



By National Bishop
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Never Stop Learning

Doctors, teachers, accountants, and others require regular continuing education to hone their skills and knowledge. So why not Christians? Here's how study can enrich your faith life and equip you to be a spirited disciple.

Regular readers of this page will know that my recent columns are based on my call to spiritual renewal and deeper discipleship within our church (Pray, Read, Worship, Study, Serve, Give, and Tell). We are at the midpoint of this conversation, so in this issue I'd like to explore why we should study.

Martin Luther was an outspoken supporter of the need for ongoing study within the church. In the introduction to *The Large Catechism* he wrote:

"Therefore I again implore all Christians, especially pastors and preachers, not to be doctors too soon, and imagine that they know everything (for imagination and cloth unshrunk [and false weights] fall far short of the measure), but that they daily exercise themselves well in these studies and constantly treat them;


encounter new challenges, new questions, where we need a deeper faith understanding in order to function.

I find that if I don't study, I lose my inspiration and perspective pretty quickly. I know I am blessed to have a job that allows me, indeed requires me, to do continuing education. When I study it helps me deepen my faith and prepares me to do many of the other deeper discipleship pieces I am called to do—Read, Pray, Worship, Serve, Give, and Tell. Through study, both personally and vocationally, I am enriched.

So what should we be studying? Scripture, for starters. Not just reading the text devotionally, but learning more about its history and context. It is also helpful to spend time studying church history, Lutheran doctrine, and ethics. Perhaps you might be interested in learning about the lives of the Reformers and the saints. Or pursuing one of the functional areas of our faith like Christian education or pastoral care. I'm sure you can add other study topics to the list.

And how might one go about studying? Join a Bible study at your congregation, or form your own group at a time and place that works for you. Consider checking out the Book of Faith resources at www.bookoffaith.org. You might attend the adult education time on Sunday morning, or, if your congregation doesn't have such a program, start one! Your congregation might hold a retreat with a study focus, or this could be done with neighbouring congregations. Read your synod news or check out their website for study events. You might even consider taking a class at seminary!

If it's not possible for you to do group study, then ask your pastor, your bishop, or your seminary faculty for suggestions on reading materials.

It doesn't matter what you study or how you study as much as why you study—your desire to deepen your understanding of your faith and strengthen your relationship with God. Send your study ideas to the ELCIC Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CanadianLutherans. God bless you as you continue to deepen your discipleship! 

As we grow in life, we experience new challenges, new questions, new situations where we need a deeper faith understanding in order to function.

moreover, that they guard with all care and diligence against the poisonous infection of such security and vain imagination, but steadily keep on reading, teaching, learning, pondering, and meditating, and do not cease until they have made a test and are sure that they have taught the devil to death, and have become more learned than God Himself and all His saints."

The reality is that our faith cannot be fully taught and comprehended by the time we have completed confirmation. It would be like graduating with a computer science degree and then never doing any more continuing education. Before long, your knowledge would be too limited to help you function and grow.

So too, with our faith. As we grow in life, we

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