings]

[Psalm]

#### Interpretation of the Word

Preaching/Teaching – (also known as Midrash)

In citing Isaiah 61, His first public words after his baptism, Jesus begins His ministry in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, announcing that he is the Messiah/Christ:

The **Spirit** [HS] of the **Lord** [Father] is upon **me** [Son]

because of which he has **anointed** me

To **proclaim good news**

**to the poor**

He **sent** me

To **proclaim release**

**to the captives**

and recovery of sight

**to the blind,**

To **send** away in **release**

**the broken ones**

To **proclaim** the year of **jubilee**

(Luke 4:18-19)

By this Old Testament prophecy Jesus is telling His hometown hearers and us:

- That He is the long-awaited Messiah come to set His people free;

- That the purpose of His incarnation is proclamation -- performative speech -- creating reality by His words, as He did in the creation in Genesis 1;
- That the purpose of His incarnation is to perform miracles of the new creation, miracles that *testify to the presence of the Creator in His creation beginning in the new creation*;
- That the result of His proclamation and miracles is release of those in bondage to demon possession (Lk 4:33-37), sickness (Lk 4:38-39), sin/sickness (Lk 5:17-26), and death (Lk 7:11-17; 8:40-56);
- That those included in this release are therefore those who are both in physical and spiritual bondage, namely, the poor, the captive, the blind, the broken ones;
- That His ministry as an ongoing release of the captives culminates on a cross where all sin, sickness, and death are placed upon Him and he finishes the work of the new creation;
- That the entire cosmos responds physically to this work of the new creation by the signs of darkness, earthquakes, and the dead rising in Jerusalem;
- That the resurrection is the great miracle that announces that in Jesus' death and His resurrected body all of creation has been released from bondage;
- That the twelve (Lk 9:1-16) and the seventy-[two] (Lk 10:1-20) continue Jesus' work of preaching and performing miracles during His ministry;
- That in Acts the apostles continue preaching and performing miracles, but that these are now focused in preaching (Word) and the new miracles of the new creation that testify to the bodily presence of the Creator in His creation bringing in the new creation (Baptism and the Lord's Supper);
- That pastors as stewards of the mysteries continue the ministry of Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy-[two] through their administration of the Word and the Sacraments;
- That what Jesus promised the seventy-[two] he promises pastors today: "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (Lk 10:16);
- That this is what Paul was referring to when he announced to the Corinthians that apostles (and pastors) are "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

## 2. Jesus' table fellowship with sinners

Jesus continued in His ministry the table fellowship of the Old Testament that was celebrated in its climactic form once a year at Passover, where the atonement was celebrated by Word and food, especially a sacrificed lamb, and every Sabbath evening seder that was a remembrance of Passover and the sacrifice of the Messiah promised in Genesis 3:15. Table fellowship at the time of Jesus always included two elements: teaching at the table and special food that climaxed the intimacy of the communion. With Jesus, however, there was a third element: His bodily presence during His ministry and His sacramental presence at the Last Supper, at Emmaus, and at Pentecost.

- During His Galilean ministry and His journey to Jerusalem, Jesus teaches and eats with His people, His local presence at the table;
- The climactic meal during this period is the feeding of the five thousand (Lk 9:10-17) where Jesus serves as host in feeding the people miraculous food;
- On the night in which He is betrayed, Jesus celebrates His Passover in the upper room (Lk 22:14-38) where He now interprets the entire Passover in terms of himself – His presence at the table is both local and sacramental – a great mystery;
- The Passover liturgy becomes the basis for our service of Holy Communion:

## Passover Seder

### I. **The Preliminary Course**

#### **Blessing -- CUP I**

**Blessing** -- Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover)

#### **Teaching at the Table**

Setting the Table

Interpretation of the Food

Narration of the Exodus

**Blessing -- CUP II** -- Cup of Redemption

**Blessing -- Bread**

Breaking the Bread of Affliction

### II. **Meal**

### III. **The Grace After the Meal** – (*Birkat Ha-Mazon*)

**Blessing -- CUP III** -- Cup of Blessing

1. Blessing for creation -- feeding
2. Thanksgiving for revelation -- land
3. Petition for redemption – Jerusalem

- After His passion and resurrection, Jesus teaches the disciples on the road to Emmaus. He creates burning hearts (the structure of our Word service – Lk 24:25-27) and opens their eyes in the breaking of the bread (structure of our Sacrament service – Lk 24:28-31). He is at table with them in both His glorified and His sacramental presence – another great mystery;
- In Luke 24:35, the evangelist announces the structures of the liturgy – Word and Sacrament: “And they were expounding the things in the way [teaching on the road – Word] and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread [Sacrament];”
- At Pentecost following Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:42, Luke reports that the apostles continued the table fellowship of Jesus with the same liturgical structures: “They were devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles [Word] and [kai] the fellowship, that is, the breaking of the bread [Lord’s Supper] and [kai] the prayers [Lord’s Prayer – temple prayers];”
- Through these structures of Word and Sacrament we now serve as “stewards of the mysteries;”
- Jesus’ table fellowship is with sinners, i.e. it is an inclusive event;
- Jesus’ table fellowship teaches about the kingdom;
- Jesus’ table fellowship is itself an expression of the new era of salvation.

### 3. **Jesus as the boundary between heaven and earth**

Every week pastors serve as stewards of the mysterious crossing of the threshold between heaven and earth in the Divine Service where heaven and earth come together through the bodily presence of Christ. This is truly a moment in which the church is “in betwixt and in between” heaven and earth. We move from our mundane lives of work and family into a space charged by the presence of the Creator who comes to us in both His divine and human natures as the crucified and resurrected Lord. As heaven and earth were joined

together in Jesus on the mount of transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36) as his earthly disciples gathered alongside Moses and Elijah, so even now in Jesus heaven and earth are joined in our liturgy.

- As Moses and Elijah broke in from heaven at the transfiguration, they were engaged in a heavenly conversation which, as the evangelist St. Luke records it, concerned Jesus' exodus he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem (Lk 9:31).
- This "exodus" is the great deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt through the shedding of blood.
- The "exodus" is always about the blood from the Passover lamb that atones for sin and releases from slavery.
- Israel's "exodus" out of slavery into the promised land was imperfect, so that Jesus comes to do what Israel could not do.
  - That is why this exodus is none other than Jesus' journey from heaven to earth and back to heaven through suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension.
- As Moses and Elijah appear on the mount with Jesus and the disciples, their conversation from their heavenly place does not stop. They continue on the mount the conversation of heaven which, in the words of St. John's Apocalypse, is about the Lamb who was slain and raised again.
- This heavenly conversation of Moses and Elijah takes place around the eternal banquet table where a messianic feast celebrating the Lamb's atonement and eternal victory is ongoing.
- What John says in Revelation of the saints applies to Moses and Elijah and all who have died and risen in Christ, that is, that these are the ones whose names have been written "before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain" (Rev 13:8).
- Even now we pray to our Father that he "gather us together from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in his kingdom, which has no end."
- This ongoing *liturgy* is both in word and supper, where Christ is host and we are guests, and a lavish banquet of aged wine and choice marrow is spread out before us (Is 25:6).
- Our participation even now in this liturgical feast is a participation in the ongoing proclamation of heaven that the Lamb is worthy of the new song he has given us to sing.
- Therefore, the language of liturgy is heavenly even though it happens here on earth.

#### 4. **Jesus' teaching about the apostolic administration of the mysteries**

Jesus' final words to his disciples in Luke's Gospel followed the institution of the Lord's Supper (Lk 22:21-38). This final teaching is sometimes called Jesus' "farewell discourse" as he gives his disciples instructions about their future life as apostles in the church. First, Jesus describes them as those who "have remained with me in my trials." But when did that take place? Jesus, the omniscient Lord, likely has in view the entirety of His disciples' lives, not just their lives up to this point. Moreover, especially in light of their imminent abandonment of Jesus at his arrest, it must be stressed that their faithfulness is only the product of his grace. He will forgive their unfaithfulness, and his own perfect obedience and faithfulness to his Father will be given to them through faith in Him. In light of this grace that forgives, restores, and strengthens disciples, they are viewed as loyal in their identification with Jesus even in His trials, and they will also inherit the kingdom he is about to receive.

He appoints to them a kingdom now that *is the same kingdom* that is appointed for Him by the Father (Lk 22:29 -- "a kingdom," is the object of both "I appoint," and "appointed"). This is the same kingdom Jesus has preached and taught throughout His ministry. He instructed

His disciples to proclaim that the kingdom is near (Lk 10:9, 11) and to pray for the kingdom to come (Lk 11:2). While the kingdom will come in all its fullness only at Christ's return, Jesus will be enthroned in glory after His death and resurrection.

The purpose for the establishment of that kingdom is communion with God, fellowship at the King's table. Lk 22:30 is yet another reference to table fellowship in this scene: "in order that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." This dialog is closely associated with the Words of Institution, which came before. The eschatological dimension of this table fellowship of Jesus with His disciples links this section to the eschatological prospect of Lk 22:16, 18 and earlier words about eating in the kingdom of God (Lk 13:29–30 and the beatitude of Lk 14:15).

This eating and drinking at His table in his kingdom already begins with Jesus' post-resurrection meals, starting at Emmaus (Lk 24:28–35; see also John 21; Acts 1:4; 10:41). While Jesus will be seated at the right hand of the Father after His ascension, His kingdom is already inaugurated by His death and resurrection, since He rises in glory. The kingdom is present whenever and wherever the King is present, and so when Jesus reveals Himself in the breaking of the bread at Emmaus, the disciples realize that they have started to eat and drink at Jesus' table in His kingdom.

The apostles will be gathered, instructed, absolved, and commissioned into the Lord's ministry. They will be appointed as stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor 4:1; cf. Lk 8:10; Eph 3:9), and they will serve to the church the eschatological Meal of the new era of salvation—the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7). At the Supper, the apostles—and those in subsequent generations in the apostolic ministry, as well as those to whom they minister—will dine at Jesus' Table in God's kingdom, anticipating the final end-time banquet (Is 25:6–9; Rev 19:6–9). Jesus' use of the present tense "I appoint" (Lk 22:29) indicates his imminent action of appointing this kingdom for them. They are soon to be instructed in the nature of this kingdom on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13–27), and they will recognize the King when He breaks bread with them (Lk 24:30–31, 35).

As stewards of the mysteries, pastors are responsible for continuing in their ministry the preaching and miracles of Jesus and the apostles. Jesus' appointment of the twelve as stewards of this kingdom has great application to our role as stewards of the mysteries in the worship life of the church:

- In the ministry of the apostles and of pastors today, the spirit of perseverance with Jesus in his death is apparent in preaching the scandal of his death as part of the proclamation of the kingdom.
- The theology of the cross marks one who is appointed for the kingdom.
- The scandal of the cross will become the center of the church's proclamation in Lk 24:44–49 after Jesus clarifies the significance of His death to the Emmaus disciples (Lk 24:25–27).
- Only after the resurrection do the disciples understand the kerygma. And only after Jesus teaches them and the Spirit comes upon them are they capable of proclaiming the kerygma and willing to suffer for it.
- Only then will they start to be conformed to Jesus' statement that they have continued with Him in his trials.
- Suffering, preaching, the cross, eating and drinking at Jesus' table—these all belong together for the apostles and us.
- So also does "you will sit [future indicative] on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk 22:30). This refers not to condemning old, unbelieving Israel, but to the responsibility of shepherding and oversight in the new Israel, the church.
- This is the Lukan equivalent to Jesus giving to Peter the keys of the kingdom in Matthew (16:19) and His bestowal of the office of the keys upon the disciples in John (20:22–23).

- The OT judges were saviors and deliverers who led the people of God to repentance and faith (e.g., Judg 2:10–23; the LXX uses the verb “to judge,” for their leadership [e.g., Judg 10:2–3]).<sup>1</sup> So too the apostles and pastors in the apostolic ministry will “judge” in the following way:
 

“The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, *exercise jurisdiction*, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent.”<sup>2</sup>
- Entrusted with the responsibility to oversee the mystery of Christ’s real presence, to apply Law and Gospel, to absolve or retain sins, and to preside at the Supper, the apostles—and those who serve as their successors in Jesus’ ministry—will lead the new Israel to gather around the Table of the Lord in His Kingdom.

### **Words from the Lutheran Confessions on Worship: Stewards of the Mysteries**

- The Lutheran Confessions establish the office of the ministry as the means by which faith is obtained through the Gospel and sacraments:

“To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.<sup>3</sup> And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.” (AC, V)

- The Lutheran Confessions appeal to Luke 10:16 to affirm that pastors represent Christ in their office as stewards of the mysteries, and that this is not dependent on their worthiness for such an office:

“According to divine right, therefore, it is the office of the bishop to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, judge doctrine and condemn doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel, and exclude from the Christian community the ungodly whose wicked conduct is manifest. All this is to be done not by human power but by God’s Word alone. On this account parish ministers and churches are bound to be obedient to the bishops according to the saying of Christ in Luke 10:16, “He who hears you hears me.” (AC, XXVIII, 21-22)

“In accordance with the Scriptures, therefore, we maintain that the church in the proper sense is the assembly of saints who truly believe the Gospel of Christ and who have the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, we grant that the many hypocrites and evil men who are mingled with them in this life share an association in the outward marks, are members of the church according to this association in the outward marks, and therefore hold office in the church. When the sacraments are administered by unworthy men, this does not rob them of their efficacy. For they do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church’s call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16), ‘He who hears you hears me.’ When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in Christ’s place and stead. Christ’s statement teaches us this in order that we may not be offended by the unworthiness of ministers.” (Apol VII and VIII, 28)

- The Lutheran Confessions also teach that, in pronouncing absolution, pastors are serving as stewards of the mysteries:

“The power of the keys administers and offers the Gospel through absolution, which is the true voice of the Gospel. In speaking of faith, therefore, we also include absolution since

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<sup>1</sup> Paul uses the language of judgment when he warns the Corinthians that “any one who eat and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Cor 11:29).

<sup>2</sup> Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 60, emphasis added.

'faith comes from what is heard.' as Paul says (Rom. 10:17). Hearing the Gospel and hearing absolution strengthens and consoles the conscience. Because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly forgive sin before him, according to the statement (Luke 10:16), 'He who hears you, hears me.' Therefore we must believe the voice of the one absolving no less than we would believe a voice coming from heaven. Absolution may properly be called a sacrament of penitence, as even the more learned of the scholastics say. Meanwhile this faith is nourished in many ways, amid temptations, through the proclamation of the Gospel and the use of the sacraments. These are signs of the new testament, that is, signs of the forgiveness of sins. Therefore they offer the forgiveness of sins, as the words in the Lord's Supper clearly state, 'This is my body which is given for you. This cup is the new testament' (Luke 22:19, 20). So faith is conceived and confirmed through absolution, through the hearing of the Gospel, so that it may not succumb in its struggles against the terrors of sin and death. This understanding of penitence is plain and clear, it adds to the honor of the power of the keys and the sacraments, it illumines the blessing of Christ, and it teaches us to make use of Christ as our mediator and propitiator." (Apol XII, 39-43)

- The Lutheran Confessions affirm that the mystery of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper is a Christological issue:

"Thus our faith in this article concerning the true presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper is built upon the truth and omnipotence of the true and eternal God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (FC SD VII, 106)

"Therefore he is able and it is easy for him [Christ] to impart to us his true body and blood which are present in the Holy Supper, *not according to the mode or property of the human nature* but *according to the mode* and property of God's right hand, as Dr. Luther says on the basis of our Christian faith as we teach this to our children. This presence is not mundane or Capernaite although it is true and essential, as the words of Christ's testament declare, "*This is, is, is my body,*" etc." (FC Ep VIII, 17)

"The one body of Christ has three different modes, or all three modes, of being at any given place. . . . The comprehensible, corporeal mode of presence, as when he walked bodily on earth and vacated or occupied space according to his size. . . . There is, secondly, the incomprehensible, spiritual mode of presence according to which he neither occupies nor vacates space but penetrates every creature, wherever he wills. To use some imperfect illustrations . . . light and heat go through air, water, glass, or crystal and exist without occupying or vacating space, and many more like these. He employed this mode of presence when he left the closed grave and came through locked doors, in the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and, as people believe, when he was born of his mother . . . Thirdly, since he is one person with God, the divine, heavenly mode, according to which all creatures are indeed much more penetrable and present to him than they are according to the second mode. . . . I do not wish to have denied by the foregoing that God may have and know more modes whereby Christ's body can be anywhere." (Martin Luther's *Grosses Bekenntnis*) (FC SD VII, 98-103)

- The Lutheran Confessions affirm Ignatius of Antioch's estimation that the Lord's Supper is the "medicine of immortality," for as stewards of the mysteries, the Lord's Supper has tremendous applications for healing in our pastoral care:

"We must never regard the sacrament as a harmful thing from which we should flee, but as a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body has benefited also." (LC V, 68)

"The Mass was instituted that the faith of those who use the Sacrament should remember what benefits it receives through Christ and cheer and comfort the anxious conscience. For

to remember Christ is to remember His benefits, and to realize that they are truly offered to us . . . The Mass is to be used to this end, that there the Sacrament may be administered to them that have need of consolation, as St. Ambrose says: ‘Because I always sin, I am always bound to take the medicine.’” (AC XXIV, 30-33)

### Conversation (groups of 3-4)

- 1) Defend the statement: “The most important act of a pastor is to bring people into communion with the flesh of Jesus Christ.” How do we bring people into communion with Christ as stewards of the mysteries?
- 2) What is the benefit for our congregations to recognize that when they gather together for worship – entering into the holy presence of Jesus Christ, the creator of the universe, the Son of God crucified, raised, and ascended – they are entering into heaven even now? How might the notion that heaven is on earth affect the way we administer the mysteries of baptism and the Lord’s Supper?
- 3) What is the benefit for our congregations to recognize that they are not worshipping alone, but that through the presence of Christ in his divine and human natures, heaven itself is present, and so are all the saints, past, present, and future?
- 4) How can we help our congregations recognize the two structures in our worship through which Christ is present, corresponding to the means of grace: the living voice of Jesus in the service of the Word, and His body and blood in, with, and under bread and wine in the service of the Lord’s Supper?
- 5) How can we help our congregations understand that their salvation may never be separated from the flesh of Jesus Christ?
- 6) What are the dangers of misrepresenting the very Gospel itself, especially in our Protestant religious culture that does not hold to Chalcedonian Christology, so central to our understanding of Christ and our role as stewards of mysteries? See Paul in Galatians.
- 7) Agree or disagree: “It’s not that you preach or teach Jesus, it’s which Jesus you proclaim, the Jesus of our Protestant religious culture or the Jesus of the Scriptures, the ecumenical creeds, and Lutheran Confessions.” Defend your position in your group.
- 8) Why is it important, as stewards of the mysteries, that pastors affirm that when they absolve sinners, they stand in the stead and by the command of their Lord Jesus Christ,
- 9) Defend the statement: “At the Lord’s Supper, God in Christ is recreating the world and making all things new.”
- 10) How are pastors both stewards of the mysteries and, at the same time, stewards of the new creation? How does this impact our understanding of the gifts we receive in the creation itself?
- 11) What pastoral responsibilities today go with pastors fulfilling Jesus’ instructions to the twelve who were appointed a kingdom, present at every Lord’s Supper in Christ the king, that they “eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22:30)?
- 12) What are the pastoral ramifications of teaching that there is both spiritual and physical healing present in the sacraments, especially in light of the church’s affirmation that the Lord’s Supper is the “medicine of immorality?”

### Prayer resources<sup>3</sup>

Since I am coming to that holy room  
Where with the choir of saints for evermore,  
I shall be made Thy music; as I come  
I tune the instrument here at the door,

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<sup>3</sup> Prayers are from *Minister’s Prayer Book: An Order of Prayers and Readings* edited by J. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986) 127-145.

And what I must do then, think here before. *John Donne*

O merciful Lord, incline thine ears to our prayer and enlighten our hearts by the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that we may be worthy stewards of thy mysteries, and may love thee with an everlasting love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord Jesus, we are not worthy that thou shouldst come under our roof, but in thy wondrous mercy come and be with us in this hour. Have mercy upon thy humble servant, and fill my soul with thy peace.

Behold, I give heart and mouth and hand to thy service. By thy grace, use me as a lowly and unworthy instrument of thy mercy to the salvation of thy congregation. Amen.

*G. C. Dieffenbach*

O Lord, graciously accept my ministry at thine altar, that as a faithful steward of thy mysteries I may rightly administer thy body and blood to thy glory and the salvation of those who share in thy Supper. Amen. *Pfarrgebete zum Gottesdienst*

O most merciful God, incline thy loving ears to my prayers, and illuminate my heart with the grace of the Holy Spirit, that I may be enabled worthily to minister thy mysteries, and to love thee with an everlasting love, and to attain everlasting joys, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Gallican*

O Lord Jesus Christ, thou true and only High Priest, who on the altar of the cross has offered thyself to thy heavenly Father as a ransom for us poor sinners, and as a memorial of thy sacrifice has instituted this holy Sacrament, in which thou givest us thy Body to eat and thy Blood to drink; I beseech thee, for the sake of thy boundless love and mercy, to grant that I, thine unworthy servant, may celebrate this Sacrament with such devotion and fear as are acceptable to thee. I know indeed that on account of my sins and transgressions I am not worthy to approach thine altar, O Lord. But I know, too, and acknowledge and confess, that thou canst make me worthy, O thou who redeemest and savest sinners. Deliver me from all unholy, vain, and hurtful thoughts, that I may serve thee with a clean heart and in humble faith. Take this heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh, that I may love and serve thee and have all my joy in thee. Bless unto me and to all who approach this holy Table, this salutary gift of thy Body and Blood, that it may be to us the strength of body and soul, keeping us in the paths of righteousness, so that we may finally be permitted to see thee face to face, and be admitted to the great Communion on high, when thou drinkest the fruit of the vine anew with thy disciples in thy Father's kingdom. Amen. *Loehe's Liturgy*

Grant, O Lord, that what we have received with our mouth we may take and keep with believing hearts, that this temporal gift may help us to eternal salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Leonine Sacramentary*

O Lord Jesus Christ, thou Everlasting Son of the Father, I give thanks unto thee, that thou hast given me, thine unworthy servant, grace to fulfill thy ministry and to distribute and receive the life-giving gift of thy Body and Blood. I beseech thee that this feast may not minister to the condemnation but to the salvation of those whom thou hast admitted to it. Grant that it may be unto me a shield of faith and the power of a right and holy life. Destroy in me all evil, and implant and nourish that which is good; subdue the passions and mortify the deeds of the flesh, so that I may ever cling to thee, and with an acceptable walk and conversation magnify thy name. And finally when my course on earth is ended, receive me into the habitations of light, to feast with the true Light and Joy of thine elect: O thou who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

*Loehe's Liturgy*

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# FAITHFUL & AFIRE

Biblical Conversations on the Pastoral Ministry  
LCMS Circuit Bible Studies, 2006-07

## Session 4 Pastoral Integrity

### *LEADER'S GUIDE*

#### **The Faithful & Afire Series**

In 2 Timothy 1:6, the apostle Paul reminds Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” His inspired words signal the reality of fatigue and malaise in pastoral ministry and our need for God’s daily grace to remain faithful as pastors. This series of Bible studies and conversations for pastoral circuits in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is a resource for fanning the flame of the pastoral gift. Fired by the Word of God, pastors will study key aspects of pastoral ministry, seeking growth and greater effectiveness.

#### **A Case in Point**

**“A Case in Point” is designed to get participants into a first conversation concerning an aspect of pastoral integrity. Read the following scenario and allow time for the total group to respond to the three questions that follow.**

Pastor Dan is in trouble. One of his members, Al, has spoken with him personally about a recent sermon. Al saw an almost identical sermon on a preaching resource website when he was looking for resources for a devotion he would lead. To Al’s shock it was almost word-for-word the sermon Pastor Dan had preached, only it was the work of another pastor. Al is an elder and a well respected leader of the congregation. He has been supportive of Pastor Dan’s ministry.

Al went to Pastor Dan and expressed his disappointment that his pastor would preach another pastor’s sermon. Pastor Dan explained the tough week he had with two funerals, a wedding, and several folks hospitalized. Al was understanding and sympathetic.

Now, though, it’s happened again -- a borrowed sermon and Al again catching his pastor doing it. Just about word for word, Pastor Dan preached a sermon on file at the same website. Al has met with Pastor Dan and suggested that he may bring it up before the elders, hoping they can address the matter in a positive, helpful way. Pastor Dan has expressed his remorse.

Pastor Dan, as expected, isn’t sleeping too well in advance of the elders meeting. Truth is, he’s been borrowing sermons off and on for quite some time, sometimes not even paraphrasing or giving the sermon his own spin. He presented them as he found them. He has never given credit or referenced the sermon source. “What am I going to say?” he thinks to himself,, “This sermon is compliments of sermoncentral.com?” He told himself (and still does) that the sermons are posted for that very reason, to be preached. Al’s comments, though, and the threat of being exposed to the elders have him worried. Not long ago, he heard about a pastor in Missouri who lost his ministry in a congregation for exactly this reason.

Al put it this way: “Pastor Dan, I’m really disappointed. We called you to preach the Word from your heart, not someone else’s.”

## Getting the Conversation Going

1. What exactly is wrong about Pastor Dan's recurring practice?
2. What goes on in a pastor's psyche to allow preaching another pastor's sermon?
3. If you were an elder in Dan's church, what action would you recommend?

## The Scriptures Speak

1. 1 Samuel 2:12-36 tells the story of Eli the priest and his priestly family. Answer the following:
  - What were the sins of Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas? (See vss. 12-17, 22) **Gluttony, greed, promiscuity, and a lack of respect for the ceremonial laws of God were among their sins.**
  - How did Eli mismanage the sins of his sons? (See vss. 24-26) **Though he rebuked them, he did not remove them from their priestly office.**
  - What would be the outcome of Eli's mismanagement of the priesthood and his family? (see 2:26-36 and 5:10-22) **As predicted Eli's sons would die and his priestly family would come to an end.**
2. Jeremiah spoke God's judgment on the prophets and priests prior to the exile. See Jeremiah 23:1-32. Where had these prophets gone wrong? **They compromised their loyalty to the LORD by naming Baal in their prophecies. They led people astray. They created visions and prophecies in their own minds, claiming they were from the LORD. They failed to lead people to repentance.**
3. Malachi 2 brings a strong rebuke on the post-exilic priests of Judah. In Chapter 1, the LORD called them down for offering less than pure animals for sacrifice. In Chapter 2:1-9, the rebuke continues. Look closely at these verses. In what various ways had the priests gone wrong, according to the LORD's rebuke? **Their heart was not set on honoring the LORD. In their teaching they caused many to stumble. They also showed partiality or favoritism in their judgments.**
4. Read the lists of qualifications for an overseer (Greek, episcopos) in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and for an elder (Greek, presbyteros) in Titus 1:5-9. You may also want to look at Titus 2. In your large group share responses to the following: What specific word or phrase in either Biblical list leaves you feeling indicted as a pastor? **Responses here will vary. Give a few pastors a chance to single out a word or phrase in the texts, indicting their own lack of integrity.**
  - The office of the public ministry has certainly developed over the centuries. Here is a list of ethical hazards facing pastors today, often leading them into danger and failure where pastoral integrity is concerned. Note how the items often echo the concerns of the texts above: **You may want to connect some lines between items on this list and the Biblical texts above.**
    1. Compromising the truth of God's Word
    2. Neglecting or mismanaging one's own family
    3. Laziness
    4. Failing to take care of oneself, physically or spiritually (1 Cor 6:19)
    5. Neglecting the primary mission of the church – making disciples
    6. Using another's words as one's own (plagiarism)
    7. Sexual immorality
    8. Failing to equip the saints for ministry (Eph 4:11-13)
    9. Neglecting the sick and shut-in
    10. Refusing to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5)

11. Breaking confidentiality in pastoral relationships
12. Lack of authenticity, a failing to practice what is preached
13. Neglecting catechesis: teaching the basic truths of Christianity
14. Bearing a grudge to the point of bitterness
15. Showing partiality or favoritism
16. Giving less than one's best in the Lord's service
17. Seeking honor for oneself rather than for the Lord (Jude 16)
18. Settling for less than excellence in ministry
19. Misusing/misallocating one's time (Eph 5:15)
20. Causing or abetting chaos and disorder (1 Cor 14:40)

Which three of the above seem to be most prevalent among pastors today? **Responses will vary.**

Are any items missing from the list, in your opinion? What else threatens pastoral integrity today? **Encourage adding other items to the pastoral integrity hazards list.**

5. The Scriptures offer encouragement toward pastoral integrity. Identify pathways to greater pastoral integrity from these passages:

**You may wish to divide a larger group into smaller groups of 3-4 and assign one or two of these passage to each small group. Then ask each group to report on their findings regarding pathways to greater pastoral integrity. Another option is to read each passage aloud and ask participants in the large group to identify the pathway(s) to greater integrity in each passage.**

- Psalm 41:12  
**A close and constant walk with God builds and protects integrity.**
- Isaiah 6:1-8  
**In worship, in confession, in Word and Sacraments, we are cleansed and readied for ministry.**
- Acts 18:24-26  
**A willingness to grow and to be corrected by others saves us from false or incomplete teaching and practice.**
- Colossians 4:2-4  
**Seeking and asking for the prayer support of others supports and builds our integrity in ministry.**
- 2 Timothy 2:22-26  
**Intentionally seek Scriptural virtues for ministry, avoiding the latest self-help plans and opinions of others.**
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17  
**Actively use the Scriptures in ministry.**
- Titus 2:11-14  
**Lean on the empowering grace of God which allows us to say "No!" to ungodliness and worldly passions.**
- 3 John 1-8  
**Consistently seek the fellowship of others committed to faithful ministry.**

## Words from the Wise

- From “The Good Parson” in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*:

To draw his flock to heaven with noble art,  
By good example, was his holy art.  
Nor less did he rebuke the obstinate  
Whether they were of high or low estate.  
For pomp or worldly show he did not care;  
Nor morbid conscience made his rule severe.  
The lore of Christ and his apostles twelve  
He taught, but first he followed it himself.<sup>1</sup>

**Chaucer recognized the power of authenticity or personal integrity in a spiritual leader.**

- From Luther’s Preface to *The Small Catechism*:

The deplorable, wretched deprivation that I recently encountered while I was a visitor has constrained and compelled me to prepare this catechism, or Christian instruction, in such a brief, plain, and simple version. Dear God, what misery I beheld! The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. Yet supposedly they all bear the name Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, even though they do not know the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments! As a result they are like simple cattle or irrational pigs, and despite the fact that the gospel has returned, have mastered the fine art of misusing all their freedom. Shame on you forever!

Therefore, my dear sirs and brothers, who are either pastors or preachers, I beg all of you for God’s sake to take up your office boldly, to have pity on your people who are entrusted to you, and to help us bring the catechism to the people, especially to the young.<sup>2</sup>

**Luther caught that sloppiness and neglect can have deep consequences for the church. The need for integrity is highlighted in the last paragraph as he speaks of “the people entrusted to you.” That makes pastoral ministry very much a matter of stewardship and accountability to God.**

- L.B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman on the hazard of sexual temptation and infidelity among pastors:

Don’t miss this important reality: Pastors are especially vulnerable to outside emotional support during seasons of fatigue, frustration, and hopelessness. That’s why they must nourish every possible prevention dynamic that flows from a happy marriage. Whatever the tempting circumstances, infidelity is sinfully wrong and it completely sabotages the work of God. One morally bankrupt pastor ruins the credibility of a thousand and makes their work immeasurably more difficult. And those closest to the fallen minister in the family or the local church usually carry scars forever.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by H. C. Leonard as quoted in John Doberstein, *Minister’s Prayer Book* (Fortress), 344.

<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Concord*, Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 347-348.

<sup>3</sup> From L.B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk* (Regal, 2003), 50.

**For London and Wiseman, the blessings of a “happy marriage” serve as preventative in times of stress or exhaustion, keeping pastors from sexual impurity. Note how seriously they take the consequences of a pastor’s sexual fall, the consciousness of which also works as a prevention tool.**

- From Eugene Peterson’s *Working the Angles*:

The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers, and the shops they keep are churches. They are preoccupied with shopkeeper’s concerns – how to keep the customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods so the customers will lay out more money.

Some of them are very good shopkeepers. They attract a lot of customers, pull in great sums of money, develop splendid reputations. Yet it is still shopkeeping; religious shopkeeping, to be sure, but shopkeeping all the same. The marketing strategies of the fast-food franchise occupy the waking minds of these entrepreneurs; while asleep they dream of the kind of success that will get the attention of journalists. “A walloping great congregation is fine, and fun,” says Martin Thornton, “but what most communities really need is a couple of saints. The tragedy is that they may well be there in embryo, waiting to be discovered, waiting for sound training, waiting to be emancipated from the cult of the mediocre.”<sup>4</sup>

**Some would say that American churches have moved from the commercial model (church as corporation or mall) described here to the entertainment model (church as rock concert or performance venue). Ask for pastors to share how the corporate model is still at work in their ministry and how it endangers their pastoral integrity.**

## Conversation (Groups of 3-4)

**These conversations are designed for small groups of 3-4 pastors. Remind pastors of the need to honor confidentiality. Encourage them as well to offer absolution, if appropriate, for responses to Question No. 3.**

1. Return to Pastor Dan’s situation as described in “A Case in Point.” When do we preachers cross the ethical line in regard to tapping into the sermons of another preacher? **Preaching another’s sermon word-for-word neglects our pastoral responsibility and commits outright plagiarism. The good, hard work of living in the text ourselves, finding its law/gospel dynamic, and applying it to our people’s lives is crucial for authentic preaching ministry.**
2. Still with Pastor Dan: What underlying issues are likely even more important to address than the plagiarism? **Dan likely needs to do a time audit and reset his priorities, allowing adequate time and energy for sermon preparation. He may also need to read and take some continuing education courses in homiletics.**
3. As you look at the list of 20 ethical hazards under No. 4 in “The Scriptures Speak,” choose one which has threatened or damaged your ministry in some way in the past. Share it with your group. **Responses will vary. Encourage absolution if responses here take the form of confession.**
4. No. 5 in “The Scriptures Speak” offers eight texts to encourage our pastoral integrity. Choose one and explain why it especially encourages you at this time in your ministry. **Responses will vary.**

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<sup>4</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles* (Eerdmans, 1987), 2. The inside quote is from Martin Thornton, *Spiritual Direction* (Boston: Cowley, 1984), 7.

5. Look at the first quote in “Words from the Wise,” Chaucer’s description of “The Good Parson.” How important is authenticity to the pastoral ministry? Do we pastors today see ourselves as role models? Should we? **Responses will vary.**
6. Many of the sins attending the pastoral office are sins of omission as highlighted by Luther’s comments regarding what he saw lacking in the pastors of Reformation churches. What expectations of pastors (internally or externally stated) are unreasonable, setting pastors up for apparent failure? On the other hand, what basic responsibilities, neglected and unmet, point to our sinful omissions? **Responses will vary.**
7. LCMS district presidents as ecclesiastical supervisors have a no-tolerance policy toward a pastor’s sexual infidelity or immorality. Discuss why this is necessary. Do you agree that it is necessary? Is there a difference between being forgiven through repentance and faith and yet no longer qualified for the office of the public ministry? If so, on what does the difference turn? **The crucial difference here turns on a pastor’s need to be “above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:7; Titus 1:7). Though forgiven for his sins, a pastor may no longer be eligible for ministry because his integrity in the office has been inalterably damaged.**
8. Twenty years ago Eugene Peterson (in the last quote above) likened pastors to entrepreneurial shopkeepers chasing a misguided ecclesiastical version of commercial success. Do you still see this culturally driven model for success at work among pastors today? Exactly how is it misguided? In what ways have you bought into it? **See the leader’s note with the quotation above. Responses will vary.**
9. Share ways by which you stay morally centered in pastoral ministry. Where and to whom do you turn for greater pastoral integrity? **Responses will vary.**
10. Close with prayer in small groups for one another as individuals, tapping into comments made during the conversation. **Encourage adequate time for prayer.**

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# FAITHFUL & AFIRE

Biblical Conversations on the Pastoral Ministry  
LCMS Circuit Bible Studies, 2006-07

## Session 5 Confessing Pastors

### LEADERS' GUIDE

#### The Faithful & Afire Series

*The leader should make a copy of both the Participants' Guide and the Leaders' Guide for his use. The first 45 minutes should be spent in a guided Bible Study with the whole group, followed by 30-45 minutes of discussion in small groups of 3-4. There is more material here than can be covered in that time, however. This will allow the leader to choose what will be most appropriate for his group, but will give the participants more resources for further discussion. Please begin in prayer.*

In 2 Timothy 1:6, the apostle Paul reminds Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” His inspired words signal the reality of fatigue in the pastoral ministry and the temptation to compromise our confession. We need God’s grace daily to remain faithful as pastors. This study, the sixth in a series of Bible studies and conversations for pastoral circuits in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, is a resource for fanning the flame of the pastoral gift. Fired by the Word of God, pastors will study key aspects of pastoral ministry, seeking growth and greater effectiveness, this month especially in confessing the faith.

#### A Case in Point

*Read the paragraphs of the “Case in Point” included in the Participants' Guide. Don't spend too much time on this as it was designed simply to introduce the point that we are “confessing pastors” for the sake of the Gospel and so that our people are comforted in Christ.*

*[See Participants' Guide]*

Here is the reason we insist the pastor repeat his ordination vow in front of the people he will serve. He needs to be firmly grounded in what he will preach and teach. The people need to know what they should expect – nothing but God’s Word of Law and Gospel, centered in the cross of Jesus. Nothing less than faithful practice directing people to Jesus and His promises.

#### Getting the Conversation Going

*Here we are dealing “up front” with the “yes, buts” some will have. “Yes, we are confessing pastors, but you don't know my situation...” The purpose of this section is to emphasize that the confessing pastor is equally concerned for the truth and for his people. Our confession of the truth needs to draw people in rather than push them away. Choose 2 or 3 of the situations listed below to discuss, albeit briefly. You will not be able to discuss them all, but do emphasize the need to teach from the Word of God and to bring people along with love and care. If any of these topics are “too hot” to handle in your present group, set a time in the future when you can focus on them with Scripture and the Confessions.*

Yes, pastors are called to be faithful confessors of the truth, both within the congregation and before the world. Christ is the content of our confession. Scripture and the Lutheran Symbols form and shape our ministry. We belong to a Synod with a definite doctrinal position drawn from Scripture and our confession, and to all of that we are committed by our ordination vow. But what if the people aren't looking for that, or don't know what it is? What's the best way to approach the situation should the pastor find that his new parish is weak in some area of doctrine or practice? Talk together in groups of 3 or 4 how you should respond if...

1. You find that the previous pastor had been practicing "open communion."
2. You believe the worship practices of your new parish need to be changed.
3. The Baptismal Font is off in the corner somewhere where no one can see it.
4. Those who plan the contemporary service in your new parish consistently leave out the Creed and Lord's Prayer.
5. Your congregation is a closed circle with little or no interest in outreach.

What are the first three things you would do in these situations? How do we confess the truth in each case? There is, of course, a "ditch" on either side of the road. One school of thought would tell you – make your changes right away. Just do it and ask questions later. Present them with a *fait accompli*. Certainly, the Baptismal Font belongs front and center, so just move it! On the other side, pastors have been known to say, "Whatever the people want... It's their church. I just have to live with the decision, even if it's wrong. I'll go along to get along."

Discuss together the Scriptural and confessional issues in the above cases. How does the pastor committed to Scripture and the confessions proceed? Here are some ideas to discuss:

1. Start on your knees in prayer. Ask good questions and then listen carefully. Find out what has been happening. What is the history? Did the problem develop because the people didn't know any different and just went along with a previous pastor because they liked him? Discovering the reason why something happened will help you determine your best approach to resolving it under the Word of God.
2. Develop a plan and share that plan with your District President for his help and support.
3. Always teach, teach, and teach some more, ever patient and gentle, yet firm in the Word, before changes are made – even good ones! Otherwise, when you leave, they'll just go back to what they were doing before. Remember, be patient. God's Word works on God's time-table, not ours. Not every problem is solved in two weeks.
4. Make sure your people understand the reason for the change. Much more can be accomplished when your people are with you in the change.
5. In every case, lead with the Word of God.

## The Scriptures Speak

***This segment is designed as a plenary guided Bible Study. You will not necessarily be able to cover all these Scriptures in this session. Perhaps choose those you believe are most applicable to the situation of your group.***

1. Jesus gives several warnings and also some promises for confessors in Matthew 10:24-33.

**Warnings – verses 24, 25, 28 and 33**

**Promises – Verses 26, 30-30, 32**

How do you take heed of the warnings?

Of what comfort are Jesus' promises? (In your discussion connect this Scripture to your own ordination vows.)

***You have taken a vow to confess Christ clearly before the world. What opposition do you experience? How do the promises of Christ help?***

2. Read through 1 Timothy 4:1-16 together, taking special note of 6-7, 9-11, 14-16. How does being part of a confessional synod help you fulfill these instructions to pastors?

The issue always is salvation (4:16). How does faithful teaching save?

***There is one way, and His name is Jesus!***

3. Examine the qualities required of a pastor in Titus 1:5-9. Where do they come from? Verse 9 explains that a pastor “must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it” (1:9). How does your ordination vow and your training in Scripture and the confessions help you “hold firm” and “give instruction”?

***We have a definite body of teaching that constantly points to Jesus.***

What is the purpose of “sound teaching” anyway?

***Only Jesus saves, and we want to see all our hearers in heaven!***

4. Galatians 6:1-2 gives both a command and a warning to all who have spiritual responsibility for others. Discuss how this applies to the pastor faced with situations similar to those detailed above.

***The sin against which Paul is warning is the sin of pride. We can never come to someone caught in a sin or a false teaching while we hold pride in our hearts. If we do, we are in grave spiritual danger ourselves. When our efforts to restore a brother or a congregation end badly, it is often because pride got in the way.***

5. The Apostle Peter gives more instruction to pastors and to all Christians – for all believers are witnesses of what Christ has done. What are the admonitions and the promises in 1 Peter 3:13-18?

***Always be prepared...***

***Christ died also for you!***

How are confessing pastors to live with their people according to 1 Peter 5:2-5?

***Not domineering over their people, but living in humility.***

What does such faithful humility look like? From where does it come?

***This comes only from the Lord, from a life lived in the Word of God and in prayer. See also Numbers 12:3.***

6. Of all the issues raised in these Scriptures, which is the most urgent for you?

***Use this question as a wrap up for this section.***

## **The Purpose of the Lutheran Confessions**

***Again, there are paragraphs (a personal account) in the Participants’ Guide that are not included here. The purpose of the account is to illustrate two points – 1) Lutheran theology and Biblical theology are one and the same. 2) The purpose of our confessional theology is to bring the greatest possible comfort to repentant sinners.***

*[See Participants' Guide]*

Such a thesis, of course, begs for demonstration. Here take out your copy of the Book of Concord and refer to the Augsburg Confession for a basic list of Lutheran teachings.

*Take out the Book of Concord, or have ready copies of the Augsburg Confession, articles 1-13. In the Participants' Guide, there is a paragraph describing briefly each of the following doctrines of the Lutheran confessions and how that doctrine brings comfort to the penitent sinner. If time is short, pick 2 or 3 to look at in greater detail.*

**The Trinity**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

**Original Sin**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

**The Person of Christ**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

**Justification**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

**The Means of Grace and the Ministry**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

**The New Obedience**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

**The Church**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

**Baptism**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

**Confession and Absolution (and Repentance)**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

**The Lord's Supper**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

**The Use of the Sacraments**

*[See Participants' Guide]*

Do you see how each article of Lutheran teaching focuses our attention on the Gospel's comfort for sinners?

**Further Reflections**

*Quickly work through the paragraphs included here in the Participants' Guide. Emphasize the evangelistic nature of our confession. It is not to be hidden but confessed in every way possible before the world. Jesus alone gives life!*

*[See Participants' Guide]*

## The Scriptures Speak Again

***Please be sure to cover these Scriptures. Here we have provided more comfort in Christ to “confessing pastors” who, if they are honest, will always feel inadequate to the task.***

1. We have made much in recent years of Paul’s charge to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6-7) that he “fan into flame the gift of God.” Check out also the corollaries that follow in 2 Timothy 1:8-14. List them here

Verse 8 – ***Do not be ashamed... But share in suffering...***

Verse 9 – ***We are saved, not by our works, but by His grace in Jesus.***

Verse 10 (especially appropriate as we confess the resurrection by the grave side) –  
***This grace is found only in Christ Jesus, crucified and raised from the dead for us.***

Verse 11 – ***For this Gospel Paul was appointed...***

Verse 12 – ***For the Gospel Paul suffers, but he is convinced Christ is able to guard until the last day what has been entrusted to him.***

What do you hear in the admonitions of 13-14?

***Follow the pattern... Guard the truth... Keep the confession pure, for the sake of the comfort it gives and so that you are reaching out with the truth. It must never be hidden, but always brought before the world.***

2. Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-4. What comforts you? What motivates you and “gets you going”?

***We have this ministry by the mercy of God. That’s why we do not lose heart.***

In 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 Christ is the center of our proclamation. How do our Lutheran Confessions help us keep Him at the center?

***The goal of every teaching is that the light of Christ may shine for all those in the darkness of sin – us included!***

3. What does Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5?

***Obviously, the message of the cross must be central to everything. Here is an illustration: the cross is like the hub of a bicycle wheel, the axle around which everything turns. If you have spokes and rim but no hub, the wheel cannot hold together or turn. If the cross is pushed to the side, everything is out of balance. If we put something other than the cross at the center, we lose our comfort and our faith will begin to rest in “the wisdom of men” rather than the “power of God” in the cross of Christ.***

How is this done in your ministry?

How do our confessions help you in this regard?

***The confessions are always cross centered and Christ focused – they always drive us back into the Scriptures.***

4. It is, after all, a matter of life and death. Nothing is more urgent than confessing Christ clearly before the world. If you have any doubts about that, look at Galatians 1:6-12. What got Paul so “worked up” here?

***The Galatians were following those who added works to the grace of God for salvation. But such additions amount to a “different gospel,” a gospel that cannot save, and so is no gospel at all.***

Which do you think Paul would be more angry about? Someone who got the confession wrong or someone who failed to reach out with it in as many ways as possible?<sup>14</sup>

5. Our confession is not just a sectarian screed, but our confession is “catholic” in the best sense of the term. We confess the heart of what the church has always believed and taught. How does Ephesians 4:1-6 form and shape this aspect of our confession?

***For 2000 years the church has confessed “one Lord, one faith, one Baptism,” etc. We Lutherans have always been part of that confession and the Lutheran confessors always saw themselves in the mainstream of that confession.***

6. 2 Timothy 4:1-5 is familiar to us since these verses are part of nearly every ordination/installation service among us. Talk about this together. How do you take to heart Paul’s charge: “As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (4:5).

***Discussion here will reflect the needs of the group.***

7. Are there other Scriptures to which you can point that inform our confession as Pastors? Talk about one of your favorites with your group.

## **Words from the Wise Regarding the Purpose of Our Confession**

***These quotes are provided as resources for the discussion to follow.***

- The Smalcald Articles on the various forms of the Gospel because, again, it’s all about the Gospel:

*We now want to return to the Gospel, which gives guidance and help against sin in more than one way, because God is extravagantly rich in his grace: first, through the spoken word, in which the forgiveness of sin is preached to the whole world (which is the proper function of the Gospel); second, through Baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters. Matt. 18:20, “Where two or three are gathered,” etc.<sup>15</sup>*

- The Apology of the Augsburg Confession on the nature of justifying faith

***This quote from the Apology illustrates our point that our confession is to give the greatest comfort for those who know their need for mercy.***

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<sup>14</sup> Unfair question! Wouldn’t he be equally angry at both?

<sup>15</sup> Smalcald Articles III.4, Book of Concord, Kolb/Wengert, p. 319.

Therefore, whenever we speak about justifying faith, we must understand that these three elements belong together: the promise itself; the fact that the promise is free; and the merits of Christ as the payment and atoning sacrifice [propitiation]. The promise is received by faith; the word “free” excludes our merits and means that the blessing is offered only through mercy; the merits of Christ are the payment because there must be some definite atoning sacrifice for our sins. Scripture contains frequent pleas for mercy, and the holy Fathers often teach that we are saved through mercy. Therefore, every time mercy is mentioned, we must bear in mind that faith is also required, for it receives the promised mercy. Conversely, every time we speak about faith, we want the object [of faith] to be understood as well, namely, the promised mercy. For faith does not justify or save because it is a worthy work in and of itself, but only because it receives the promised mercy.<sup>16</sup>

- The Preface to the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord explains the approach of the 16<sup>th</sup> century confessors to the Augsburg Confession. Ought not our desire to be to take the same approach?

**Our purpose here is to illustrate the attitude of our Lutheran forefathers toward the Augsburg Confession.**

*Herewith we again whole-heartedly subscribe this Christian and thoroughly scriptural Augsburg Confession, and we abide by the plain, clear, and pure meaning of its words. We consider this Confession a genuinely Christian symbol which all true Christians ought to accept next to the Word of God, just as in ancient times Christian symbols and confessions were formulated in the church of God when great controversies broke out, and orthodox teachers and hearers pledged themselves to these symbols with heart and mouth. Similarly we are determined by the grace of the Almighty to abide until our end by this repeatedly cited Christian Confession as it was delivered to Emperor Charles in 1530. And we do not intend, either in this or in subsequent doctrinal statements, to depart from the aforementioned Confession or to set up a different and new confession.<sup>17</sup>*

- This is our church’s confession. It shows us how to read Scripture and it identifies what we believe about Scripture. It’s purpose is to help us keep the Gospel clear. That’s why we, also in these last days, desire to stand in the same line of faithful confessors and fathers in the faith who prepared this confession. As confessing pastors, we also “pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated.”<sup>18</sup>
- Again, our fathers in the faith point to the Augsburg Confession:

***[This quote is not included in the Participants’ Guide but is offered here as a further reference.]***

*We therefore declare our adherence to the first, unaltered Augsburg Confession (in the form in which it was set down in writing in the year 1530 and submitted to Emperor Charles V at Augsburg by a number of Christian electors, princes, and*

<sup>16</sup>Apology IV.53ff, Book of Concord, Kolb/Wengert, p. 128f.

<sup>17</sup>Tappert, T. G. (2000, c1959). *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church* (The Formula of Concord: 2, 4-5). Philadelphia: Fortress Press, p. 502.

<sup>18</sup>Tappert, pp. 503f.

estates of the Roman Empire as the common confession of the reformed churches) as our symbol in this epoch, not because this confession was prepared by our theologians but because it is taken from the Word of God and solidly and well grounded therein. This symbol distinguishes our reformed churches from the papacy and from other condemned sects and heresies. We appeal to it just as in the ancient church it was traditional and customary for later synods and Christian bishops and teachers to appeal and confess adherence to the Nicene Creed.<sup>19</sup>

- C.F.W. Walther insists on a quia subscription to the confessions because any other approach will rob the church of its symbolical books:

***The following two quotes from C.F.W. Walther's famous 1879 essay on the Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod show the importance for the proclamation of the Gospel of a quia subscription to the confessions – because they are in agreement with Scripture.***

*For if those who pledge themselves to the confessions still retain the freedom to choose what they like, then there is no point in saying, "yes, I profess the same faith you do." For I still have no idea what he is professing, if he does not say, "from its first sentence to its last one, the Lutheran Confession is my confession."<sup>20</sup>*

He explains that our Synod requires our pastors to swear to the confessions and testify:

*"I have checked them against Scripture and have found that they are in perfect agreement with Scripture, that they do not claim a single doctrine that is not taken directly from Holy Scripture." Such a person need not, because of conscience scruples have to swear [to the confessions] "in so far as," because you see, He himself has determined that they are in full agreement. Therefore he vows, "Because they are in perfect agreement with Holy Scripture."<sup>21</sup>*

- Eugene Peterson is a Presbyterian pastor, but I believe he's got it right in this passage from Working the Angles on why we take a vow at ordination, and is worth quoting at length:

***Included here is the full quote from Peterson (the first two paragraphs are not in the Participants' Guide) in order to illustrate that we subscribe to our confessions and vow loyalty to the same, for the sake of the Gospel and for the sake of the people.***

[C]entury after century Christians continue to take certain persons in their communities, set them apart and say, "We want you to be responsible for saying and acting among us what we believe about God and kingdom and gospel. We believe that the Holy Spirit is among us and within us. We believe that God's Spirit continues to hover over the chaos of the world's evil and our sin, shaping a new creation and new creatures. We believe that God is not a spectator in turn amused and alarmed at the wreckage of world history but a participant in it. We believe that everything, especially everything that looks like wreckage, is material God is using to make a praising life. We *believe* all this, but we don't see it. We

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<sup>19</sup>Tappert, p. 504.

<sup>20</sup> C.F.W. Walther, On the Primary Duties Incumbent on a Synod that Wants Rightly to Be Considered an Evangelical Lutheran Synod, a doctrinal essay presented to the constituting convention of the Iowa District of the Missouri Synod in 1879, in Essays for the Church, Volume 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Walther, On the Primary Duties, p. 18.

see, like Ezekiel, dismembered skeletons whitened under a pitiless Babylonian sun. We see a lot of bones that once were laughing and dancing children, of adults who once made love and plans, of believers who once brought their doubts and sang their praises in church – and sinned. We don't see the dancers or the lovers or the singers – at best we see only fleeting glimpses of them. What we see are bones. Dry bones. We see sin and judgment on the sin. That is what it *looks* like. It looked that way to Ezekiel; it looks that way to anyone with eyes to see and a brain to think; and it looks that way to us.

“But we *believe* something else. We believe in the coming together of these bones into connected, sinewed, muscled human beings who speak and sing and laugh and work and believe and bless their God. We believe that it happened the way Ezekiel preached it and we believe that it still happens. We believe it happened in Israel and that it happens in the church. We believe that we are part of the happening as we sing our praises, listen believably to God's word, receive the new life of Christ in the sacraments. We believe that the most significant thing that happens or can happen is that we are no longer dismembered but are remembered into the resurrection body of Christ.

“We need help in keeping our beliefs sharp and accurate and intact. We don't trust ourselves – our emotions seduce us into infidelities. We know that we are launched on a difficult and dangerous act of faith, and that there are strong influences intent on diluting or destroying it. We want you to help us: be our pastor, a minister of word and sacrament, in the middle of this world's life. Minister with word and sacrament to us in all the different parts and stages of our lives – in our work and play, with our children and our parents, at birth and death, in our celebrations and sorrows, on those days when morning breaks over us in a wash of sunshine, and those other days that are all drizzle. This isn't the only task in the life of faith, but it is your task. We will find someone else to do the other important and essential tasks. *This* is yours: word and sacrament.

“One more thing: we are going to ordain you to this ministry and we want your vow that you will stick to it. This is not a temporary job assignment but a way of life that we need lived out in our community. We know that you are launched on the same difficult belief venture in the same dangerous world as we are. We know your emotions are as fickle as ours, and that your mind can play the same tricks on you as ours. That is why we are going to *ordain* you and why we are going to extract a *vow* from you. We know that there are going to be days and months, maybe even years, when we won't feel like believing anything and won't want to hear it from you. And we know that there will be days and weeks and maybe even years when you won't feel like saying it. It doesn't matter. Do it. You are ordained to this ministry. Vowed to it. There may be times when we come to you as a committee or delegation and demand that you tell us something else than what we are telling you now. Promise right now that you won't give in to what we demand of you. You are not the minister of our changing desires, or our time-conditioned understanding of our needs, or our secularized hopes for something better. With these vows of ordination we are lashing you fast to the mast of word and sacrament so that you will be unable to respond to the siren voices. There are a lot of other things to be done in this wrecked world and we are going to be doing at least some of them, but if we don't know the basic terms with which we are working, the foundational realities with which we are dealing – God, kingdom, gospel – we are going to end up living futile, fantasy lives. Your task is to keep telling the basic story, representing the presence of the Spirit, insisting on the priority of God, speaking the biblical words of command and promise and invitation.”

That, or something very much like that, is what I understand the church to say to the people whom it ordains to be its pastors.<sup>22</sup>

We live only by the cross and resurrection of Jesus. And as pastors we also live and serve for the sake of this Gospel in Word and Sacrament. As Paul writes, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

## Conversation (Groups of 3-4)

***You may want to ask a pastor in each group to serve as leader, whose primary task is to be sure everyone has an opportunity to speak. Participants may decide to focus on only 2-3 of the questions or to raise questions themselves. Be sure to encourage prayer for one another. Be sure to emphasize that our confession is always for the sake of Christ’s mission.***

1. Share with one another. Why are you a Lutheran pastor? How did you come to this conviction? What ignites your passion?
2. One homiletics professor told his seminary class that pastors should re-read Apology IV every six weeks. This may be a bit of hyperbole, but do you see value in regular reading of the confessions as part of your study program? How would you begin?
3. Talk about the false dichotomy between “confession” and “outreach.” How does our confession form, shape and motivate our outreach?
4. Above all else, the Augsburg Confession is concerned for the comfort of sinners. How does that help you in your preaching and pastoral care?
5. Respond to the Eugene Peterson quote. How well does this reflect your understanding of your own ordination vows?
6. Our Synod has experienced division in several areas of teaching and practice. What are the issues you struggle with in your circuit? In light of Walther’s comments, how might an honest look at our confession help resolve some of these?
7. Living in our confession, how would you approach as pastor a parish that you believe is deficient in its doctrine or practice?<sup>23</sup>
8. Living in our confession, how do you and your people reach out with the Gospel faithfully? How do you think our confession can help your congregation live and serve more consciously as a “mission outpost”? See also the Apology quote above.

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<sup>22</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 23-25.

<sup>23</sup> One way of proceeding: One of the parishes I served had the reputation before I came of being involved in ecumenical worship events with pastors of other denominations and also the reputation of having “open communion.” Before accepting the call, I talked it over with the Board of Elders. I knew that we would need to work toward change in those areas. They knew there would be differences and that we would not always agree, but they were willing to listen and to be taught. They also agreed it would not be good to make me go against my conscience. So what was our approach?

1. I told them we could not do ecumenical services and explained the reasons why (truth and error cannot be given an equal billing in the same service).
2. There were several on-going situations in which people who were not members of the LCMS were being regularly communed.
3. We taught the reasons for a proper practice of the Lord’s Supper.
4. Over the course of nearly two years we patiently worked through each of the situations individually. Some were instructed and confirmed. Another was examined and received by affirmation of faith. Others needed to choose between the Lutheran altar and that of another denomination.
5. In every case, we were able to explain the Word of God and allow it to go to work. Over the course of time, the congregation was drawn by the Word of God into a more faithful confession and practice.

9. Run through the basic list of Lutheran doctrines. Discuss again how each one is designed to bring maximum comfort to penitent sinners. How about more difficult teachings such as “predestination”? (See Ephesians 1:3ff).
10. What keeps us from reaching out with this confession more than we do now?<sup>24</sup>
11. What will you do differently as a result of this study?
12. Be sure to lift up one another in prayer. Seek to hold each other accountable in your circuit to your decisions as a result of #10.

*“Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you ... The Lord is faithful; He will strengthen you and guard you from evil ... May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ”  
(2 Thessalonians 3:1,3,5).*

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<sup>24</sup> If you think the question unfair, ask why some seem to “water down” the confession and others seem to “hide it” in some way – or are these both caricatures?



# FAITHFUL & AFIRE

Biblical Conversations on the Pastoral Ministry  
LCMS Circuit Bible Studies, 2006-07

## Session 6 The Pastor's Prayer and Devotional Life Annotated Leader's Guide

### **The *Faithful and Afire* Series**

In 2 Timothy 1:6, the apostle Paul reminds Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” His inspired words signal the reality of fatigue and malaise in pastoral ministry and our need for God’s daily grace to remain faithful as pastors. This series of Bible studies and conversations for pastoral circuits in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod is a resource for fanning the flame of the pastoral gift. Fired by the Word of God, pastors will study key aspects of pastoral ministry, seeking growth and greater effectiveness.

**Your task as a leader is to facilitate conversation and to maintain enough safety so that people can speak their mind from their heart. Depending on the number of persons present a decision can be made in every section whether to conduct the session in plenary or in small groups. If small group discussion is used, it is helpful to have a time when brief summaries of the conversations can be given to the larger plenary group. If sensitive material is discussed in the small groups, only the summary of the content should be shared.**

**The area of prayer and devotional life is an obviously important area. The weakening of one’s own personal spiritual life and behavior is an occupational hazard of ministry. Since pastors are always using the scriptures and always praying for others, personal application and resonance is harder. The issue here is not strength of faith, for faith is a gift of God through Christ. The issue here is developing practices of the faith that are wholesome, personally strengthening, and that give support to fighting the good fight.**

**Feedback to the author concerning the use and helpfulness of this material is encouraged and requested.**

### **A Fundamental Point (Before the Case in Point)**

**“A Fundamental Point” is designed to help participants engage in a conversation concerning the nature of one’s personal spiritual prayer and devotional life. Read the following essay and allow time for the total group to respond to the questions that follow. The fundamental point is that the question is not whether there will be temptation, but rather what the temptation is; not whether there will be spiritual vulnerability for the pastor, but rather what that vulnerability is. Prayer, meditation, and temptation are all expected parts of the development of a spiritual and devotional life. It is possible to**

**make the case that the weakening of one's own spiritual practices is part of the "tentatio" described.**

"What's more, I would like to show you the right way of studying theology, for I myself have practiced it...This is the way that holy King David...teaches in Psalm 119. In it you will discover three rules, abundantly explained throughout the whole Psalm. They are **prayer** (oratio), **meditation** (meditation), **temptation** (tentatio).

First you must realize that the Holy Scriptures are the kind of book that turns the wisdom of all other books into folly, because none of them can teach about eternal life except this alone. So you should immediately despair of your own reason and understanding. With them you will not attain eternal life. Instead, with arrogance like that, you will hurl yourself, and others with you, from heaven, like Lucifer, into the abyss of hell. Rather, kneel down in your room and pray to God, with true humility and earnestness, that through his dear Son, he would give you his Holy Spirit, to enlighten you, lead you, and give you understanding.

You can see how David keeps on praying in Psalm 119, "Teach me, Lord, instruct me, lead me, show me" and so on. Even though he knew the text of the Pentateuch well, and many other books, heard and read them daily, he wanted to have the true teacher (master) of the Scriptures for himself as well, so that he would not tackle them with his understanding and become his own teacher (master). That produces spiritual rabble-rousers who fancy that the Scriptures are subject to them and are readily grasped with their own understanding, without the Holy Spirit and prayer, like the tales of Markolf, or Aesop's fables.

Secondly, you must meditate, not only with your heart, but also externally, by always studying and rubbing, reading and re-reading the spoken word and written text in the Bible, with diligent attention and reflection on what the Holy Spirit means in it. Take care that you do not become bored and think that if you have read, heard, and spoken it once or twice that is enough for you to understand it fully. You will never become much of a theologian like that, but will be like immature fruit that drops down before it is half-ripe...

Thirdly, there is temptation (tentatio), 'Anfechtung'. This is the touchstone that teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right and true, how sweet and lovely, how powerful and comforting God's word is, wisdom above all wisdom.

Thus you see how David, in Psalm 119, laments so often about all the different enemies, arrogant princes or tyrants, and about all the false spirits and hordes that he has to suffer just because he meditates; that is, because he deals with God's word, as we have said, in many different ways. *For as soon as God's word shoots up and spreads through you, the devil persecutes you. He makes you a true doctor (of theology); through his temptations, he teaches you to seek and love God's word.*" (Martin Luther, "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition", revised translation by John W. Kleinig based on LW 34, 285-287 in Preparing Lutheran Pastors For Today, Editora da ULBRA, 2006, pp. 33-35, italics mine)

### Getting the Conversation Going

4. How does this passage from Luther help us understand the particular vulnerabilities of a pastor related especially to his devotional and spiritual life? **This question is phrased in a general way so that conversation can be more theoretical.**
5. How does this passage from Luther help us understand our own personal, particular vulnerabilities as we consider our own devotional and spiritual life? **This question is phrased in a specific and personal way so that conversation can be more personal and existential.**
6. How do you understand Luther's apparent point that, as God's Word grows in us, our level of persecution by Satan also grows, and that through that persecution or temptation we even more passionately "seek and love" God's Word? **This question specifically addresses the nature of temptation, and the reality that temptation propels us to the cross of Christ. We rely on Christ alone. (The Bonhoeffer and Kleinig quotations in "Words From the Wise" might also be used here.)**

## A Case in Point

**“A Case in Point” is designed to move from the somewhat more general discussion into a specific scenario with which it is hoped the participants can identify. Read the following scenario and allow time for the total group (or smaller groupings) to respond to the questions that follow.**

Pastor George sees himself as less spiritual fit than he saw himself a decade ago. He came to that conclusion as he looked at his open Bible for the fifth time. “I really try to read faithfully, and I often do read, but it seems not to go anywhere – at least anywhere for my own life. I get the exegesis and I get the points to preach, but somewhere increasingly my heart and my soul are being missed” he mused to himself. Slowly he closed the Bible, put it down, and joined his spouse for a night-time cup of tea. Susan, George’s spouse, could sense his weariness, but she herself was pretty weary. Couple devotions had become perfunctory; her own spiritual life seemed not very alive. Very different this is than the spiritually afire sense they had in their early years. They stared into each other’s eyes, each wondering if the words could be formed to begin what seemed like a necessary discussion. “Ah, it is late” Susan said, “and I am tired.” They both trudged off to bed.

### Getting this Conversation Going

4. What might have happened or be happening in the lives of Susan and George that developed this trajectory in their spiritual lives? **This question gives participants an opportunity to speculate about causes of the spiritual malaise described. Be aware that some speculations in response to stories might have a bit of personal connection.**
5. How might this be seen as a “tentatio”, i.e., that this is a piece of the persecution of Satan that eventually neutralizes the effectiveness of the pastor? **If Satan had a game plan, would it not be to neutralize the effectiveness of a pastor and his spouse, and if this neutralization were to be accomplished, would it not be a reasonable strategy to attack the spiritual life of the pastor and his spouse.**
6. If George and Susan came to you for pastoral care, what might you say to them? What might you encourage them to do? **Here pastors can consider responses of pastoral care. These responses can be used later to discuss overall personal strategies for spiritual growth.**

### The Scriptures Speak

2. Paul’s charge to Timothy is focused in 1 Timothy 6: 11-16. The exhortations of Paul to Timothy are clear. “Fighting the good fight of faith” is a central theme. To what extent is attention to the pastor’s personal spiritual life part of the “fighting the good fight of faith”? Consider the following questions:
  - What support is necessary for pastors to fight the good fight of faith? **Answers should vary here. Certainly being in the Word and participation in the Eucharist are central. Work to dig deeper than these standard answers, though, so that, hopefully, ideas such as the mutual consolation and admonition of the brethren, small group Bible study, private confession and absolution, use of a spiritual director, and the like might emerge.**
  - What helps are necessary for the pursuit of “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness”? **Some of the responses here might repeat and/or build on the previous ones.**

- How does a pastor's devotional and spiritual life support fighting the good fight of faith? Be specific about what devotional practices you have found useful to help in the fight? **The assumption here is that a pastor's devotional and spiritual life, when healthy, does support fighting the good fight. This is an opportunity for participants to share devotional techniques, strategies, and activities that have been helpful to them.**
3. Among the many possible selections from Psalm 119, consider Psalm 119:105-112. This is an ideal for personal devotion and the development of one's spiritual life. "I will follow your righteous laws" (119:106b), "I will not forget your law" (119:109b), "Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end." (119:111-112). Here the emphasis is on the following of God's laws as a central theme of one's spiritual life.

Or, consider Psalm 119: 97-104. This active approach to personal devotion and the development of one's spiritual life is clear: "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long" (119: 97) "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (119: 103). Here the emphasis is on the meditation and study of God's Word, with all the wonderful positive motivation involved. Consider the following questions:

- What picture do these portions of Psalm 119 paint of the pastor as a follower of Yahweh? **Psalm 119 was selected because of its connection to the earlier quotation from Martin Luther. The pastor is to have all the characteristics listed.**
  - What are the ways that the picture painted is one of Law for the pastor as different than Gospel? For instance, have you had times in which the study of God's Word has not been "sweet"? If the answer is "yes", where can you turn? **The reality is that no one can perfectly live as the picture suggests. This can lead us into despair. For instance, if a pastor is having difficulty being regular and enthusiastic about his personal Bible study, having a picture that he should be regular and enthusiastic is Law. In all things, we turn to Christ and through Christ to the members of His Body.**
4. The place of the community is central to the devotional and spiritual life of the pastor. Consult James 5: 13-19. At times prayer and praise is an individual response. At other times, it is a response within the community. Mutual confession of sins and prayer for one another is considered to be the vehicle God in Christ uses for healing. Consider the following questions:
- Under what conditions might you "call the elders," as colleagues in ministry, or the circuit counselor, or others in the community of the Body of Christ? **Answers should vary here. However, the central theme that is hoped for is that pastors need to develop others who can be helpful, supportive, and provide accountability.**
  - How can bringing people together in spiritual care and community devotion aid the pastor's devotional and spiritual life? **The community provides support and accountability. It is important for the pastor to be able to take his internal struggles, concerns, satisfactions, etc. and make at least some of them external. In that way others participate in the development of the pastor's prayer and devotional life, among other things.**
  - How does the community develop both support and accountability? **Communities do this by working to develop themselves as safe spaces where it is possible to bring prayer, meditation, and temptation.**
  - How can circuit gatherings and conferences be places where prayer specifically for each other, confession to one another other, and songs of praise be part of

the very fabric of the gathering? **This is an opportunity for the participants to address directly the nature of the circuit gathering and how it can be used to foster and strengthen the spiritual lives of the pastors, their spouses, and their children.**

5. Finally, read Psalm 67. The end of all of personal devotion and spiritual life is the praise of God. Even when we as pastors do not “feel” like praising, praise of God for God’s love and care in the sending of the Christ to redeem us is a core devotional response. Consider the following questions:

- What interferes with our praise of God in Christ? Be specific. **This question is phrased in a more general way (“a pastor’s praise ...”) so that conversation can be more theoretical.**
- What interferes with your praise of God in Christ? Be specific. **This question is phrased in a more personal and specific way so that answers can be more personal and existential. Allow the conversation to deepen if that is its natural development.**
- What strategies can you develop to work through the interferences? ? **Encourage specific behaviors that can be done, as contrasted with general statements of attitude. The more specific participant’s can get, and the more the circuit brothers can participate in a supportive way, the more likely, empowered by God’s Holy Spirit, an intentional strategy can become a healthy and growthful behavior.**
- How can your circuit coming together be a place where both tentatio and praise exist together as part of the general rhythm of the gathering? **Here is an opportunity to make specific plans about the function of the circuit meetings.**

### Words from the Wise

“Temptation is a concrete happening which juts out from the course of life. For the physical man all life is a struggle, and for the moral man every hour is a time of temptation. The Christian knows hours of temptation, which differ from hours of gracious care and preservation from temptation as the devil is different from God. The saying that every moment of life is a time of decision is for him a meaningless abstraction. The Christian cannot see his life as a series of principles, but only in its relation to the living God. The God who causes day and night to be gives also seasons of thirst and seasons of refreshment; he gives storms and peace, times of grief and fear, and times of joy. ‘Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy cometh in the morning’ (Ps. 30.5). ‘To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh . . . . He hath made every thing beautiful in its time’ (Eccles. 3.1-4, 11). It is not what life may be in itself, but how God now deals with me, which matters for the Christian. God rejects me, and he accepts me again. He destroys my work, and he builds it up again. ‘I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil’ (Isa. 45.7).

So the Christian lives from the times of God, and not from his own idea of life. He does not say that he lives in constant temptation and constant testing, but in the time when he is preserved from temptation he prays that God may not let the time of temptation come over him.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Temptation. London: SCM Press LTD, 1955, p. 11)

*“Spiritual growth and development takes discipline. The person who is ordained to the parish ministry is expected to be a spiritual giant and an expert on all spiritual matters. Yet more than likely, he entered seminary as part of a spiritual quest or journey. He was looking for some answers to life’s deepest questions. At seminary he was supposed to develop spiritually by*

studying Bible, theology, and church history. In reality, any spiritual maturity he gained probably happened between academic courses and chapel attendance. The final illusion was that parish work would continue that process of spiritual development.

Instead parish work often drains one spiritually. At this point, we realize that we have not been given all the training and skills needed to take even the first steps on our spiritual journey.

Spiritual maturity usually comes about as a result of some disciplined work in the field. Parishioners expect sermons to have spiritual depth to them, yet few agree to have their pastor spend significant time in personal reflection, prayer, Bible reading, and meditation. They assume that their pastor has done this kind of inner work already.

Clergy generally find it difficult to find time for their own personal/spiritual development. Perhaps they themselves think it would be selfish to spend time in this area. 'That's not what I am paid to do,' they may think. Yet, in reality, a strong argument could be made that a clergy person's spiritual life should be his first job responsibility." (Roy M Oswald, New Beginnings: A Pastorate Start Up Workbook, The Alban Institute, 1989, p. 61)

"The Gospel should predominate in Christian preaching. Says Walther: 'Worst of all a preacher sins against his duty to preach the whole counsel of God, and more than in any other way will his hearers be made to suffer, if he preaches more Law than Gospel, or, expressed in other words, if the Gospel does not predominate in his sermons, if the comforting doctrine of justification of a poor sinner by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, without the works of the Law, is not the outstanding feature of all his sermons. A preacher should be able to say with Paul: "God also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"' (2 Cor. 3:6). A true preacher should 'do the work of an evangelist' (2 Tim. 4:5), and should therefore consider it his chief duty to be a witness unto Christ (John 15:27; Acts 1:8). A preacher who chiefly moralizes and has not himself yet experienced the power of the Gospel, but is yet a servant under the Law, has not the courage to preach the Gospel in its fullness and cannot give all its rich comfort to his hearers; a preacher who is rather troubled that by giving the full comfort of the Gospel he will make people secure and lead them into hell and therefore so limit the Gospel that poor sinners do not risk boldly to take a hold; a preacher who, as often as he speaks of faith, at once adds all manner of warnings against self-deception and against believing too soon and is not wholly concerned so to preach that the heart of his hearers be filled with faith: such a preacher indeed may believe that his way is the sure way of not distorting the Word of God and of not neglecting the care of souls entrusted to him, but actually such a preacher is guilty of distorting the Word of God and of sadly and inexcusably neglecting the welfare of souls dearly bought by the blood of Christ. A preacher who only sparingly dispenses the comfort of the Gospel and lets the Law predominate in his preaching does not truly encourage faith and a real Christian life; he, moreover, is just in that way preventing it. A true preacher should be able to say with Luther: *'In corde meo iste unus regnat articulus, scilicet fides Christi; ex quo, per quem, et in quem omnes meae diu noctuque fluunt et refluunt theologicae cogitationes'* (In my heart there is uppermost that one thought: faith in Christ, from whom, through whom, and into whom all my theological thoughts flow to and fro by day and by night)." (John H.C. Fritz, The Essentials of Preaching, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948, pp. 18-20)

"One of our parishioners once said to us, 'You spiritual leaders have the perfect job. You get to think about God all day.'

We wish it were so! Just as you might suppose that professional athletes are in excellent physical condition, many people assume that spiritual leaders have perfect spiritual lives. As you know, this is not always the case. Many spiritual leaders are like hosts who run around catering to the needs of their guests. They make sure that everyone else is fed, even while they may themselves be hungry.

As a spiritual leader you pray for others. You counsel, encourage, serve, and care for them. Yet unless you take time to care for your own spiritual needs, you damage your ability to care for others." (Rochelle Melander and Harold Eppley, The Spiritual Leader's Guide to Self-Care, The Alban Institute, 2002, p. 158)

“First of all we need to recognize that ‘now we see in a mirror, dimly’ when it comes to spirituality (1 Cor. 13:12). We can conjecture, rationalize, and pontificate about spirituality, but without the spiritual gift of discernment we have only our own limited notions to guide us. When dealing with God’s higher thoughts and higher ways (Isa. 55:9) we need spiritual disciplines that open us to God’s thoughts and ways; we need the community of faith to critique and reinforce our understandings; and we need our own intentional fitness quest to make our spiritual experiences authentic and personal.” (G. Lloyd Rediger, Fit to be a Pastor: A Call to Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Fitness, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, p. 125)

“This discussion of spiritual fitness can be summarized as follows:

A—Awareness: I open my heart and mind as widely as possible, recognizing that spirituality is not a simple context for my rational mind. I humbly note that God’s ways are higher than my ways. And I accept my responsibility to develop spiritual fitness through disciplined and joyous practice of spiritual disciplines.

B—Basics: I give thanks and remind myself that I can and must relax-release-trust in order to allow the spiritual dimensions to override my bodily appetites, my mental anxieties and habits, and my theological certainties so that I may be open to God’s dynamic grace and purposes. Then the spiritual disciplines become a more natural part of my life instead of forced add-ons.

C—Congruency: The union-communion with God and creation, the intimacy and shared spiritual energy of human relationships now add synergy to my spiritual fitness.”

(G. Lloyd Rediger, Fit to be a Pastor: A Call to Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Fitness. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, p. 141)

“*The greatest problem in the Church is the pastor.* People are no better than their leaders. ‘Like people, like priest.’ Hos. 4, 9; Matt. 15, 14. *Qualis rex, talis grex.* Much depends upon the pastor’s spiritual leadership. Said Oecolampadius; ‘How much more would a few good and fervent men effect in the ministry than a multitude of lukewarm ones!’ Said William Reid: ‘The mere multiplying of men calling themselves ministers of Christ will avail little. They may be but “cumberers of the ground.” . . . Even when sound in faith, yet through unbelief, lukewarmness, and slothful formality they may do irreparable injury to the cause of Christ, freezing and withering up all spiritual life around them. The lukewarm ministry of one who is theoretically orthodox is often more extensively and fatally ruinous to souls than that of one grossly inconsistent or flagrantly heretical.’ Luther complained that some men in the ministry ‘ought to be more properly swineherds and dog-tenders than caretakers of souls and pastors’ (*Triglot*, 567,2.) All detailed instruction and good advice given to a pastor will avail little or nothing if the pastor himself is not the right kind of man — a *sincere Christian* and a *faithful* and an *able* worker. In reference to natural endowments, and acquired knowledge, and practical ability, and a highly developed personality, ministers cannot all be Pauls and Luthers, but they can and ought to be filled with the same ardent love for Christ and for souls and with the same consciousness of the privilege which the Lord is according them and the responsibility which He has placed upon them. A minister of Jesus Christ should seek to become great by way of service, Matt. 20, 25—28. That is a laudable ambition. A pastor should therefore keep himself spiritually, intellectually, and physically fit.” (John H.C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932, pp. 14-15)

“The study of theology, then, is based on prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit turns would-be masters of theology, spiritual self-promoters, into humble, life-long students of the Scriptures. Apart from Spirit and his empowerment, people know nothing about eternal life. Without his illumination, the teaching of the Scriptures remains mere theory without any reality. Prayer for God’s ongoing bestowal of the Holy Spirit through Jesus and the ongoing reception of the Holy Spirit makes a theologian. In short, the Holy Spirit makes a theologian. And this is a life-long undertaking...Luther claims that in the study of theology, prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit needs to be accompanied by continual meditation on the Scriptures...No word; no Spirit. Likewise, no prayer; no Spirit.” (John W. Kleinig, “Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes a Theologian,” Preparing Lutheran Pastors for Today, Editora da ULBRA, 2006, pp. 20-21)

## Further Conversations

In addition to the conversations in small groups that were generated during the course of the discussion of Luther's "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition, of Pastor George and spouse Susan, and of the scriptural study, further conversation and discussion could revolve around the following questions:

- What is the place and role of a Father-Confessor or spiritual director my personal spiritual and devotional life? Is this an opportunity to develop this discipline? **This question gives participants an opportunity to discuss how a regular pattern of spiritual conversation and a regular pattern of individual confession/absolution could become part of the routine of the pastor.**
- What is the place and role of my brother pastors? Is the gathering of pastors an opportunity for deeper sharing in the areas of prayer, meditation, and temptation? If so, how can that be structured and encouraged? Are there impediments to the development of such? **Much of this question has likely already been addressed in previous sections. The additional specific question here, however, is the last one in this group. It gives participants an opportunity, if they have not already done so, to speak about barriers to sharing at more deep levels. Each barrier needs to be heard and understood. But the barrier should never be left unaddressed. Always a facilitating question such as, "if we want to address this barrier what ideas do you have to do so?" is important.**
- According to Duane Bidwell ([Short-Term Spiritual Guidance](#)), the central dual focus to all spiritual direction is "identifying God's action" and "appropriate response" (xii). At times, guided by the Holy Spirit, we are able to do this individually. But often the opportunity to study together, pray together, and discern together is crucial to the process of clearly identifying God's action and developing an appropriate response. How can pastors more clearly discern God's action in their lives and ministries? How can you work toward such greater discernment? **This simple sequence of two central foci of spiritual direction opens the possibility of significant conversation. It is with the eyes of faith that followers of Christ look to what happens in life to find God's action. As Christians we seek discernment about the will of God and how to respond faithfully.**

All conversations in the Body of Christ are to be bathed in prayer. Allow plenty of time for such opportunities. **Prayer can be interspersed throughout the meeting. It is not necessary to save it until the end. Especially if deeper conversation emerges, taking a moment for prayer might be both helpful and appropriate.**

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# FAITHFUL & AFIRE

Biblical Conversations on the Pastoral Ministry  
LCMS Circuit Bible Studies, 2006-07  
Leader's Guide

## Session 7 Balancing Family & Ministry

### The *Faithful and Afire* Series

***Introduce the series and distribute the Study Guide. Other sessions focus on various aspects of pastoral ministry, including missional leadership, worship, balance of family and ministry, integrity, confessing pastors, equipping the saints and the pastor's prayer and devotional life. Explain that there will be 30-45 minutes of group Bible study, followed by 30-45 minutes of small group conversation.***

In 2 Timothy 1:6, the apostle Paul reminds Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” His inspired words signal the reality of fatigue and malaise in pastoral ministry and our need for God’s daily grace to remain faithful as pastors. This series of Bible studies and conversations for pastoral circuits in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod is a resource for fanning the flame of the pastoral gift. Fired by the Word of God, pastors will study key aspects of pastoral ministry, seeking growth and greater effectiveness.

### A Case in Point

***In this “Case in Point” pastors are invited to consider the challenge of balancing the time and energy which they commit to family and to ministry. Hopefully this will “prime the pump” for a lively discussion. Be alert to those whose lives have become unbalanced and are in need of encouragement and healing. Read the case study out loud, and use the questions below to generate conversation for about 10 minutes.***

Ralph, a young minister, is filled with excitement, and his “plate” is filled with many tasks. In the midst of sermon preparation, he receives word of a death in the church.

As he rises from his desk to respond to this pressing need, he notices several letters on his desk, for which replies are long overdue. Before he can put on his coat, his secretary buzzes him that his next appointment is waiting in the outer office.

His office door opens, and he is confronted by his wife, who is red faced and crying. “Please, dear,” he says quickly, continuing to put on his coat, “I’ve got to go. I’ve just learned that Mr. Smith has died, and I need to be there. Can it wait until supper?”

“No,” she replies quickly, “it won’t wait because it never happens.” Ralph is now aware of some anger in her voice. “What’s wrong dear?” he asks cautiously.

“I . . . I . . . I,” she stammers, “I think you’re having an affair, and I want a divorce!” she blurts out. She covers her face and sinks into a chair as a wave of tears engulfs her.

Pastor Ralph is stunned. “Why . . . why . . . why . . .” Now it is his turn to stammer. “Honey, I assure you that you’re the only one for me. There has never been another woman in my life!” He begins to move toward the door.

“Oh, I know there’s not another *woman*. But it’s . . . it’s . . . it’s this *church*. *She* takes all of your time. You ask, ‘Can’t it wait until supper?’ But supper never comes – or at least yours doesn’t. And I’m tired of it. Last week you were late for supper every night except Tuesday, and on Wednesday you didn’t make it home until after 10! You haven’t been to an activity at the kids’ school in months! Two days ago it was an emergency at the hospital. Yesterday someone called just as you left.”

“You said *they* needed to talk! But sometimes I need to talk too,” she continues, “and by the time you get home every night *neither* of us has any energy left. It’s like you give all you have to this church, and there’s nothing left for me. I know there’s not another woman, but I still feel cheated. You don’t have time for me. But it’s just like you’re having an affair, and I want out!”

#### Getting the Conversation Going

1. So now what? What would your next move be?
2. Would it be easier if he were having an actual affair? Explain your response.
3. How would you know whether or not your wife has ever felt like this?
4. You’ve got a lot on your plate, too. If confronted with a similar plea from your wife to talk right now, how would you respond, given other crises competing for your time?
5. How do you keep your priorities straight so conversations like the one above do not occur?

## The Scriptures Speak

**Use “The Scriptures Speak” as a guide for a large group Bible study. The circuit counselor, host pastor or another designated leader can present this section. Each participant should have a study guide. Additional material is provided in bold italics for the leader. Because of electronic transmission issues, Hebrew and Greek words and phrases have been transliterated into English.**

1. **Invite participants to read to themselves.** As you read 1 Timothy chapter 3, note the Biblical requirements for and descriptions of being a pastor, (deacon or pastor’s wife). Make special note of the ones you feel are particularly important in maintaining balance between family and ministry.

- v 1: *kalos*, good, valuable, **a noble task**
- v 2: *anepileptos* **above reproach, inviolable, unassailable**
  - *sophron*, **self-controlled, sound in mind**
  - *kosmio* **of good behavior, well mannered, balanced!**
  - *philoxenos*, **hospitable, fond of guests**
  - *didaktikos*, **able to teach, and to be taught!**
- v 3: *epieikes*, **gentle, patient – opposite of violent!**
  - *plektes*, **not quarrelsome, or looking for a fight**
  - *philarguros*, **not a lover of money, one who loves ill-gotten gain**
- v 4: *tekna . . . en hypotage* **children in submission**
- v 7: *kalov marturia*, **a good reputation, witness, externally, with outsiders**
  - *pagis diabolos*, **trick or noose of the devil!**

2. **Provide brief background for Moses leadership of the children of Israel.** What did Moses do for God and for the people he had been called to lead? How was his a noble task? What evidence do you have that his leadership was balanced?

- Ex 12:31ff: **Moses had led God’s people out of Israel.**
- Ex 16:4; 11-12, 17: 5-6: **Moses was used by God to provide food and drink for God’s people in the wilderness.**
- Ex 17:9-10: **Moses directed the defeat of the *Amelekites*.**
- Ex 17:15: **Moses led God’s people in worshipping God for His protection, care and deliverance.**

3. **Like Pastor Ralph, Moses was confronted, here by his father-in-law, about the impossible job of handling every situation himself and trying to please everyone.** Take turns reading verses from Exodus 18:13-27.

- vss 13, 15-16: What was Moses doing? **Moses served as judge, *shaphat*: one who defends or contends, from morning till night**

- v 17: **Review Jethro's observation, "What you are doing is not good!"** What was good and what was *not* so good about Moses' strategies? **He speaks for God, but apparently tries to do everything himself!**
- v18: In addition to wearing himself out, who will also wear out? **The people!**
- v19: *kabed*, too heavy, How could this "too heavy" be both 'good' and 'bad'? **Bad – wear you out. Good – 1 Corinthians 4:1, ". . . entrusted with the secret things of God," but not as a burden to borne alone!**
- What responsibilities does Paul suggest to those entrusted as God's servants in his farewell to the Ephesian elders, Acts 20:28? *episkopos*: **overseer, is like a superintendent, of other workers, not the owner, or sole proprietor! "With His own blood He bought us . . ."**
- What alternate strategy did Jethro suggest to Moses? v 19: **Give advice so you know that God is with you. Remember you are not God, but God's representative to His people!**
- Before selecting capable men, v 21, what was Moses to do? v 20: **Teach them God's will, show them how they are to live and the duties they are to perform.**
- v 24: What might have happened had Moses chosen not to follow his father-in-law's advice? **Wear himself out, become too sick to continue, or worse, died prematurely.**
- vv 25-26: Compare the structure of your current ministry setting to Moses' "church." **Some church structures place inordinate responsibilities upon called/salaried workers, while others are more reasonable and recognize human limitations. Share various views.**

4. **Paul is certainly the best known and perhaps the hardest working of the apostles. Most pastors have quoted and/or misquoted this verse.** Read 1 Corinthians 9:22. What do you think Paul meant?

- **Then ask:**
  - What is realistic about Paul's goal? **He wants people to be saved.**
  - What is unrealistic about his goal? **Only Jesus "saves" people. We are ambassadors of God's good will, 2 Corinthians 5:20**
- Survey the context to better understand v 22.
  - v 1: Paul had *seen* the Lord. **How have you *seen* the Lord?**
  - v 1: The faith of his readers is a direct *result* of Paul's ministry. **Do faith-building activities consume more or less of your time?**
  - v 3: *anakrino*, judgment, question, discernment: **What kinds of judgments could have been leveled against Paul? You?**
  - vss 4-14: Pastors are sometimes compared as having more or less physical things than others in the church, including money/salary. **What have your personal experiences been?**
  - v 23: What does it mean for you to do something "for the sake of the Gospel?" *poieo dia to euaggelion* **According to 1 Corinthians 4:1, "pastors are entrusted with the secret things of God." The Gospel isn't to be kept secret, but the Gospel message is to be handled with *special care*.**
  - v 24-27: Paul compares the rigorous training necessary for a physical contest to similar, rigorous *spiritual* training and the single-mindedness necessary for the work of ministry. How have you succeeded and where do you still need work here? Why is balance between family and ministry important? **Note specifics listed.**
- How is Paul's strategy "*to be all things to all people*," realistic and healthy? **Seize all means to bring people to Christ, and Christ to people. Ask, "Do all phone calls, letters, and objections need to be answered? How can you be more realistic about the tasks "on your plate," and the expectations of others around you, both area pastors and people in your church?"**

- How is Paul's strategy unrealistic and unhealthy? **Humans have limited time and energy. How could you "re-word" this verse to be more realistic and reasonable for you?**
- "God gave Adam a wife, not a congregation!" What does this mean to you? **We are to live *with our wives and serve God's people***
- With what safeguards can you surround yourself to prevent v 22 from becoming your motto? **Keep a running list of their suggestions. Talk briefly about how the *shed blood of Jesus* and the *forgiveness* He freely offers all is of special help to the proclaimer of the Gospel! You may want to pronounce absolution at this point, if it is appropriate.**

5. Together read the Third Commandment, Exodus 20:8-11.

- What does the word Sabbath mean to you? *Shabbath*: **intermission, the observance of the seventh day, a day of rest**
- How and when do you observe Sabbath? **Prime the pump by sharing personally how this time or the event is most important to you? Is Sabbath for you or for God? Mark 2:27 How so?**
- When the many and varied demands of parish ministry are closing in around you, how does the Third Commandment help you maintain a balance between work and family?
- Is it easy or hard for you to *worship* while you lead others in worship? Describe how you *worship* God. **How do you keep a day *holy*? Describe how your life/Sabbath practice is a paraphrase of the word "holy," or a time and a place that is "set apart" for God.**

6. Study some other verses where the word "Sabbath," occurs, and note additional meanings: **Invite others to include their favorite verses, perhaps first.**

- Exodus 16:23: **day of rest**
- Exodus 16:25-26: **no manna on the Sabbath, faith that God will provide!**
- Exodus 20:9: **no work on the Sabbath, allowing time for worship. Some will talk nostalgically about how "things used to be." Ask if pastors take *another day* for their Sabbath and *how* they observe it? Ask if they take one or two days off? In modern Israel observant Jews prepare Sabbath/Saturday meals the day before/Friday! Ask, "How do you get ready for Sabbath?" Would you eat a cold meal on the Sabbath because you preferred not to allow work/effort to get in the way of your worship of God?**
- Exodus 20:10: **no work**
- Exodus 31:16: **a celebration, that is passed on to other generations**
- Lev 16:31: **a day of rest, during which you deny yourself some ordinary physical pleasures, in order to focus on God. What are the good parts of monasticism? How were the isolation and withdrawal of the monastics dangerous for their faith and service to others?**
- Numbers 28:9: **make an offering to God**
- Matthew 12:1-8, especially v 7: **Which is more important, mercy or sacrifice, and why?**
- Matthew 12:12: **What did Jesus mean, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath?"**
- John 5:10: **According to some interpretations of the law, it was unlawful to carry, even a sleeping mat on the Sabbath!**
- Acts 1:12: **a Sabbath's day's journey (Exodus 16:29, Numbers 35:5, Joshua 3:4), about ¾ mile**
- Acts 13:27: **reading of God's Word**
- Hebrews 4:9: ***sabbatismos* - Sabbath rest**

## Words from the Wise

Use these quotes as spring-boards to conversations to follow.  
Use as many as time or interest dictates.

Are you happy? How do others perceive you? How does your family perceive your happiness? How would you respond to the young man who asks: "I am 15 and . . . want to become a pastor . . . my pastor is a good pastor but . . . does not seem really happy . . . I wonder if I will be getting into a job like his and I will be unhappy?" Bruce Hartung, "Pressure Points," **Reporter** (February, 2007), 8.

**Here is part of Bruce Hartung's response: "Talk . . . frankly as you can. Tell him that you are concerned the pastoral ministry might not be a happy place. Let him know your concerns . . . if a pastor is close to his people, he will hurt for them, sigh with them, and walk arm-in-arm with them. This is stressful, but a necessary and actually rewarding part of ministry. Ask him what his stressors and his joys are in ministry . . . There are pieces of my life as a pastor/seminary professor that are quite satisfying, and others that are not so satisfying, and even others that are actually troubling. But I really believe that life is like that."**

Henri Nouwen was a Trappist priest, trained in Europe, who spent his life teaching at Yale and Harvard Divinity Schools, helping people respond to the universal "yearning for love, unity, and communion that doesn't go away." What do his words say to you?

**Some pastors and professional church workers handle the pain and stress of the *unhappy or troubling* parts of their jobs by isolating themselves from others, including their families. How do you cope with the temptation to isolate yourself from friends and especially from your family? In what other ways do you deal with the stress, pain, and unsatisfying parts of your job in a healthier, more constructive and balanced way?**

"We live in a society in which loneliness has become one of the most painful human wounds. The growing competition and rivalry which pervade our lives from birth have created in us an acute awareness of our isolation. This awareness has in turn left many with a heightened anxiety and an intense search for the experience of unity and community. It has also led people to ask anew how love, friendship, brotherhood and sisterhood can free them from isolation and offer them a sense of intimacy and belonging." Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: In Our Own Woundedness, We Can Become a Source of Life for Others* (New York, Doubleday, 1979).

Martin Luther often felt the loneliness and stress of ministry. But he also knew the joys of leading people to Jesus. Consider these words: "We can engage in no sublimer and greater work on earth than educating people by preaching and teaching . . . But no work is more difficult than making other people good. Yet this is the best service we can render God." **Luther's Works** (American Edition, Vol. 36) 216.

**Luther's words could be both encouraging and discouraging to those seeking the office of the ministry. But imagine how your family members would respond to Luther's comments. Suggest that pastors share these readings with their family. Caution them to simply *listen*, without defensiveness to the responses they receive.**

In a fascinating little book, *What Matters Most: When No Is Better Than Yes*, long-time youth worker, Doug Fields, has some interesting things to say about self-care, balance, and by extension, the care and feeding of relationships that matter most.

"You may be at a crossroads in your life and ministry, and the challenge of saying no is exactly that you need. So I want to challenge you now: The "good way" is saying no – have the courage to walk in it and find rest for your soul. Is busyness really getting you what you want – or need? In the end, busyness makes us look important but cripples our relationships. Busyness feeds our egos but ultimately

starves our souls. Busyness fills our calendars but fractures our families. And busyness props up our images and shrinks our hearts.” Doug Fields, *What Matters Most: When No is Better Than Yes*, (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2006), 20-21.

**Some discomfort may be generated by reading this passage. Hopefully it will motivate some to purchase and read the entire book. Perhaps others will challenge the reasonableness of pastors even saying *no* to anyone and anything. Some have jokingly called this “*donning the cape!*” (as in Superman!)**

**Consider another quote from later in the book. You could read it now, or use it as a closing thought for your study.**

***“Jesus said “no” to good things. He said “no” to important people. Jesus left people unhealed. He didn’t answer every question, go to every event, or meet everyone’s needs. He needed time away from his disciples. He needed space. Yes, he even needed sleep. He was 100 percent God and 100 percent human; therefore he had human limits. He needed solitude. He needed time to reflect and pray and nourish his spiritual life. It was this life-giving time of connection to the Vine that gave Jesus spiritual power and energy for His ministry to others. And I believe it was during those times of solitude that He was able to hear God’s voice and know what matters most.” (pp. 80-81)***

## **Conversation**

***Suggest a division into groups of 2, 3 or no more than 4. Ask for or appoint a leader. Suggest that the most important goal for this leader be that everyone has opportunity to share with no one dominating the discussion. Suggest that you will announce a time for prayer at which time all participants will pray for one another.***

1. For you, what is the most important reason to maintain balance between your commitment to your family and your commitment to your calling to serve God as a pastor?
2. Considering the Scriptures we have studied, imagine how and why some pastors have adopted the following “drivers” for their ministry:
  - a. Be perfect
  - b. Be strong
  - c. Hurry up
  - d. Try Harder
  - e. You’re OK if you please everybody!

Which of these, in your opinion, is the hardest to maintain? Describe the precautions you take, so that these are *not* your first considerations for ministry.

3. In what position of importance does your family come in the order of your current set of priorities? When do you (and when don’t you) alter these priorities?
4. Just how do you determine priorities between family and ministry?
5. How do you “keep heat” under all the kettles at the same time?
6. What about yourself? Is there any time for you, yourself?
7. Has your wife ever confided feelings similar to Ralph’s wife? How did you handle the situation? What changes, if any, did you make to change your priorities?
8. How do you maintain a healthy balance between being a husband and father (if indeed you are) and being a pastor?
9. Why, in the end, is a healthy balance between ministry and family so important?
10. Spend time in prayer for one another and for one another’s families.

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# FAITHFUL & AFIRE

Biblical Conversations on the Pastoral Ministry  
LCMS Circuit Bible Studies, 2006-07

## Leaders Guide

### Session 8 Equipping the Saints

#### The Faithful and Afire Series

In 2 Timothy 1:6, the apostle Paul reminds Timothy to “fan into flame the fit of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” His inspired words signal the reality of fatigue and malaise in pastoral ministry and our need for God’s daily grace to remain faithful as pastors. This series of Bible studies and conversations for pastoral circuits in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is a resource for fanning the flame of the pastoral gift. Fired by the Word of God, pastors will study key aspects of pastoral ministry, seeking growth and greater effectiveness.

#### A Case In Point

**In this “Case in Point” pastors are invited to consider the relationship of clergy to laity and their respective roles in carrying out the mission of the Church. Hopefully this will “prime the pump” for a lively discussion. Read the case study aloud. Use the three questions that follow to generate conversation for about 10 minutes. This can be done in the total group or in smaller groups of 3-4.**

A group of several pastors stood around the coffee and rolls table prior to the official beginning of their monthly Winkel meeting, as was their custom. Pastor Don, who had been ordained and installed ten months before stepped up to the table. Before he filled his coffee cup he began talking about how Lent and Easter had gone in his congregation. He expressed his disappointment at how low attendance had been April 15 compared with Easter Sunday the week before. Pastor Dale, in his seventeenth year of ministry, responded, “That’s the way it is. You have to expect that. It’s been that way forever.” Pastor Don, while appreciating Pastor Dale’s attempt to make him feel better, was not satisfied with the answer. “There has to be more we can be doing to help people understand how important it is to be faithful and committed on a constant basis, not just at certain times of the year! And I’m not just talking about worship attendance. It seems like the people I serve aren’t too excited about doing much of anything in the parish.” Pastor Dale said, “Don, don’t be too hard on yourself. The truth is that there are some built-in frustrations in the ministry. I know I had to deal with these very same issues early in my ministry. I guess I’ve come to the point where I just expect that some things aren’t going to be the way I want them. People just want to have things done for them.”

Pastor Tom interjected, “Well, I’ve been serving for about ten years and I still deal with frustrations like the one you are talking about, Don. About two months ago someone I would consider a strong member informed me that he was not getting spiritually fed enough and had joined a community church not far from where we are. He says they are helping him grow more in his faith, addressing specific life issues and giving him, as he said, some real handles on how to live life. I thought I was doing that. It really hurt me that he and his family left.” He was noticeably downcast.

Pastor Jim, reluctant at first, ventured to speak. “Several of my members, all of whom have been very supportive of our ministry and demonstrated servants’ hearts, came to me and said they had organized a mission group to go to the New Orleans area to assist in clean-up and rebuilding efforts. I didn’t know that they were planning this nor was I involved in this outreach in any way. At first I was annoyed, but now I’m thankful they took the initiative.”

Pastor John, who was usually quiet in groups, was eager to join in the conversation. He stated that he would be thrilled if anyone in his congregation took the initiative in any part of the ministry. He said that trying to get his people to do anything proactive was like trying to herd cats. "They all kinda just go their own way and do what they want."

It was time to begin the conference so they stopped their conversation and took their places in the meeting room. But each of their minds was still focused on the words they had spoken and heard. Had they said too much? Or had they said too little?

### Getting the Conversation Going

1. Which of these pastors might you most identify with? **Responses will vary.**
2. How do you think each of these pastors, in general, viewed the members of their congregations? **Note that this is a critical element in determining how pastor and people relate to one another. Personal experience may well impact responses. We will address this issue in the Scripture study portion of this lesson.**
3. What do you think these brothers were wanting from one another? Did they get it? **Responses will vary and should be interesting.**

## The Scriptures Speak

1. Read Ephesians 4: 1-13. The Lord has given us a number of pictures and descriptions of the church and what He has called her to be. One of those is in this passage.
  - o Broadly speaking, what does Paul want his readers to understand?  
**God has given His Church the gift of unity – “one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and father of us all.” This unity exists because He has created it. He also gives a variety of gifts to His children who have been called by name into His family. We celebrate the unity of the Body as well as the diversity in the Body. (cf. Romans 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:12ff)**
  - o Why does Paul stress the unity of the Body of Christ before he talks about what the Body of Christ is to do?  
**He is laying common ground, the core reality of the nature of the holy Christian church, the Body of Christ. The variety of gifts emerges from our unity in Christ. Therefore the differences in peoples’ gifts do not separate us from one another or cause us to go in our own direction. Rather, rooted and grounded in Christ, we have both a common ground and beginning and an eternal connection to Him and to one another.**
  - o What are some implications if one really believes what Paul says in verse 7?  
**Implications include but are not limited to the following: laity will be seen as gifted by God; their jealousy of another’s gift will dissipate; the challenges and burdens of ministry will be shared; more will be done to reveal the Lord’s kingdom as more people are involved in ministry.**
  - o To what degree does a pastor have a responsibility for seeing that members discover and utilize their God given gifts?  
**To a complete degree. Such responsibility doesn’t mean the pastor has to do this all or do it by himself. He is to see that it is done.**
  - o What are some ways you can help people discover and express the “grace” they have been given, “as Christ apportioned it.?”  
**There are resources and instruments available for this purpose through CPH and other publishers. Also, pastors can help greatly by insuring that the congregation has an increasingly clear vision of what the Lord is calling that congregation to do. This brings a greater alignment between mission and the gifts needed to accomplish that mission. This topic was also covered in an earlier lesson on the “Missional Leader.”**

- Take three minutes to list as many works of service as you can.  
**Let the brains storm! Should be interesting and, hopefully, give participants “works” they might not have considered.**
  - What is the relationship between works of service and building up the Body of Christ?  
**According to this passage there is a direct relationship. As God’s people serve others, Jesus is served. As people extend and share the grace of God in Christ and their unique “graces” in specific situations, lives are impacted and strengthened. As faith is shared, faith is strengthened.**
  - What would you see as evidence that the Body of Christ is being built up?  
**Answers may include baptisms; acts of love and compassion; people responding to the Holy Spirit’s call to faith; new ministries; a joyful spirit in the congregation; sacrificial giving of resources and time; and public stands that glorify God as opposed to sliding into the culture’s mold. At the same time, the Lord can be doing things in people’s lives in ways that we cannot see at a given moment.**
2. How do the following passages speak to the Lord’s words in Ephesians 4:11-13?
- Ephesians 2:8-10  
**The Lord graces or gifts us with faith. He also has created us, clergy and lay alike, as “works of art” to “do good works,” which we are also called to do in Ephesians 4:12.**
  - 1 Peter 2:9-10  
**Christians are addressed at large and designated a “royal priesthood.” We are given the command — lay and clergy alike — to “declare the wonderful praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.” As clergy, we are to assist others in knowing what it is we praise God for. This is why our role as proclaimers of the Gospel is so important. PEOPLE CANNOT BE EQUIPPED IF THEY HAVEN’T HEARD THE GOSPEL.**
  - John 15:5  
**If people are to be equipped for works of service (“bear much fruit”), they must be connected to Jesus. This is where our call as clergy is to be taken with all seriousness. By God’s grace, people are connected as they hear the Word and receive the sacraments. We have been granted the privilege of being the messengers and bearers of these graces from God.**
  - 2 Timothy 3:16-17  
**Equipping God’s people for works of service involves them in growing in their understanding and living out of the truths of Scripture. As clergy we are to insure that those we serve are immersed in the Word. This is an essential ingredient in equipping the saints.**
  - Hebrews 13:20-21  
**Again we hear that God desires His people be equipped to know and do His will. The relationship between pleasing Him and doing His will is an intimate one. They are equipped as they hear the Word, receive the sacrament, and offer themselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:2) in service to others.**
3. Read Ephesians 4:14-16
- What happens as God’s people carry out works of service?  
**We become more grounded in the true and saving faith, more focused in our mission, more able to declare and take the Gospel to others in the spirit of Christ’s love, more united in our witness, and more committed to carrying out that which the Lord has prepared and equipped us to do.**

4. What do the following passages say about how Jesus equipped his disciples?

**He equipped, or prepared them to serve God's people by:**

- Matthew 4:19  
**Calling them to "follow Him" (here as in other verses). In following Him they were in a way becoming His apprentices. The apprentice watches, learns from, and imitates the master. He modeled service and sacrifice.**
- Matthew 5:2  
**Teaching and showing them the Father's kingdom—His plan, reign, and power. In His teaching He revealed the heart and the will of God the Father.**
- Matthew 6:9a  
**Teaching them to pray.**
- Matthew 10:5-9  
**Instructing them in how they were to take His message to others. He told them what the message was, namely, "The kingdom of heaven is near" (v.7). Also, note that He trusted them to do it. He delegated and trusted they would take His message to others in the way He instructed them.**
- Matthew 28:18-20  
**Giving them "marching orders" and promising that He, though unseen, would be with them constantly until that day when they will once again see Him face to face.**
- Mark 10:41-45  
**Emphasizing in the clearest way possible that they were to be servants. Also, giving the example of washing their feet (John 13: 1-17)**
- Luke 24:49  
**Promising and sending them His Holy Spirit.**
- John 17:13-19  
**Praying for them.**
- John 21:15-17  
**Showing the depth of His love and grace by giving Peter the opportunity to serve and feed the flock, in spite of his previous betrayal.**

Are there other ways in which Jesus equipped his disciples? If so, name some.

**Other ways Jesus equipped His disciples may be shared.**

What guidance can you receive from these descriptions of ways Jesus equipped His disciples?

**See how well participants can apply what Jesus did to their ministry settings and their roles as equippers.**

## Words from the Wise

Through holy baptism, every Christian has been consecrated, ordained, and installed into the ministry to teach, admonish, and comfort his neighbor. Through holy baptism each Christian has obtained not only the authority, power, and right, but also the high, holy obligation—under pain of losing the divine grace—of rousing himself to care and to help so that others may be brought to Christ. **C.F.W. WALTHER** (Walther, C.F.W. "Bringing Souls to Christ—Every Christian's Desire and Duty," Sermon for the 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, 1842, Published in Festklänge, CPH, 1892. Translated by Bruce Cameron, July, 1993.)

**Walther emphasizes the high calling (Eph. 4:1) of all Christians and our responsibility to carry out the most important "work of service," namely, taking the saving name and person of Jesus to others.**

Luther wrote that a believer's life was characterized by three stages. First, all the works in a believer's life flow freely and joyfully out of love for God, without thought of merit. A person who doubts and frets whether enough has been done is not at one, or at peace with God, fully trusting Him and His mercy

above all things. The second stage of faith is exemplified by the fact that a believer loves God even when He permits suffering, confident that the Lord has not forsaken him. This child of God also refrains from blaming those around him or the devils in hell. The third stage of faith, and the highest according to Luther, is that which persists and prevails when torments of conscience seek to overwhelm and destroy the child of God. Luther personally had gone through these stages. He believed they also portrayed each believer's life. Luther had come to realize that there was no help other than the sweet Gospel that God proclaims in His Word. Faith and trust in the Gospel, worked in hearts by the Holy Spirit, was the firm foundation on which every Christian's life must be based. Out of this faith flowed every good work in the believer's life. **EUGENE KLUG**

(Klug, Eugene, *Lift High This Cross: The Theology of Martin Luther*, St. Louis: CPH, 2003, pp.73-74.)

**We are reminded of the maturing process in the life of the redeemed, and that the good works we are allowed to perform result from the life of Christ that is in us. We then trust that God will work this in the lives of clergy and lay alike.**

The role of church leadership is to help its members to identify their gifts and to integrate them into appropriate ministries. When Christians serve in their area of giftedness, they generally function less in their own strength and more in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus ordinary people can accomplish the extraordinary! **C.A. SCHWARTZ**

(Schwartz, C. A., *Natural Church Development*. Carolstream, IL: Church Source Resources, 1998, p. 24.)

**This is a reminder of our call as clergy to enlist, encourage, affirm, and support the works of service carried out by those we have been called to serve.**

In Ghana, priests are regarded as chiefs and this certainly goes to their heads. In fact, the pastor becomes a boss and a village chief. He is the banker, the cashier, the school teacher, the judge, the preacher, the mechanic, the driver(s), the builder—you name it. The “chief” mentality creates problems.

Similar thinking can be found here in the United States. The pastor is often seen as a boss who does everything in the congregation. He decides where the altar should be. He is the liturgist. He leads the worship. He reads the lessons. He practically does everything. There is one thing he does not do in the congregation, and that is take the offering. Maybe the congregation doesn't trust him with the money.

It is as if the congregation is in a boat. The pastor alone paddles the boat while the members sit in it, smoking a pipe and drinking coffee. If anything happens to the pastor while on the sea, the whole boat will sink and the people will perish. The pastor teaches them to be lazy and to sit. They then become comfortable Christians. **PAUL KOFI FLYNN, PRESIDENT, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, GHANA, WEST AFRICA**

(In Joerz, J.C. and McCain, P.T., *Church and Ministry: The Collected Papers of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Theological Convocation of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*. St. Louis: CPH, 1998, pp.242-243.)

**These words paint a vivid picture of the pastor who thinks he must, for whatever reason, “go it alone” in the parish. He asks us to look at our motives for doing so. Could they be self-serving?**

If we should take religion seriously as was done in the early Christian church, the dull picture presented by so many contemporary churches would be radically altered. . . pastors would not be performing while others watch, but helping stir up the ministry of the ordinary members. **ELTON TRUEBLOOD**

(Quoted in Luecke, D., *Apostolic Style and Lutheran Substance*, Lima, Ohio: Fairway Press, 1999, pp. 114-115.)

**He challenges us to think like first and second century Christians in terms of our appraisal, perception, and enlistment of the laity.**

## Further Conversation

1. What are some “graces” you believe the Lord has given you?
2. What are some of the graces you see in the lives of your brother pastors?
3. Think of five people in the congregation you serve.

**Encourages pastors to see and name the giftedness in congregation members. It will be good for all involved to see and affirm these gifts more clearly.**

- What “graces” do you see in each of them?
- What have these gifts meant to the life of the congregation?
- How did you come to recognize these “graces?”

4. What factors might impede one in “equipping” or “preparing God’s people for works of service?”  
**Responses could include low congregational morale; not having a system in place to do so; bad experiences at previous attempts; fear that the pastor will lose some authority or power in the congregation (This can be a big one at times and the reason for some deep reluctance to “equip the saints.”); fuzzy congregational vision; or lack of mission focus.**
5. What have been some of your frustrations in equipping the saints for works of service?’
6. What have been some of your joys as you have equipped the saints for works of service?
7. What have you found to be most effective in equipping the saints for works of service?
8. There are district and synodical resources available in this vital area of equipping the people of God for works of service. There is general agreement that the mechanics of equipping the saints includes the following:
  - Discovering/Finding Out what graces reside in which people.
  - Connecting the gifts of God’s people to specific opportunities to serve.
  - Inviting/Enlisting/Recruiting/Motivating people to use their gifts in light of the church’s mission and the congregation’s vision.
  - Supporting/Providing resources necessary for the saints to do works of service.
  - Encouraging/Acknowledging/Thanking those who carry out works of service.

Is there anything you believe should be added to this list?

9. What do you believe the Lord is calling you to do in order to “prepare (equip) God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up?”
10. Close with prayer for one another. Share with one another whatever aspects of personal or pastoral life are most important at this time. Lift them to the Lord.  
**May this be a time of blessing, “consolation and conversation of the brethren,” and a “work of service” to others that the Body of Christ “may be built up” in love.**

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