

For the Life of the World

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

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Teach the Faithful

By Stephen K. Preus

Reach the Lost

By Lannon R. Martin

Care for All

By Faith E. Fretham

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By learning skills for sound exegesis, preaching and catechizing, diligently studying the Lutheran Confessions and examining the history of the Christians who have gone before us, the student of theology is prepared not only to learn God's teaching, but to teach it to others. In addition, he is equipped to *continue* learning it himself, that he might *continue* teaching it to others.

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By Lannon R. Martin

When the Lord Jesus charged His disciples to make disciples who make disciples and so on, He was doing so with a great love for the generations of people for whom He had just willingly given His life. The lost were the passion of Jesus, and the lost need to be our passion as the people of God and particularly as pastors of His church.

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By Faith E. Fretham

It seems the criteria for a deaconess student or a deaconess serving in the field are that they are caring. This caring is seen through the relationships that develop because of the strong passion that these women have for serving the Lord. This passion is prevalent in the classes we take, the relationships among our brothers and sisters in Christ and the compassionate relationships with the people that we get to serve on a daily basis.

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Teach the Faithful

By Stephen K. Preus



Teaching the faithful reaches around the world as Stephen participated in a mission trip to Kenya in 2011.

Paul told the presbyters in Ephesus, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). A pastor cannot pay careful attention to all the flock unless he pays careful attention to himself. He cannot pay careful attention to himself without the Holy Spirit teaching him through His holy Word. Quite simply, if a pastor is going to be a faithful teacher of Christ and to His Church, he first needs to be a faithful Christian who receives the good gifts of God and heeds His instruction. Concordia Theological Seminary instills such a conviction in its students.

“Pay attention to yourself” is far from a plea to be selfish. It is an exhortation to pastors to take their task seriously, that they might be a blessing to Christ’s Church and teach the faithful God’s teaching for as long as the Lord desires to have them serve.

Concordia Theological Seminary exists to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all. From my very first quarter at the seminary, the formation of a pastor concentrated on plunging into the “pure, clear fountain of Israel” of the Old and New Testaments. Holy Scripture is “the only true standard or norm by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged” (*Formula of Concord*, SD, Rule and Norm, 3). Teaching the faithful consists of teaching *God’s* teaching. Pastors are duty-bound to say with Jesus, “My

teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me” (John 7:16). A scriptural foundation is essential to the formation of faithful pastors who teach the faithful.

Yet a seminarian is not simply tossed a Greek New Testament, patted on the back and told to fend for himself. Rather, like a child who is raised in the fear and instruction of the Lord, a seminarian is brought from drinking theological milk to munching theological meat. By learning skills for sound exegesis, preaching and catechizing; diligently studying the Lutheran Confessions and

examining the history of the Christians who have gone before us, the student of theology is prepared not only to learn God's teaching, but to teach it to others. In addition, he is equipped to *continue* learning it himself, that he might *continue* teaching it to others.

The theologian never stops learning. He must never stop learning, or he will cease to teach God's teaching. Therefore, perhaps the most beneficial part of my own seminary training has been to receive guidance from Luther on the correct way to study theology: *oratio*, *meditatio*, *tentatio*.¹ These three simple Latin words push one away from the darkness of the heart to the external word of God, which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. They show what forms a life-long servant of Jesus Christ. Guided by Psalm 119, Luther writes,

Firstly, you should know that the Holy Scriptures constitute a book which turns the wisdom of all other books into foolishness, because not one teaches about eternal life except this one alone.²

Casting aside conjecture, the theologian must despair of his own reason and trust that God alone prepares him for his task. Just as one cannot by his own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, so he cannot by his own reason or strength understand properly God's holy Word. Thus, *oratio* (prayer). Pray to God "that He through His dear Son may give you His Holy Spirit, who will enlighten you, lead you, and give you understanding."³ Prayer is needed, says Luther, because without the Holy Spirit's guidance one becomes "his own teacher,"⁴ rather than a steady student of Scripture.

Prayer is the voice of faith. One who prays also meditates on the word of God that creates, strengthens and nourishes his faith. Thus, *meditatio* (meditation). Luther writes,

Secondly, you should meditate, that is, not only in your heart, but also externally, by actually repeating and comparing oral speech and literal words of the book, reading

and rereading them with diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them.⁵

The importance that one act like King David in this regard, who would "talk, meditate, speak, sing, hear, [and] read"⁶ God's Word, comes to light when one considers that "God will not give you His Spirit without the external Word."⁷ Without God's Word you don't know God. You don't know Christ. You don't know anything of theological substance. Luther writes well elsewhere, "When I am without the Word, do not meditate on it, and occupy myself with it, there is no Christ at home."⁸

When one is occupied with God's Word, the devil attacks and makes "a real doctor out of you."⁹ Luther writes,

Thirdly, there is *tentatio*, *Anfechtung* [temptation]. This is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's Word is, wisdom beyond all wisdom.¹⁰

The devil, the world and our own sinful flesh cannot stand to let God's Word remain intact. They attack it like wolves. Therefore, diligence in studying, preaching and teaching God's Word will bring affliction, temptation and pangs of conscience. Yet the attacks of the devil teach the theologian to cherish the Word of God even more. This truth brought Luther to say that the devil is the "best teacher of theology."¹¹ Through temptation one sees his own inability to conquer the unholy trinity and so he flees for refuge to God's Word, crying out, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). At such a point of despair, only God's mercy in Christ brings relief.

Oratio, *meditatio*, *tentatio* (prayer, meditation, temptation) are a constant throughout the life of the pastor. They are also helpful for the faithful Christians whom the pastor serves. When one is baptized, he is given a "lifelong enemy"¹² in the devil. The devil seeks to steal

Christians away from their Lord, who purchased them with His own blood. The devil tempts. The world entices. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Christians fall into temptation and sin. So, when a pastor is instructed in such a way that he understands this well and has been taught and learned from experience the way to overcome it, he is able to teach the faithful the same. He teaches them to pray. He teaches them to return to God's holy Word. He teaches them to repent. He teaches them the Gospel and administers to them our Lord's Sacraments. He forgives them. He staves off the wolves and points the flock to Christ who has overcome the world, crushed the devil and has taken upon Himself the sin of us all.

When servants of Jesus Christ not only learn while they are at the seminary, but also learn at the seminary to be constant throughout their ministry in prayer and meditation upon God's Word, the seminary is instilling in its students something invaluable. "Pay attention to yourself" is far from a plea to be selfish. It is an exhortation to pastors to take their task seriously, that they might be a blessing to Christ's Church and teach the faithful God's teaching for as long as the Lord desires to have them serve. 🏰

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| 1 | Martin Luther. <i>Luther's Works: American Edition</i> (AE). Vol. 34 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986), 285. | 6 | Ibid. |
| 2 | Ibid. | 7 | Ibid. |
| 3 | Ibid., 285-286. | 8 | Francis Pieper, <i>Christian Dogmatics</i> (St. Louis: Concordia), AE 34:387. |
| 4 | Ibid., 286. | 9 | Ibid. |
| 5 | Ibid. | 10 | AE 54:50. |
| | | 11 | AE 53:102. |