

How Do I Do Devotions?

Waseca Circuit Fall Bible Institute

Trinity Lutheran Church, Janesville, MN — October 26, 2013
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First things first!

The Christian life flows from Lord's Day to Lord's Day, from Sunday to Sunday from Divine Service to Divine Service. Nothing is more important than that you devote yourself to the Lord's Word and Sacrament in the Divine Service. It is the starting point and ongoing high point of the devotional life of the Christian. Without devotion to the Lord's Word and Sacrament in the Divine Service of a specific congregation, any other devotional life is an offense to God!

What is a "devotion"?

A "devotion" is time and energy you "devote" to hearing, reading, and meditating on God's Word, and to prayer.

*Devotions only "help" if you actually "do" them!
You won't "do" them unless you actually "devote" time and energy to them.*

How Do I Get Started?

First of all, devote yourself to daily Bible reading and prayer!

You don't have time? Then you are too busy! God's Word and prayer are more important than most of the other things you are spending your time on, so make time for it! You don't want to? Repent! Make this a priority and recognize that it is not a burden or a chore, but a gift of God!

Choose a time of the day!

For example: when you get up, before or after lunch, 7:00 pm, before bed. It doesn't have to take more than 10 or 15 minutes a day. But make it the same 10 or 15 minutes each day. Choose a time when your spouse and children will be able to join you. Establish a routine and stick to it. Make daily devotions a habit. If you only do it when you get around to it, you won't get around to it!

Choose a place!

A quiet place free from distractions. A comfortable place. An inviting place. Turn off the TV and the radio. Stay away from the computer, the iPad, and your cell phone. Close the door if it will help you to be less distracted. And ignore the phone. Let it go to voicemail. It can wait 10 or 15 minutes.

Choose your resources!

More on this in a minute.

Choose your plan!

Have a plan and a schedule. If you just do as the "Spirit moves you," you will end up doing nothing.

Stick to it!

There will be days when you miss it because life intruded, you were lazy, sinful, sick, etc. Don't worry or let that cause total failure. Simply start again at the right place. And don't try to do too much! It is better to do something, however small, than to set yourself up for failure or guilt.

What Resources Should I Use?

Three books are foundational for Lutheran Christians - the Bible, the Catechism, and the Hymnal.

The Bible

The Bible is the Word of God. It is living and powerful. It does what it says and gives what it declares. It accomplishes the purpose for which God gives it. It's Law accuses and condemns us. It's Gospel absolves and comforts us. It gives us Jesus and all His gifts. It is holy, and makes us holy. It is true. It is good. It is beautiful. It is about Jesus and it is about you. If you have young children, use a Bible Story book. If they are able to read, let them do some of the reading!

God's Word must lie at the CENTER of our devotional life! Devotional meditations are good, but God's Word is better! Read a section of the Bible (out-loud) each and every day!

The Catechism

Luther's Small Catechism is a handbook for the Bible. It teaches us how to read and understand the Bible. No matter how young or old you are, you should be reading, praying, and learning-by-heart the Catechism. If you know the Catechism well, you will understand the Bible well. If you don't know the Catechism well, you will not understand the Bible well.

Review a small section of the Catechism each and every week. Say it out-loud a number of times each day. Think about what it is saying. Learn it by heart.

The Hymnal

You are a Lutheran Christian and thus a liturgical Christian. Accept that and embrace that! The hymnal is God's Word in action. It delivers God's gifts to us. It teaches us how to receive those gifts, and how to pray, praise, and give thanks. The hymnal is a prayer book and a devotional book. It is not just for Sunday morning.

Buy a hymnal and use it in your home! Sing hymns in your home. Ask your pastor what the hymn of the day will be on the coming Sunday, and sing it each day in your home. Learn a stanza or two by heart. Teach it to your children. Teach them how to follow along and participate in the Divine Service. Show them how to do so by your good example.

Don't spend your (valuable) time teaching your children something they will quickly grow out of, but good solid things they will spend the rest of their lives growing into.

How do I pray?

Use the Bible, the Catechism, and the Hymnal, and perhaps also a good Lutheran prayer or devotional book. Pray out-loud! Pray as though God were listening - because He is! Pray with faith in His promises, confidence in His mercy, and boldness as His dear child. At a minimum, pray in the morning, in the evening, and at the dinner table. Make it a routine and a habit!

The Bible

Pray the Lord's Prayer at least once a day. After all, Jesus said, "When you pray, say: Our Father who art in heaven, ..." Also, ask your pastor what the appointed Psalm is for the week, and then pray it each day (out loud, in unison or half-verse by half-verse) from the Bible or the Hymnal.

The Catechism

Use the "Daily Prayers" found in Luther's Small Catechism. You will find there an excellent routine for when you get up in the morning, when you go to bed in the evening, when you sit down at the table, and when you get up! In my opinion, this is the most neglected thing in the catechism!

The Hymnal

The Lutheran Service Book is full of excellent collects for any occasion that can and should be prayed by Christians in their devotional life. Spend some time getting to know your hymnal, and then use it!

See resources below for good Lutheran prayer or devotional books!

Final Thoughts

- Prayer is difficult. “Devotion” is so called because it requires devotion, dedication, and discipline. The cares of the world, distractions, and sometimes the sinful thought that it doesn’t really matter or that nothing really changes can make us give up quickly.
- The Church Fathers spoke of devotion as the “exercise of piety,” and like bodily exercise, or playing an instrument, or math or a foreign language, if we do not keep on exercising, practicing, and reviewing, we will quickly lose what we had.
- If you are married, do your devotions with your spouse. If you have a family still living at home, do your devotions with your family.
- Do everything out loud, if at all possible. It will slow you down. It will engage your mind, your eyes, your voice, and your ears. And faith comes by hearing!
- Remember, it is all about God’s Word! The Holy Spirit works through the Word to call us back to repentance and to strengthen our faith in Jesus. God gives Jesus and all His gifts to us by His Word and Spirit. Luther: “You should meditate [on the Scriptures], that is, not only in your heart, but also externally, by repeating the written words externally [out loud] and rubbing them (like an herb for its flavor), reading and rereading them with diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them.” In other words, chew on the Word of God the way that a cow chews its cud - that’s how you “inwardly digest” it!
- Go to the Divine Service! Gladly hear and learn preaching and the Word. Partake of Jesus’ body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. Rejoice in the forgiveness of your sins, and in the life and salvation that are yours in Christ. Delight in His Word and promises at church and at home!

Resource List

Bibles and Bible Story Books

The Lutheran Study Bible (CPH, 2009) - Excellent resource for every Lutheran Christian! From \$36.99 - \$79.99.

Faith Alive Student Bible (CPH, 2011) - A great first “real” Bible for children. A sort of little “study” Bible for children. \$25.00.

A Bible History (CPH, 2003) - A great Bible story book (with pictures) for junior high children. \$20.99. A workbook is available for \$10.99.

One Hundred Bible Stories (CPH, 1998) - A great Bible story book (with pictures) for 3rd-6th graders. \$12.99. A workbook is available for \$10.49.

The Story Bible (CPH, 2011) - A great Bible story book (with big, beautiful pictures) for young

children. \$16.99 (soft-back) \$19.99 (hard-back).

Catechism

Luther's Small Catechism - A must have! Available in NIV or ESV versions. Current edition - \$12.99.

Hymnal

Lutheran Service Book (CPH, 2006) Pew Edition - \$25.00. Personal Edition - \$36.00.

Prayer and Devotional Books

Treasury of Daily Prayer (CPH, 2008) - An excellent all-in-one resource with a daily Psalm, Old Testament Reading, New Testament Reading, Meditation, Hymn Verse, and Prayer. From \$29.99. Also, an excellent iPhone, Android, or iPad app for ?

Lutheran Book of Prayer (CPH, 2005) - Prayers for every morning and evening and all other occasions. \$9.99 - \$19.99.

To Live with Christ (CPH, 2008) - An excellent daily devotional book by the sainted bishop of Sweden, Bo Giertz. \$20.99.

Portals of Prayer (CPH) - Daily devotional booklet that is a good supplement to a more "meaty" devotional life. Pick one up at your church.

Other Resources for the Christian Home

Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions (CPH, Second Edition, 2006) - The Lutheran Confessions are a clear, Christ-centered exposition of the Holy Scriptures. \$19.99 - \$52.99.

Lutheranism 101 (CPH, 2010) - A quick, usable, and comprehensive overview of Lutheran faith and practice. \$16.99.

5 Things You Can Do To Live a Jesus-Centered Life (CPH, 2013) - A great little book that expands upon this presentation. \$4.50.

Electronic Resources

www.issuesetc.org - Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio. Listen live or on-demand from anywhere on the internet.

Higher Things Daily Reflections - a good Biblical daily devotion delivered daily to your email inbox. Subscribe at higherthings.org/reflections.