

What Lutherans Believe

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

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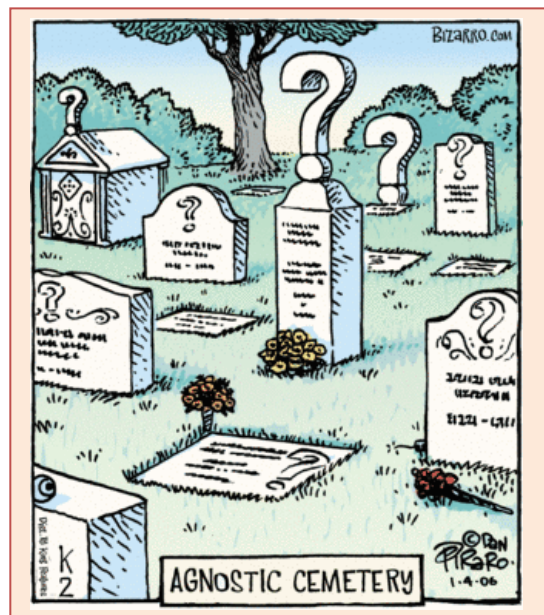
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The Fundamentals - LEADER'S GUIDE

Introduction:

(Who am I? Who are you? Why are we here?!)

1. Which elements of Lutheran church practice, teaching, or doctrine are of the most concern to you?
2. Are any of these controversial in our society? In our church?
3. Which are the most opaque, or difficult to understand?
4. Are there any that are difficult to accept?



Foundational Principles for this Bible Study

- Inspiration. The Bible is "God breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). Although Genesis is the first "Book of Moses", God is the author. It's easy to think "The Old Testament contains law, the New Testament contains gospel," but in fact we find both of these two great doctrines (law and gospel) throughout the Bible.
- Purpose. The main purpose of the Bible is to make us "...wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). When we read the Bible with that in mind, we read it not only to learn history and hear about interesting people; we read the Old Testament in anticipation of the Messiah, and the New Testament as the singular revelation of Jesus Christ as our Messiah, Savior, and Lord.
- Method. Sections and even entire books of the Bible have been interpreted and re-interpreted numerous ways by different Christians and churches for many years, but perhaps never so much as in the last century or so. In this study we will interpret what we read using the "historical/grammatical" method. That means that we accept the accounts in the Biblical text to be actual historical events unless there is something in the grammar or the words themselves that indicate they are to be taken differently. God used, and uses, real events, real human beings, and real human languages to communicate eternal truths to us.
- Context. When we read the Bible we pay attention to the context of the passage. While there are many verses in the Bible that stand alone and don't require context to be clearly understood, *there is never a downside* to reading the entire paragraph, chapter, book, and even other Biblical books to inform our understanding.
- "Sola Scriptura" all the way. Related to paying attention to context, because God is the Author of the entire Bible, and because God never intends to confuse us (1 Corinthians 14:33), we always seek to "let Scripture interpret Scripture." God often addresses the same matter in two or more places in Scripture. Very often one passage can help us understand another passage. So we seek to always let the clear passages help us interpret the obscure ones, not the other way around.

Today's Topics: *(The Fundamentals of Lutheran existence)*

1. Who is God?

2. What is a Christian?

3. What is the Church?

1. The Two “Great Doctrines” of the Bible **(Per M.Luther, see Appendix A):**

a. Law: “Do this, avoid that, this is what I expect of you.”

b. Gospel: “This is what God has done for you; he has let his Son be made flesh for you, has let him be put to death for your sake.”

Have the class read the bible passages first, then answer!

2. Justification: Being declared just or righteous. “Our sins have been imputed or charged to Christ, the Savior, and Christ’s righteousness has been imputed or credited to us” (SC: Apostles’ Creed, 3rd Article)

Romans 3:21-26, John 3:16, I John 2:2, I Peter 2:24, II Corinthians 5:17-19

3. Sanctification: Living out our justification! The Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith” (SC: Apostles’ Creed, 3rd Article). In sanctification, God sets us apart and cleanses us so that we can live in the new life that is given to us as Christians.

I Corinthians 6:9-11, I Thessalonians 5:23, II Corinthians 7:1, Romans 12:1-2

What Lutherans Believe about God (Koehler¹, Chapters VII – IX)

One True God: Exodus 20:3, Isaiah 45:5, 1 Corinthians 8:4

Immutable: Malachi 3:6, James 1:17

Infinite: 1 Kings 8:27

Eternal: Psalm 90:2, 2 Peter 3:8

Omniscient: Proverbs 15:3, 1 John 3:20

Wise: Romans 11:33, Job 12:13

Omnipotent: Psalm 33:9, Psalm 115:3, Luke 1:37

God is a Trinity of Persons:

- Genesis 1:26, Isaiah 48:16
- John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6
- 1 John 5:20, John 15:26
- Acts 5:3-4

Creation and Providence (Koehler, Chapters X – XI)

Creator: Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 11:3, Colossians 1:17

Creation: Genesis 1:31, Psalm 104:24, Revelation 4:11

Preserves His Creation: Colossians 1:16-17, Acts 17:27-28

Does not provoke evil in man: Matthew 12:36, Romans 2:14-15

Has dominion over all: Matthew 5:45

Uses evil to accomplish good: Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28

¹ Koehler, Edward W. A, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, Concordia Publishing House, 1971

For Next Week: The "Alones"

Read the following to prepare (if you have other favorites, bring them!)

1. Faith: Romans 1:16-17, Galatians 3:1-14, John 6:28-29, Hebrews 1:1
2. Grace: Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 5:15-17
3. Scripture: Acts 17:11, II Timothy 3:15-17, I Timothy 6:3-4, Romans 3:21-26

Appendix A (Leader's Guide only!)

From Luther's sermon on "the two sermons" of scripture re: Law & Gospel, 1525:

Now the first sermon, and doctrine, is the law of God. The second is the gospel. These two sermons are not the same. Therefore we must have a good grasp of the matter in order to know how to differentiate between them. We must know what the law is, and what the gospel is. The law commands and requires us to do certain things. The law is thus directed solely to our behavior and consists in making requirements. For God speaks through the law, saying, "Do this, avoid that, this is what I expect of you." The gospel, however, does not preach what we are to do or to avoid. It sets up no requirements but reverses the approach of the law, does the very opposite, and says, "This is what God has done for you; he has let his Son be made flesh for you, has let him be put to death for your sake." So, then, there are two kinds of doctrine and two kinds of works, those of God and those of men. Just as we and God are separated from one another, so also these two doctrines are widely separated from one another. For the gospel teaches exclusively what has been given us by God, and not—as in the case of the law—what we are to do and give to God.

Appendix B: Bible Passages

Justification:

Romans 3:21-26

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

John 3:16

16 “For God so loved the world,[a] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

1 John 2:2

2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 Peter 2:24

24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.[a] The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling[b] the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Sanctification:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous^[a] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^[b] ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 7:1

⁷ Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body^[a] and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Romans 12:1-2

¹² I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.^[b] ² Do not be conformed to this world,^[c] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.^[d]