

**Bible Study:
Nurturing a Passion for Christ,
& a Passion for Sharing the Good News**

Bible Study for all, using Lutheran approaches, **is the goal of the Book of Faith Initiative. Reading and listening to what God is telling us through scripture is crucial for faith growth.** Because of this central and indispensable role understanding scripture plays, Bible study is encouraged in the Lutheran church. But to rightly understand what the Bible says to us, certain underlying beliefs about the Bible, its context & language, Christ, salvation, and the church must be considered. The content in the basic *Book of Faith* course presents this material, as well as key Lutheran thoughts and methods regarding how to study Bible passages.

Bible study equips us, enlightening and educating us, as members of God's family to: trust in God's grace alone for our salvation, strive to build our lives on the ethical framework of Christ, and to clearly and compassionately proclaim God's message of grace, love, hope, and salvation to others.

A congregation, especially those who have a large membership, may have individuals that come from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. Therefore, different approaches may be needed to teach the Bible to different groups within a congregation.

The Lutheran Study Bible can be used to guide Bible study of a particular portion of the scripture. The Lutheran Study Bible is a New Revised Standard Version translation which has maps, Bible timelines, background on each book of the Bible, concordance, and comments regarding meaning of certain Bible verses and also comments on Lutheran understanding of some Bible verses. This Bible also contains content from the Book of Faith book on Lutheran approaches to the Bible, a Bible reading plan, and material regarding Martin Luther. At Calvary Lutheran Church in Rapid City, The Lutheran Study Bible has been used as the main resource for a study of the book of Galatians and is currently being used to study Daniel. At Calvary, the Book of Faith curriculum was presented the previous year.

Galatians Bible Study at Calvary Lutheran Church in Rapid City

- ~ Galatians was chosen as the first book of the Bible to study. This book's focus on God's grace is a message fundamental to Lutheran faith.
- ~ People were asked to sign up for the study during the proceeding month. This fostered a commitment to attend and also helped in copying and ordering materials, etc.
- ~ For learner convenience (and for higher visibility so people would remember a Bible study was available), class was held in the sanctuary directly following the lively Wednesday evening worship service.

- ~ A 35 minute time frame was set to facilitate attendance by those with limited time, some with the need to pick up children after confirmation classes, or a need to not be away from home late.
- ~ To generate greater interest in Bible study, a *Faith Comes By Hearing* Bible **audio stick** was given to each participant. These sticks were ordered from: Hosanna, 2421 Aztec Road NE, Albuquerque, NM 87107-4224. (www.faithcomesbyhearing.com).
- ~ Learning sessions began with a general question regarding life and/or faith asked by the leader, Pastor Dwight Stensgaard. Participants shared their thoughts on the question with those sitting around them. Several participants then shared responses with the entire group. This time served to get to know others in the group. Group size varied between a dozen to over 30. Candy was sometimes shared with the group, too. A sense of community in the group was established with the above methods.
- ~ The *Lutheran Study Bible* was utilized as ‘the text’. This Bible study was given in the presentation format, with Pastor Dwight presenting the lesson material to the class. Participants were invited to ask questions and share comments. A portable white board was used to present material.
- ~ Participants read portions of Galatians and comments in the LSB out loud each class session. Study guidelines with questions found on-line (with some changes made) were distributed to guide individual home study and class discussion. Another resource used included the **written script from the ELCA Mosaic Television DVD “The Life of Apostle Paul with Rick Steves”** (www.elca.org/mosaic). Some online background materials on Galatians and maps of that area at the time of Paul, were carefully evaluated to make sure their theological perspective was consistent with ELCA beliefs before distribution. To further explore how God’s action alone saves us, chapter eight “*Three types of Atonement*” in the book *Christus Victor* by Gustaf Aulen was read and discussed. The theme of GRACE ALONE was emphasized throughout the study.

The Book of Daniel Bible Study at Calvary Lutheran Church in Rapid City

- ~ People were given the opportunity to sign up for this Bible Study. Over 40 people signed up.
- ~ Again, as with the study of Galatians, the 35 minute long sessions are held in the sanctuary after Wednesday worship, start with responding to a question (an example of a question: if you could change something major in the world, what would it be?), discussing it with the person adjacent, and then having a few people respond to the entire group. Discussion is encouraged throughout the class time.
- ~ Pastor Dwight developed the lessons and gave each participant a packet of handouts and study guides. He presents the lesson to the class & facilitates discussion, using a white board. The *Lutheran Study Bible* is being used as the main class resource. Additional resources used to guide personal study and class discussion include: questions from an **internet Bible Study** (adapted), other internet materials (evaluated for Lutheran perspective), and materials from *Enter the Bible* at Luther Seminary (free from internet site: www.luthersem.edu/enterthebible/).

Bible study Resources (besides those mentioned above)

Many resources for studying the scriptures may be found at **The Book of Faith web site** (www.bookoffaith.org). These resources include Foundational courses for studying the Bible from the Lutheran perspective (3 courses), Books of Faith (studies on 7 books of the Bible), People of Faith (4 different series studies), and Together in Faith (follows lectionary with studies on 4 books of the Bible). Leader resources and workbooks for participants have been developed for these courses.

Additional resources are also available from the **ELCA**, including DVDs & videos, ELCA Mosaic Television DVDs, and written Bible Study materials available from **Augsburg Fortress Publishing**. Many of these DVDs are available for free viewing by direct internet connection streaming.

Select Learning has developed a DVD series on studying the Bible, with study guides. When the Book of Faith Course was taught last year at Calvary Lutheran in Rapid City, the Select DVD series on *How Lutherans Interpret the Bible* featuring Mark Allen Powell was used. These DVDs are thought provoking and the group found them very helpful. A number of other Select Learning DVDs and computer courses are also available to facilitate in-depth scripture study (www.selectlearning.org).

“Implementing Bible study will build faith communities that ‘Embrace the message of Grace’ and will be on fire to bring the Good News to all.” [quote: Pastor Dwight Stensgaard]

~ ~ ~ **Studying Scripture Nurtures a Passion for Christ** ~ ~ ~

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