



FAITHFUL & AFIRE

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

Participants Guide

Participant Guides

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Study Guide

Session 1 The Pastor as Preacher

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

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

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, 7)
- (Vs. 4)
- (Vs. 6)
- (Vs. 7)
- (Vs. 8)
- (Vss. 9-12)

2. 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 (Mark 1:38-39; 3:14; 1 Cor 1:17) – proclamation; heralding
- Euangelium (Acts 16:10; Rom 1:15) -- announcing Good News
- Homilia (Luke 24:14; Acts 20:11) – conversing
- Logos (1 Cor 1:18) – reasoning; persuading
- Didache (Mt 11:1, Acts 28:31, and Rom 2:21, 1 Tim 2:7) - teaching
- Lalia (Mark 2:2) – speaking; giving a speech

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 miracles, 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)
- Engaging the hearer's imagination through the use of visual metaphor or narrative
- Breaking open old truths from Scripture to extend or freshen their meaning and application
- Using hyperbole or humorous exaggerated imagery to make a point

Are there other characteristics of Jesus' teaching that transfer well to our preaching task?

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:

- (Vs. 23)
- (Vss. 16-21; 25-28; 34-35)
- (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 characterized with a variety of words, showing the multi-faceted nature of preaching. The words what he did in the synagogue include the following:

- i.
- ii.
- iii.
- iv.
- v.

- 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:

- i. (Vs. 22)
- ii. (Vss. 23-28)
- iii. (Vss. 23-24, 29-31)

- 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.

6. Paul's instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 is crucial for the preaching task. Note the following from this verse:

-
-

Words from the Wise

- The Lutheran Confessions on the real-time effects of law/Gospel 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, 16th Century English reformer and martyr, on the power of the Word to bind us and loose us with law and gospel:

“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. W. Walther on the importance of the preacher's own genuine experience of law and gospel:

“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)

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

PARTICIPANT'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.

A Case in Point

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

I. Leadership Credentials

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

A. 1 Timothy 3:1-7:

B. Titus 1:1-9:

II. The Servant Character of the Pastor as Leader:

In 1995, author Laurie Beth Jones wrote *Jesus, CEO*,⁴ 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

B. Philippians 2:1-11

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.”³

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...”⁴

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.”⁸ 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.”⁹ 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. CTCR document, *Theological Statement of Mission* (1990)

1. Mission: Broad
2. Mission: Narrow

B. The Missional Purpose of the Church

1. Pastors
2. Individual Saints

C. Matthew 28:18-20

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 as Good Shepherd
 - o John 10:3,14
 - o Luke 15:3-7

- John 10:11-13
- Mark 14:27-28/Zechariah 13:7
- 1 Peter 2:25

2. Pastors as shepherds

- Ephesians 4:11
- 1 Peter 5:1-11

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.¹³ 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.

- Mark 3:13-19
- 1 Corinthians 1:17
- Romans 10:16-17
- Matthew 28:20
- 1 Timothy 4:11
- Titus 2:1-2

2. The shepherd meets needs.

- Matthew 25:35, 43
- Acts 15:36
- James 1:27

3. The shepherd leads.

- Revelation 1-3

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 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. On efficient leadership via delegation

- Exodus 18:1-27
- Acts 6:1-7

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; 1 Peter 4:7-11.)

VI. Leadership Style

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

- Galatians 2:11-19: Dominant Style
- Acts 9:23-28: Influence Style
- Genesis 12:11ff and Genesis 16:1-6: Steadier Style
- Exodus 2:11-20: Conscientious Style

Words from the Wise on Leadership

- Martin Luther on the “high-view” scripture holds of the pastoral office:

“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), p. 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, p7.

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. Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus, CEO* (Laurie Beth Jones, 1995).
3. Bill Hybels and Rob Wilkins, *Descending into Greatness* (Zondervan, 1998).
4. J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Moody Press, 1967), 13.
5. John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Atlanta: Maxwell Motivation Inc., 1991), 33.
6. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Bondservant 1995), 81; 10).
7. Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (Harper-Collins, 2001).

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Session 3 Worship: Stewards of the Mysteries

STUDY 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)

- Luke 4:18-19 and Isaiah 61

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)

- Luke 4:33-37
- Luke 4:38-39
- Luke 5:17-26
- Luke 7:11-17
- Luke 8:40-56

- Luke 9:1-16
- Luke 10:1-20
- Luke 10:16)

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.

- Luke 9:10-17
- Luke 22:14-38
- 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

- Luke 24:25-27
- Luke 24:28-31
- Luke 24:35
- Acts 2:42:
 - “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];”

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.

- Luke 9:31).
- Rev 13:8
- Is 25:6).

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:

- Luke 24:44–49
- Luke 24:25–27
- Luke 22:30
- Matthew 16:19
- John 20:22–23
- Judges 2:10–23; the LXX uses the verb “to judge,” for their leadership [e.g., Judges 10:2–3]).
- 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.”¹
- 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. 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)

¹ Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 60, emphasis added.

“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 ‘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, in 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 might we help our congregations, in both our teaching about worship and our embodiment of that worship in our liturgical life, that there are 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 might we preach and teach about the person of Christ that will 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 that is central to our understanding of Christ and our role as stewards of mysteries? (see Paul in Galatians)
- 7) Defend the statement: "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."
- 8) Why is it important, as stewards of the mysteries, that pastors affirm that they stand in the stead and by the command of their Lord Jesus Christ, in fulfillment of Jesus' admonition, "He who hears you, hears me."
- 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, then, as stewards of the mysteries, at the same time, stewards of the new creation? What are the ramifications of this upon our understanding of the gifts we receive in the creation itself?
- 11) What are the pastoral responsibilities involved for pastors today with 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 (Luke 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 immortality?

Prayer resources²

"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,
 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

² Prayers are from *Minister's Prayer Book: An Order of Prayers and Readings* edited by J. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986) 127-145.

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
Study Guide

Session 4 Pastoral Integrity

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

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)
 - How did Eli mismanage the sins of his sons? (See vss. 24-26)
 - What would be the outcome of Eli's mismanagement of the priesthood and his family? (see 2:26-36 and 5:10-22)
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?
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?
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?
 - 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:
 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 most prevalent among pastors today?

Are any items missing from the list, in your opinion? What else threatens pastoral integrity today?

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

- Psalm 41:12
- Isaiah 6:1-8
- Acts 18:24-26
- Colossians 4:2-4
- 2 Timothy 2:22-26
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17
- Titus 2:11-14
- 3 John 1-8

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.¹

- 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.²

- 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.³

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

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

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

- o 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."⁴

Conversation (Groups of 3-4)

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?
2. Still with Pastor Dan: What underlying issues are likely even more important to address than the plagiarism?
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.
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.
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?
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?
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?
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?
9. Share ways by which you stay morally centered in pastoral ministry. Where and to whom do you turn for greater pastoral integrity?
10. Close with prayer in small groups for one another as individuals, tapping into comments made during the conversation.

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



FAITHFUL & AFIRE

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

Session 5 Confessing Pastors

PARTICIPANTS' 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 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

“You can’t let them do this to you!” she insisted. “Let them do what?” I asked. Two weeks before my ordination I had shared a draft of my ordination vows with my mother-in-law.¹ At the time she thought the LC-MS was way too conservative, and so she responded, “These promises are far too restrictive. Why are ‘they’ making you do this?”

“No one is ‘making me’ take this vow,” I said, “but this is a promise I am making freely and willingly.” I was pointing to the words by which I would assure the congregation calling me that all my preaching and teaching would conform to Scripture and our Lutheran confessions because Scripture is the Word of God and the confessions are a correct exposition of Scripture. “Well, then, why do you want to limit yourself so much? Isn’t there more of God than what you find in the Bible? What if you find something new?” she asked me. “Yes, I am limiting myself freely and willingly, both because I believe this is the truth and for the sake of the people I will serve. I am convinced the Bible is the Word of God and that Jesus is the only way to life,” I explained, “and our Lutheran confessions help me keep the Gospel of Jesus at the center of my ministry. Everything I say and do as a pastor needs to point people to Jesus Christ, crucified and raised from the dead. We are saved by God’s grace alone, for the sake of Christ alone, and we receive it through faith alone.”

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.

¹ This is a summary of an actual conversation that took place between my mother-in-law, now deceased, and myself about two weeks before my ordination in 1979. See also the quote below from Eugene Peterson, [Working the Angles](#), regarding the ordination vow.

Getting the Conversation Going

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? How would you 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

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

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.)

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?

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”?

What is the purpose of “sound teaching” anyway?

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.
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?

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

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

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

The Purpose of the Lutheran Confessions

“We don’t want Lutheran theology. We want Biblical theology!” one of the regular Bible class members insisted. The pastor leading the class was new to his parish, having just accepted the call a few months before.² He had been aware that the congregation needed to be drawn toward a greater understanding of our confession and practice. In fact, this was one of the reasons he accepted the call – precisely because of this challenge.

Now the new pastor was teaching the Sunday morning class on the Book of Revelation because that’s what the class had asked for several weeks before. It was an enjoyable class with lots of

² This story is also a summary of an actual conversation that took place in the Bible Class of one of the parishes served by the author.

give and take. Pastor thought this group of members was beginning to develop a level of personal trust, but there still seemed to be something of a “disconnect” at times. He had just explained how in Lutheran theology we understand the Book of Revelation to include the whole time between Pentecost and the Second Coming of Christ.

“Pastor, we don’t want Lutheran theology. We want Biblical theology!” she said. “There’s the reason we sometimes have a hard time understanding one another,” thought the pastor. And so he responded, “For me, Lutheran theology and Biblical theology are one and the same. In fact, my commitment to our Lutheran confessions means that everything I believe and teach must be drawn from the Bible. Our Lutheran theology helps me preach and teach the Bible faithfully.”

“I’m a passionate Lutheran,” the pastor continued, “not by accident but by conviction, because Lutheran theology does the best job of keeping the Gospel central. The purpose of Lutheran teaching is always to point to Jesus, crucified and risen for us. Every article of Lutheran doctrine drawn from the Bible is designed to give the maximum comfort to the penitent sinner.”

Once they finished Revelation, this new pastor spent nearly two years with his Sunday morning class discussing “Distinctive Features of Lutheranism.” One week the people would pick the topic. When they were finished (often it was a question of life and sanctification), the pastor would pick a topic. Over the course of a couple of years, he worked through the articles of the Augsburg Confession one by one, seeking to illustrate how each article of Lutheran doctrine brings the greatest possible comfort to penitent sinners.

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.

The Trinity

We confess one God in three persons, not only to be faithful to the Biblical revelation but also to comfort one another with the promise that this one God created us, redeemed us and now by His Word dwells within us so that we might believe. It’s all His, the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for us. In a world of uncertainty, nothing is more sure than the name of the Blessed Trinity, the only name that saves. What is even more comforting, He puts this name on US in our Baptism!

Original Sin

If the problem we face with sin and death is something small and we only need a little help to overcome it ourselves, then our Savior is also quite small. But that’s not how we experience life! None of us can stop sinning. None of us can decide not to die! That’s because we are conceived and born in sin and cannot free ourselves. We need a Savior who has taken all our sins and conquered death for us! “Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Paul writes (Romans 7:24-25).

The Person of Christ

Jesus Christ unites in one person everything it takes to be God plus everything it takes to be human. This is the confession of the Church since the earliest days (see Colossians 2:9). At one and the same time fully God and fully human, in His death and resurrection Christ has done all for our salvation. It’s all His work, not ours. If in our teaching we “fudge” on the personal union of the divine and human natures in Christ, we lose the comfort. A less than divine Jesus cannot save. A less than human Christ cannot take our place in death. In Jesus, God Himself takes on flesh (John 1:14) to die and rise so that we might be His forever.

Justification

What could be more comforting than justification, the “article by which the Church stands or falls”? There is no better way to say it than: “... we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ’s sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are

given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight..."³ Therefore, we always seek to proclaim a clear message of Law and Gospel, so that sinners are convicted by the Law and take comfort only in Christ and His work for us.

The Means of Grace and the Ministry

The Holy Spirit does not jump on us in a dark alley somewhere, but comes through means. So that we might have this faith that justifies, God instituted the preaching office to bring the Word and Sacrament to people. We don't have to wonder where to find the grace of God. It's here in the Word and Sacrament. These not only remind us of Jesus, by the Spirit's power they convey Jesus to us. There is no wordless Spirit and no spiritless Word of God. And the Word of God directs sinners to look, not to themselves, but to Christ alone for life.

The New Obedience

We are not saved by our good works. We are saved by the good works of Christ for us, received through faith in Him. But this faith, if it is alive, is always working, always doing things to serve God and the neighbor. Of course, God never needs our good works, but our neighbor always does. Whatever is done in faith is a good work. Though always tainted by sin here in this life, God sees us through the cross of Jesus. God sees that we are justified in Christ.

The Church

The holy Christian Church is found wherever there are believers in Christ. What is necessary for the true unity of the Church is not the right structure, not the Pope in Rome, but the Gospel purely taught and the Sacraments rightly done. This is a great comfort to the person distressed by all the mistakes and sins of churches and church leaders. It is the Word of Christ that saves, not the character of the preacher. The Gospel and the Sacraments gather the Church – all the more reason to be sure we hold to and proclaim the pure Gospel!

Baptism

God works in Baptism to bring the person (even an infant!) into His grace and unites the one baptized with the death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:1ff). There is no clearer illustration of salvation by grace alone than infant Baptism. Were you baptized? Then you can always claim the promises of God and know they apply to you! This is not license to sin but freedom to live each day for Christ, daily repenting of sin and daily rising to new life in Christ.

Confession and Absolution (and Repentance)

Our churches retain Confession and Absolution for the sake of the Absolution (both public and private), which is Christ Himself speaking through His called pastors to proclaim individually and personally the forgiveness of sins. Like all of the promises, this blessing also is received through faith. Regarding repentance, we say, "... true repentance is nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror about sin, and yet at the same time to believe in the gospel and absolution that sin is forgiven and grace is obtained through Christ. Such faith, in turn, comforts the heart and puts it at peace."⁴ Every Christian is called to speak the same forgiveness within the vocations to which God has called him (e.g. fathers and mothers to their children, teachers for their students, employers and employees, etc.)

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is the true Body and Blood of Christ given in, with and under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins. The Body and Blood are given because Jesus promised to give them and are received by all who eat and drink. It is not our faith that makes Christ's Body and Blood present in the bread and wine, but the Word and promise of Christ. Those who receive them in faith receive the blessings offered. Those who receive the Body and Blood apart from faith receive judgment, hence our careful practice of the Supper (see 1 Corinthians 11:17ff).

³ Augsburg Confession IV, The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000), p. 38ff.

⁴ Augsburg Confession XII, Book of Concord, Kolb/Wengert, p. 44.

The Use of the Sacraments

Some teach that the Sacraments bring benefit whether or not you believe the promise. Others teach that the Sacraments are simply ordinances we are commanded to follow in order to do the will of God. However, we teach that the Sacraments are gifts of God's grace, that God is at work through them to bring the blessings of life and salvation and the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, the proper use of the Sacraments is to receive them in faith, trusting the promise of Christ to raise us to life and to feed us with His Body and Blood. What could be more comforting than this?

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

Further Reflections

Law and Gospel. Maximum comfort in Christ crucified for the penitent sinner – that's what our confession is all about. No more, no less. We are not just concerned for "getting it right" but we want our people to be comforted in Christ.

This is the heart and core of our confession! What we just did with the first 13 articles of the Augsburg Confession, you can also do with the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord as well. Read them again with an eye toward answering this question: How will this help me bring the greatest possible Gospel comfort to the penitent sinners in my congregation?

What is more, this is not something to keep to ourselves, but **is meant to be broadcast**, to be confessed before the world. So to those who are interested in outreach, we say, that's good! It is our Lord's command to take the Gospel to all creation. Now please be sure of what you are proclaiming by living faithfully in your confession. And to those who claim to be "confessional," we say, that's good! "You shall know the truth," Jesus said, "and the truth shall set you free." (John 8:32). Now don't keep that to yourself, but get out there in the world and confess this truth for as many as will hear you!

The world is full of people (so is your community!) who need to hear the Law of God which convicts of sin and then need to hear over and over again the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins in Christ, the same Gospel that is explained from so many different directions in our confession.

One hot summer day years ago brought for me the 4th funeral in the space of a week. I was tired of death and tired of dealing with death. It hit me again as I looked into the anxious faces of the mourners around the grave: they don't care what YOU think, Mr. Pastor. They want to hear what God is thinking. Your opinion counts for absolutely nothing right about now. But this is what counts – God's Word – and through my tears I began to read Jesus' promise, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." (John 11:25-26).

This is what it comes to. We confess the truth of God in Jesus because, in the end, we live by that truth alone. Jesus alone gives life – also to pastors! Jesus alone carries us through death to a glorious resurrection to eternal life.

The Scriptures Speak Again

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 –

Verse 9 –

Verse 10 (especially appropriate as we confess the resurrection by the grave side) –

Verse 11 –

Verse 12 –

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

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

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?

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

How is this done in your ministry?

How do our confessions help you in this regard?

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?

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?⁵

5. Our confession is not 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?

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

⁵ Unfair question! Wouldn't he be equally angry at both?

heart Paul's charge: "As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (4:5).

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

- 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.⁶

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

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.⁷

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

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

⁶Smalcald Articles III.4, Book of Concord, Kolb/Wengert, p. 319.

⁷Apology IV.53ff, Book of Concord, Kolb/Wengert, p. 128f.

*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.*⁸

- This is our church's confession. It shows us how to read Scripture and it identifies what we believe about Scripture. Its 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."⁹ The Leaders' Guide includes another reference explaining the role of the Augsburg Confession.
- C.F.W. Walther insists on a quia subscription to the confessions because any other approach will rob the church of its symbolical books:

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."¹⁰

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."¹¹

- 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 (a more complete version of this quote is found in the Leaders Guide):

... "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

⁸Tappert, 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.

⁹Tappert, pp. 503f.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Walther, On the Primary Duties, p. 18.

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.¹²

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)

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?

¹² Eugene H. Peterson, Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 23-25.

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?
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.
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?¹³
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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¹³ 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

Participant'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.

A Fundamental Point (Before the Case in Point)

“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

1. How does this passage from Luther help us understand the particular vulnerabilities of a pastor related especially to his devotional and spiritual life?
2. How does this passage from Luther help us understand the our own personal, particular vulnerabilities as we consider our own devotional and spiritual life?
3. 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?

A Case in Point

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

1. What might have happened or be happening in the lives of Susan and George that developed this trajectory in their spiritual lives?
2. 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?
3. If George and Susan came to you for pastoral care, what might you say to them? What might you encourage them to do?

The Scriptures Speak

1. 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?
 - What helps are necessary for the pursuit of "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness"?
 - 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?

2. 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?
 - 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?
3. 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?
 - How can bringing people together in spiritual care and community devotion aid the pastor's devotional and spiritual life?
 - How does the community develop both support and accountability?
 - 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?
 4. 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.
 - What interferes with your praise of God in Christ? Be specific.
 - What strategies can you develop to work through the interferences?
 - 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?

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 spent 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 clergyperson'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?
- 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?
- 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?

All conversations in the Body of Christ are to be bathed in prayer. Allow plenty of time for such opportunities.

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FAITHFUL & AFIRE

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

Session 7 Balancing Family & Ministry

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.

A Case in Point

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,” 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

1. 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 think are particularly important in maintaining balance between family and ministry.
 - v 1: *kalos*, good, valuable
 - v 2: *anepileptos*
 - *sophron*
 - *kosmio*
 - *philoxenos*
 - *didaktikos*
 - v 3: *epieikes*
 - *plektes*
 - *aphilarguros*
 - v 4: *tekna . . . en hypotage*
 - v 7: *kalov marturia*
 - *pagis diabolos*
2. 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
 - Ex 16:4; 11-12, 17: 5-6
 - Ex 17:9-10
 - Ex 17:15
3. Take turns reading verses from Exodus 18:13-27.
 - v 13, 15-16: What was Moses doing? *shaphat*
 - v 17: What was good and what was *not* so good about Moses' strategies?
 - v18: In addition to wearing himself out, who will also wear out.
 - v19: *kabed*, too heavy, How could this "too heavy" be both 'good' and 'bad'?
 - What responsibilities does Paul suggest to those entrusted as God's servants, in his farewell to the Ephesian elders, Acts 20:28? *episkopos*,
 - What alternate strategy did Jethro suggest to Moses? v 19
 - Before selecting capable men, v 21, what was Moses to do? v20
 - v 24: What might have happened had Moses chosen not to follow his father-in-law's advice?
 - vss 25-26: Compare the structure of your current ministry setting to Moses' "church."
4. Read 1 Corinthians 9:22. What do you think Paul meant?
 - What is realistic about Paul's goal? He wants people to be saved.
 - What is unrealistic about his goal?
 - Survey the context to better understand v 22.
 - v 1: Paul had *seen* the Lord.
 - v 1: The faith of his readers is a direct *result* of Paul's ministry.
 - v 3: *anakrino*, judgment, question, discernment
 - vv 4-14: Pastors are sometimes compared as having more or less physical things than others in the church, including money/salary.
 - v 23: What does it mean for you to do something "for the sake of the Gospel?" *poieo dia to euaggelion*
 - vv 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?

- How is Paul's strategy "*to be all things to all people*" realistic and healthy?
- How is Paul's strategy unrealistic and unhealthy?
- "God gave Adam a wife, not a congregation!" What does this mean to you? With what safeguards can you surround yourself to prevent v 22 from becoming your motto?

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

- What does the word Sabbath mean to you? *Shabbath*
- How and when do you observe Sabbath?
- 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.

6. Study some other verses where the word "*Sabbath*," occurs, and note additional meanings:

- Exodus 16:23
- Exodus 16:25-26
- Exodus 20:9
- Exodus 20:10
- Exodus 31:16
- Lev 16:31
- Numbers 28:9
- Matthew 12:1-8
- Matthew 12:12
- John 5:10
- Acts 1:12
- Acts 13:27
- Hebrews 4:9

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.

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?

"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.

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.

Conversation

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

Study 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

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?
2. How do you think each of these pastors, in general, viewed the members of their congregations?
3. What do you think these brothers were wanting from one another? Did they get it?

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.
 - Broadly speaking, what does Paul want his readers to understand?
 - Why does Paul stress the unity of the Body of Christ before he talks about what the Body of Christ is to do?
 - What are some implications if one really believes what Paul says in verse 7?
 - To what degree does a pastor have a responsibility for seeing that members discover and utilize their God-given gifts?
 - What are some ways you can help people discover and express the “grace” they have been given, “as Christ apportioned it.?”
 - Take three minutes to list as many works of service as you can.
 - What is the relationship between works of service and building up the Body of Christ?
 - What would you see as evidence that the Body of Christ is being built up?
2. How do the following passages speak to the Lord’s words in Ephesians 4:11-13?
 - Ephesians 2:8-10
 - 1 Peter 2:9-10
 - John 15:5
 - 2 Timothy 3:17
 - Hebrews 13:20-21
3. Read Ephesians 4:14-16
 - What happens as God’s people carry out works of service?
4. What do the following passages say about how Jesus equipped his disciples?
 - Matthew 4:19
 - Matthew 5:2
 - Matthew 6:9a
 - Matthew 10:5-9
 - Matthew 28:18-20
 - Mark 10:32-35
 - Luke 24:49
 - John 17:13-19
 - John 21:15-17

Are there other ways in which Jesus equipped his disciples? If so, name some. What guidance can you receive from these descriptions of ways Jesus equipped His disciples?

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 12th Sunday after Trinity, 1842, Published in Festklänge, CPH, 1892. Translated by Bruce Cameron, July, 1993.)

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.)

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.)

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 150th Anniversary Theological Convocation of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*. St. Louis: CPH, 1998, p.242-243.)

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

(In Luecke, D., *Apostolic Style and Lutheran Substance*, Lima, Ohio: Fairway Press, 1999, p9. 114-115.)

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.
 - o What “graces” do you see in each of them?
 - o What have these gifts meant to the life of the congregation?
 - o 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?”
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:
 - o Discovering/Finding Out what graces reside in which people.
 - o Connecting the gifts of God’s people to specific opportunities to serve.
 - o Inviting/Enlisting/Recruiting/Motivating people to use their gifts in light of the church’s mission and the congregation’s vision.
 - o Supporting/Providing resources necessary for the saints to do works of service.
 - o 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.

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Spring, 2007

Brothers in Christ:

This Bible study concludes Year 1 of “Faithful and Afire” Bible studies for LCMS circuits. We have heard that some studies have been too long and that we have had a few copy editing issues. We apologize for both these shortcomings during this first year. We preachers often wear the descriptors, “long-winded” and “grammatically challenged.” We hope to bring on a copy editor next year who qualifies as an editorial Pharisee.

We’d like to hear more from you as we seek to serve your needs for Bible studies focused on our pastoral ministry. Feel free to email us at nadasdyd@woodburylutheran.org with your responses to these questions:

1. “Here We Stand” has been suggested as next year’s topic, focusing on what unites us as LCMS pastors and what challenges our unity. Ideas for topics? Let us know.
2. Anything you especially like about the series and hope we maintain?
3. Anything you hope we change?
4. Any folks you’d especially like to see write for next year’s Bible study series? This year’s writers were Art Just, Luke Biggs, Bruce Frederickson, Bruce Hartung, Art Just, Bill Knippa, Herb Mueller, and Dean Nadasdy. Send in a name or two. On our writers team, we look for a balance of parish pastors, seminary professors, and district/synodical leaders.

Thanks for your participation, and thanks to the LCMS districts contributing \$200 per district for this series.

FAITHFUL & AFIRE Editorial Team