

READ THE BIBLE DAILY

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is the book of our faith. It is story of God and God's relationship with Creation, including all of humanity. In reality, the Bible is not one book but a collection of books each with its own value and significance in adding to the overall story of God. As followers of Jesus and through the power and working of the Holy Spirit, we too are part of that story. The story of God in the Bible is our story and we are part of that story.

The Bible helps us understand our relationship with God and how God wants us to live. As one young child, seeing a grandparent reading the Bible, observed, the Bible means "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth"! That sums it up pretty well!

Disciples "read" the Bible Daily as a faith practice to help us grow more and more into the image of Jesus (see Eph. 4:11-13). Now, there are various ways to "read" the Bible: we can have a regular devotion time where we read the Bible along with other devotional material; we might get the Bible on CD and listen to it while driving, walking or exercising; or, we might take the readings for the next Sunday and spend the week reflecting on them. However we do that "reading," it is important for our faith walk to include the habit of attending to the Word of God each and every day.

In this booklet you will find a collection of suggested Scripture readings regarding Reading the Bible, which is followed by an article on the Bible. We then offer a piece on making Bible reading a priority for our congregation. Finally, we provide a listed some websites that you may visit to provide further assistance in helping you and/or your family in find beneficial and new ways to engage the Word of God as written in the Holy Scriptures.

For further assistance or additional information contact the church office or one of the pastors. Also, if you have other suggestions for how TLC disciples might "Read the Bible," please feel free to share that as well.

God bless and guide you as you seek ways by which you might learn to read the Bible daily as a follower of Jesus, for in reading the Bible we discover a powerful and personal connection with God through Christ Jesus our Lord!

Your fellow disciples in Christ,
Pastor Ron Miller
Pastor Mike Price

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READINGS

Ephesians 4:11-16 - The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and some teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

2 Corinthians 13:5 - Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves...

Matthew 28:19-20 - Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

Hebrews 5:11-6:1,11-12 - About this we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us grow on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ....And we want each one of you to show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope to the very end. So that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

2 Timothy 3:16,17 - All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

Romans 15:4 - For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of scriptures we might have hope.

Colossians 2:6-7 – As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” —

Romans 12:1-2 – I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing

of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 – According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.”

1 Corinthians 3:6-9 – I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.

Ephesians 4:13b (LB) – You are living a brand new kind of life that is continually learning more and more of what is right, and trying constantly to be more and more like Christ.

Philippians 1:9-11 – And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Colossians 1:28-29 – It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me.” -

Galatians 4:19 – My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...”

The Bible

The Bible as encounter with the living Word

Lutherans believe that the Bible is the most important of all the ways God’s person and presence are revealed to humanity. That is because it is in reading the biblical books that we most reliably hear and encounter the living Word of God, who is the risen Jesus.

The Bible’s very name begins to tell us what we have between its covers. In Greek "the Bible" literally means "the books." The Bible that Lutherans use is a collection of 66

books produced over a period of as much as 1,000 years. Each of these books had a life and use of its own prior to its incorporation into what we know as the "sacred canon."

The Bible contains the story of God's interaction with humankind, first through the understanding of the Jewish people (Old Testament, 39 books), and subsequently to all people through God's self revelation in Jesus (New Testament, 27 books).

Lutherans believe that people meet God in Scripture, where God's heart, mind, relationship to - and intention for - humankind are revealed. Through an ongoing dialogue with the God revealed in the Bible, people in every age are called to a living faith.

The Bible's authority rests in God

ELCA Lutherans confidently proclaim with all Christians that the authority of the Bible rests in God. We believe that God inspired the Bible's many writers, editors and compilers. As they heard God speaking and discerned God's activity in events around them in their own times and places, the Bible's content took shape. Among other things, the literature they produced includes history, legal code, parables, letters of instruction, persuasion and encouragement, tales of heroism, love poetry and hymns of praise. The varying types and styles of literature found here all testify to faith in a God who acts by personally engaging men and women in human history.

At the same time, we also find in the Bible human emotion, testimony, opinion, cultural limitation and bias. ELCA Lutherans recognize that human testimony and writing are related to and often limited by culture, customs and world view. Today we know that the earth is not flat and that rabbits do not chew their cud (Leviticus 11:6). These are examples of time-bound cultural understandings or practices. Christians do not follow biblically prescribed dietary laws such as eliminating pork from one's diet (Leviticus 11:7) because the new covenant we have with God has replaced the Old Testament covenant God had with his people. Because Biblical writers, editors and compilers were limited by their times and world views, even as we are, the Bible contains material wedded to those times and places. It also means that writers sometimes provide differing and even contradictory views of God's word, ways and will.

Listening to the living Jesus in the context of the church, we therefore have the task of deciding among these. Having done this listening, we sometimes conclude either that the writer's culture or personal experience (e.g., subordination of women or keeping of slaves) seems to have prompted his missing what God was saying or doing, or that God now is saying or doing something new.

The Bible's authority is interpreted through Jesus

By no means does that human presence in sacred Scripture detract from the Bible's testimony to God. Rather, this human testimony provides layers of faith and insight by those who contributed to the canon. The Bible's reliability lies not in reading it as science or proscription, but as humankind's chief witness to God, reflecting on faith as it is to be lived. Again, ELCA Lutherans judge all Scripture through the window of God's chief act

— that of entering human flesh in Jesus of Nazareth — and they interpret Scripture by listening to the living Jesus in the context of the Church. Because Jesus' person, life and witness become the lens through which we read and interpret all Scripture, we can judge slavery as "not of Jesus," yet understand the customs of the time and read Paul's inspiring letter to Philemon, master of the slave Onesimus, as testimony to faith.

On several occasions, Martin Luther suggested that not all books of the Bible have the same value for faith formation. Similarly, as in all of life, ELCA Lutherans ask, "Is what we find here consistent with God's revelation in Jesus?" This is a central question/prescription that provides guidance for acting as moral beings and for calling humankind to justice; it also becomes the authority for our reading Scripture, for it is the Jesus of Scripture, the living Word, who reveals God and judges Scripture, just as he is the judge for all else in life. Therefore, it is a question that ELCA Lutherans find best answered within the life of the Church in community, for this risen Jesus is Lord of the Church.

Biblical interpretation as scholarly endeavor

ELCA Lutherans understand that the Bible contains various kinds of testimony to God's purpose for humanity. Included in its literary forms are history, story, parable, legal codes, hymns, inspirational and instructive letters, and personal faith testimony.

Some ancient Biblical content precedes the written word and was passed orally from generation to generation. Thereafter, early manuscripts were written fully or in part in a number of languages, principally Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. In order to duplicate and disseminate these manuscripts before the invention of the printing press texts were hand copied. While they are remarkable in their agreement and accuracy, sometimes - though mostly in minor matters — because of a copyist's writing, mistakes or incorporation of margin notes, these texts do not agree among themselves.

Manuscript variances raise questions among scholars concerning the original text's intent or meaning. For instance, did God use ravens or Arabs to feed Elijah in the wilderness (1 Kings 17:6)? The two words share the same Hebrew characters, and since the passage predates the use of vowels in the Hebrew language, manuscript translations vary according to which vowels were assigned later by the scribe-copyists.

It may be helpful here to distinguish studying Biblical texts from mining the Bible for devotional material. ELCA Lutherans honor and employ both approaches in faith formation. The distinctions are not clear cut, for elements of each are found in both approaches. Yet some Biblical material particularly lends itself to meditation or reflection on the will of God for faithful living (e.g. Hebrews 11 on examples of faith).

The Harper Collins Study Bible, NRSV (includes introductions and annotations by members of the Society of Biblical Literature)
The New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV

A CONGREGATIONAL PRIORITY

Make Daily Bible Reading a Priority in Your Congregation's Life

- Identify a Bible Verse of the Week for all members of the congregation to memorize.
- 2008-2009 is the year of the Gospel of Mark in the lectionary. Read/study this Gospel during the 2008-2009 Sunday school year. Ask members to sign a poster when they are finished. Hang the poster in a prominent place.
- Be in touch with the college students of your congregation and invite them to study with you via e-mail or instant messaging.
- Invite members to set aside a place in their homes to read the Bible. It can be as simple as a table with a candle, the Bible, a notebook and pen for writing thoughts, a good light and a favorite chair. Encourage them to develop a consistent time to read together.
- Ask congregational youth to meet for lunch after worship to discuss the Gospel lesson and sermon.
- Emphasize the importance of life-long learning through temple talks, newsletter articles, or a feature on your Web page.
- Sponsor a Bible Quiz night. Form teams of Sunday school classes, women's or men's groups, and committees to compete against each other.
- If your congregation has a school or early childhood learning center, ask the students to draw pictures of their favorite Bible stories. Hang them in the narthex or in the halls or use them as bulletin covers.

[Adapted from *Fanning the Flames of Discipleship: ELCA Christian Education Planning Guide 2001-2002.*]

BIBLE-BASED DEVOTIONS FOR PERSONAL AND FAMILY STUDY

Daily Devotions

- [Prayer Ventures](#) – Daily prayers for ELCA ministries
- [Daily devotions](#) by the Rev. Kerry Nelson – Covenant Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas
- [Daily Prayer in the Anglican tradition](#) – Published online daily since 1993
- [Moravian Daily Texts](#) – First published by Moravians in 1731 in Saxony, Germany

Family Resources

- [Tips for Reading the Bible Together at Home](#)

Weekly Devotions

- For Youth (13-18)
 - [Faith Lens](#) – A weekly Bible study/discussion for youth linking a current news story and Scripture texts
 - Lutheran Youth Organization [invitation to pray](#) at 4:24 on Wednesdays
 - *See also* [Young People and the Bible](#)
- For small groups
 - [Daily Discipleship](#) – A weekly lectionary Bible study based on the Gospel lesson used at Sunday worship, produced by ELCA Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission.
 - *See also* [Study the Bible with Others](#)
- For Women
 - [Monday Prayer at Noon](#) – Prayers compiled weekly by Women of the ELCA
 - "The Hidden Hand of God" -- 2008-2009 Bible Study in *Lutheran Woman Today*
- For Educators
 - [Weekly devotions for educators](#) – Produced annually by ELCA Vocation and Education