

Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Heritage



Summer Online 2016

I. Course Identification

ST9068 (an STM elective course in the Systematic Theology area of focus)

1 credit

June 20 – August 12

II. Course Description

Approaching our devotional life as a demand to fulfill (as if we are doing God some kind of favor) quickly leads to personal prayer and study of the Word becoming another burdensome “to do” on an already over-burdened schedule. But when we recognize our devotional life primarily as a gift of the gospel, we can find the joy and delight (and the release of burdens) that comes from being amazed day after day by the beauty of how graciously devoted God is to us! That understanding is at the heart of our Lutheran devotional heritage.

The twin goals of this course are:

- 1) to help each course participant to find greater delight in his Savior’s devotion to him in the midst of his personal time in Word and prayer; and
- 2) to assist each participant in developing a concrete plan for how to put that blessing to work even more richly in his life.

III. Course Objectives

Under God’s blessing each one enrolled in the course will have:

Demonstrated how appropriately to divide law and gospel so that he can in good conscience approach his personal devotional life of Word and prayer with greater joy.

Demonstrated his understanding and application for what it means to meditate on God’s Word (*meditatio*) and what gifts of grace are at work as he does so.

Demonstrated his understanding and application for what it means to pray through the Scriptures (*oratio*) and what gifts of grace are at work as he does so.

Deepened his understanding for what it means to undergo testing/struggle (*tentatio*) and what gifts of grace are at work as God uses this to draw him to Word and prayer.

Developed a concrete plan for how to put to work the blessing of our Christ-centered Lutheran devotional heritage more richly in his personal life for the benefit of all his God-given callings (child of God, husband, father, pastor, etc.).

IV. General Outline

Regular Course Work

In each lesson there will be:

- A brief video introduction that sets the tone for that lesson;
- Readings in our two course textbooks (listed below) or in online essays that relate to the focus of that lesson;
- Discussion forums that help all participants to process key insights shared in the readings; and
- Ongoing development of key insights that each participant is gaining from the course readings and discussions that he might incorporate into his plan for his devotional life.

Concrete Plan for Personal Word and Prayer

During the last lesson of the course, each participant will use insights gained from the readings and discussions to assist him in developing a concrete plan for his devotional life. He will upload that plan to our Seminary Online course page so that he can receive feedback from an assigned partner(s) and from the instructor.

There will also be time in the course schedule for each participant to field test his plan and then report back on changes/improvements that this field test suggested.

Here is what the instructor means by *a concrete plan*. The plan is concrete in...

- ...applying specific insights gained from the readings, presentations, and discussions that were part of this class.
- ...grasping how the gospel predominates in how we as Lutherans approach our devotional life in general.
- ...grasping how God's grace informs how he approaches meditation on the Word and prayer in his devotional life.
- ...guarding specific times of day for personal Word and prayer.
- ...noting any specific devotional aides or reading plans that will be instrumental to implementing the plan.
- ...showing that careful thought has been given to strengthening the intercessory element of daily prayer.

- ...building a support system among ministry peers, family, or lay leaders that can provide accountability and (most of all) gospel-focused encouragement to stay with or improve his plan.

The plan ***does not*** need to speak of how he might put these insights to work for the benefit of his family or church family. This plan focuses only on his own devotional life, trusting in turn, as Psalm 1 promises, that God will use that to make His purposes prosper in all the participant's God-given callings.

V. Required Textbooks

Grace Upon Grace: Spirituality for Today, John W. Kleinig (Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, 2008)

A Simple Way to Pray, Martin Luther (translated by O. J. Trapp) (Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, 2013).

All other required readings for class will be available in digital form on our course page on ***Seminary Online***

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VI. General Lesson Outline

Lesson	Topic for Study or Discussion	Readings or Other Assignments Due Other than the two required textbooks, all readings are in digital form on our <i>Seminary Online</i> course page.
Course Introduction & Overview	Some opening disclaimers from the course facilitator, an overview of the course goals/objectives, and going over our online class procedures	Please watch the <i>Introductory Video & Course Overview</i> Please also provide a brief bio in the <i>Introduce Yourself!</i> discussion forum Read the instructor's review of the book <i>Grace Upon Grace</i>
Lesson #1 <i>Approaching Devotional Life from the Perspective of Gospel Predominance</i>	Our Lutheran Heritage: Properly distinguishing law and gospel in our approach to our devotional life – with clear gospel predominance Luther's concept of how God grows a theologian: <i>oratio, meditatio, tentatio</i> Contrasts between Lutheran and other approaches to the devotional life	Read <i>Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings</i> Read the <i>Preface, Introduction: Receptive Spirituality, and Chapter 1: The Mystery of Christ</i> from <i>Grace Upon Grace</i> Read <i>Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Life, Part 1: Drawing Our Devotional Life from the Gospel</i>
Lesson #2 <i>The Grace of Meditatio</i>	Our Lutheran Heritage: Confidence in the power of the written Word as a true means of grace and the implications of that for personal meditation (<i>meditatio</i>) on the Word	Read <i>A Simple Way to Pray</i> (Note the challenge of which lesson in this course to which to assign the reading of Luther's letter to Peter, his barber. Luther so intertwines instruction on

		<p>meditation and instruction on prayer that it is hard to say which topic he is on – that already is a key part of his gracious insight!)</p> <p>Read <i>Chapter 2: The Mystery of Meditation</i> from <i>Grace Upon Grace</i></p> <p>Read <i>Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Life, Part 2: Growing in the Gift of Meditating on the Word</i></p>
<p>Lesson #3 <i>The Grace of Oratio</i></p>	<p>Our Lutheran Heritage: Delight in the gracious gift of prayer (<i>oratio</i>) and in the gift of even the very words to pray as we “pray through” the Scriptures and the implications of that for our devotional life</p>	<p>Read <i>Chapter 3: The Mystery of Prayer</i> from <i>Grace Upon Grace</i></p> <p>Read <i>Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Life, Part 3: Growing in the Gift of Word-Focused Prayer</i></p>
<p>Lesson #4 <i>The Grace of Tentatio</i></p>	<p>Our Lutheran Heritage: Gospel certainty even in the midst of struggle/testing (<i>tentatio</i>) as that struggle sends us running back to Word and prayer and implications of that for our devotional life</p>	<p>Read <i>Chapter 4: The Hidden Battle</i> from <i>Grace Upon Grace</i></p> <p>Read <i>Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Life, Part 4: Growing in the Gift of Testing</i></p>
<p>Lesson #5 <i>Putting It All Together: Developing, Evaluating, and Field Testing Plans for Devotional Life</i></p>	<p>Developing, receiving feedback on, and putting to work a concrete plan for devotional life</p>	