

WHAT READERS ARE SAYING . . .

It's a clever idea—really!—to tell God's story from creation to the eternal joy of the resurrection, interweaving our own personal stories from Baptism through our funerals and beyond. It's invariably the story of Christ, but we always read ourselves right in it. Dr. Filipek's style is constantly speaking directly to the reader, a very inviting way to catechize those entirely new to the faith. The Six Chief Parts and Lutheran worship (even closed Communion) are presented in their biblical contexts!

—**Dr. Carl C. Fickenschner II**, professor of pastoral ministry and missions, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana; speaker and author; editor of *Concordia Pulpit Resources*

I have a friend who does drone photography. With a bird's-eye view, what you thought you knew intimately unfolds in wonder from a wider, higher perspective. Dr. Filipek's new book, *Life in Christ: Rooted, Woven, and Grafted into God's Story*, grants readers such an experience with the Sacred Scriptures. Rather than “losing the forest for the trees,” this work enables readers to glimpse the grand sweep of the greatest story ever told. They'll walk away marveling at how it centers on Jesus from the beginning and connects to us right here in our own world.

—**William Weedon**, assistant pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Hamel, Illinois

With pastoral passion, Adam Filipek calls us to not abandon our first love, Christ. The reason is not found in obligation but in the delight that God deigns to dwell with us. *Life in Christ* faithfully grounds its readers in the narrative of Scripture that then flows into the ongoing life of the Church so that we might be blessed with life in Christ.

—**Kevin Golden**, PhD; associate professor of exegetical theology, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri

To know the entire Bible is a good thing for every Christian. Whether it is a lifelong Christian, someone new to the faith, or someone somewhere in between, they may discover that reading the Bible is challenging, especially when they want to find the connection between the stories and statements in the sixty-six books of the Bible. What helps in that situation is for the reader to be mindful of two things: First, that he looks to Christ and sees what Christ has done as central to Scripture. Second, as a reader, he does not read Scripture unaffected by Christ's ministry but rather sees himself as someone who has been grafted into the Body of Christ through Baptism, who attends a church and worships the triune God. Reading Scripture is a theocentric endeavor looking outward toward what God has done in Christ for me; it is not anthropocentric in orientation—all about me and my personal desires. The Bible is also not only an accumulation of separate stories or doctrines. To that end, the author draws the reader into Scripture from Eden to Christ's return and successfully builds a bridge from texts to the personal life of the reader so that Scripture speaks about my creation, my redemption, and my sanctification. This is a book written for a broad audience, pastors and laity alike, and it is written in an easy, readable style.

—**Klaus Detlev Schulz**, professor of pastoral ministry and missions; dean of graduate studies; director of PhD in missiology program; and director of international studies at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana



LIFE IN CHRIST

Rooted, Woven, and Grafted
into God's Story

ADAM T. FILIPEK



Published by Concordia Publishing House
3558 S. Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
1-800-325-3040 • cph.org

Copyright © 2023 Adam T. Filipek

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Concordia Publishing House.

Written by Adam T. Filipek

Edited by Wayne Palmer

Scripture quotations are from the ESV Bible® (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Quotations marked *LSB* are from *Lutheran Service Book*, copyright © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Quotations marked *LSB Altar Book* are from *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book*, copyright © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Quotations marked *LSB Pastoral Care Companion* are from *Lutheran Service Book: Pastoral Care Companion*. Copyright © 2007 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this publication (FC SD, LC, and Ap) are from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, second edition, copyright © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All Rights Reserved.

Small Catechism quotations are from *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, copyright © 1986, 2017 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The quotations from *Luther's Works* are from Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition; general editors: Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehman, Christopher Boyd Brown, and Benjamin T. G. Mayes; 82 vols., St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, and Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress, 1955-.

Figures 4-9 are images of stained glass windows at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lidgerwood, North Dakota.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Dedicated to the saints of Holy Cross Lutheran
Church and Immanuel Lutheran Church in
Lidgerwood, North Dakota.

**For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ
and Him crucified.**

1 Corinthians 2:2

**For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear
with Him in glory.**

Colossians 3:3-4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments 7

Abbreviations 8

Chapter 1: The Great Disconnect 10

Chapter 2: Piecing It Together: From Eden to Egypt 18

Chapter 3: Piecing It Together: The Red Sea
to the Promised Land 32

Chapter 4: Piecing It Together: The Promised Land
to Babylon and Back 46

Chapter 5: Held Together by Christ 60

Chapter 6: One in Christ 82

Chapter 7: Joined to Christ 96

Chapter 8: Abiding with Christ 110

Chapter 9: Living under Christ 126

Appendix: Unity of Confession 140

Bibliography 146

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Chiefly, I am indebted to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has called me out of darkness into His marvelous light of salvation. Without Him, I would be lost forever. But He has delivered me from sin, death, and the devil. To Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might, now and ever, unto ages of ages. Amen!

Additionally, this book would not have been possible without the prayers, love, and support of the saints of Holy Cross Lutheran Church and Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lidgerwood, North Dakota. I am truly privileged, honored, and blessed to serve as their pastor, and I owe them an inexpressible debt of gratitude and thanksgiving for all they have done for me, with a special thank you to those who have participated in *Life in Christ* (adult instruction) every time that it has been offered.

Moreover, I am grateful for my brother, Rev. Aaron M. Filipek, who served as a makeshift theological consultant on numerous occasions. He was always ready and willing to listen to a paragraph or two, even if I called him at the most inopportune times, and he would tell me if my wording was theologically accurate.

Finally, a special acknowledgment and recognition is owed not only to my children, David, Miriam, Jacob, and Bethany, who sacrificed countless hours of playtime with their father, but evermore to my wife, Becky, for her unwavering assistance and encouragement. In the preparation of this manuscript, she devoted incalculable hours to copyediting and proofreading. Without her this not make sense does, but because of her I'm not missing or mincing any words. I am incessantly grateful for this amazing, God-fearing woman who the Lord has given to me.

ABBREVIATIONS

Books of the Bible

Gn Genesis	Ezr Ezra	Jl Joel
Ex Exodus	Ne Nehemiah	Am Amos
Lv Leviticus	Est Esther	Ob Obadiah
Nu Numbers	Jb Job	Jnh Jonah
Dt Deuteronomy	Ps Psalms	Mi Micah
Jsh Joshua	Pr Proverbs	Na Nahum
Jgs Judges	Ec Ecclesiastes	Hab Habakkuk
Ru Ruth	Sg Song of Solomon	Zep Zephaniah
1Sm 1 Samuel	Is Isaiah	Hg Haggai
2Sm 2 Samuel	Jer Jeremiah	Zec Zechariah
1Ki 1 Kings	Lm Lamentations	Mal Malachi
2Ki 2 Kings	Ezk Ezekiel	
1Ch 1 Chronicles	Dn Daniel	
2Ch 2 Chronicles	Hos Hosea	

Mt Matthew	Eph Ephesians	Heb Hebrews
Mk Mark	Php Philippians	Jas James
Lk Luke	Col Colossians	1Pt 1 Peter
Jn John	1Th 1 Thessalonians	2Pt 2 Peter
Ac Acts	2Th 2 Thessalonians	1Jn 1 John
Rm Romans	1Tm 1 Timothy	2Jn 2 John
1Co 1 Corinthians	2Tm 2 Timothy	3Jn 3 John
2Co 2 Corinthians	Ti Titus	Jude Jude
Gal Galatians	Phm Philemon	Rv Revelation

Other Abbreviations

AC	Augsburg Confession
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
FC	Formula of Concord
LC	Large Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
AE	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American Edition



CHAPTER 1

THE GREAT DISCONNECT

Okay. Think fast. What are the first and last books of the Bible? What is the central message of the Bible? How many days did it take for God to create the world? What is the name of the tree that God commanded Adam not to eat from? Where was Adam when his wife ate from the forbidden tree? What happened to Adam and his wife when they ate from the forbidden tree? Where in the Bible is the first promise of a savior? How do Adam, Noah, Abraham, the sacrifice of Isaac, the exodus, the tabernacle, Israel's wandering in the wilderness, Jonah, David, the temple, the Assyrian captivity, and the Babylonian captivity relate to Jesus? Who is Jesus? Why are the cross and empty tomb important? Why did Jesus ascend to heaven? What is so significant about the apostles, Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicolaus, and Paul? When will Jesus return? What will happen when He does? What will heaven be like? And what does any of this stuff have to do with my daily life?

If you can't answer some, most, or all of these questions, do not feel bad. You are not alone. A recent study conducted by the American Bible Society in conjunction with Barna Group research revealed that while 87 percent of surveyed households own a Bible, and 73 percent professed to be somewhat knowledgeable about the contents of the Bible, only 57 percent knew that Mary Magdalene was the first person to see Jesus after the resurrection. Fifty-six percent knew that Peter was the disciple who denied Jesus. And fewer than 50 percent of surveyed households believed that the Bible is the infallible, inerrant Word of God.¹ Another study revealed that “nearly 26 million Americans reduced or stopped their interaction with Scripture in the past year.”² What research has discovered, and my own experience as a pastor has revealed, is that Americans, Christians included, are becoming increasingly biblically illiterate. We don't know the basics of the Christian story and how it all connects.

Now, I realize that this statement might sound trivial. I mean, after all, who cares if I know the name of a tree, how many days it took for God to create the world, the first reference to a Savior, or even how Adam, Noah, Abraham, the sacrifice of Isaac, the exodus, the tabernacle, Israel's wandering in the wilderness, Jonah, David, the temple, the Assyrian

1 American Bible Society, “State of the Bible 2017,” (February 2017): 71–78. https://1s712.americanbible.org/state-of-the-bible/stateofthebible/State_of_the_bible-2017.pdf (accessed July 29, 2022).

2 American Bible Society, “State of the Bible 2022,” (January 2022). https://1s712.americanbible.org/state-of-the-bible/stateofthebible/State_of_the_bible-2022.pdf (accessed July 29, 2022).

captivity, and the Babylonian captivity connect to Jesus? As long as I know who Jesus is and what He did for me on the cross and in the empty tomb, isn't that enough? *Isn't that all I need to know to be saved?*

While it is true that all people who confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead will be saved (see Rm 10:9), it is also true that there are great dangers in asking a question like this. The first danger is that the tenor of the question treats the Word of God apathetically. Jesus, however, does not. He eagerly read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah in the Nazareth synagogue (see Lk 4:17–21). He regularly references the beginning of creation, Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Israel, and many other Old Testament people and events. He stressed the importance of hearing God's Word when He said, "Whoever is of God hears the words of God" (Jn 8:47). If that were too little, the psalmist proclaims, "Oh how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps 119:97). And Paul commends the entirety of Scripture to Timothy: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tm 3:16–17).

If that is how our Lord and His patriarchs, prophets, and apostles speak about the Word of God, how can we apathetically say, "Who cares?" We are given to pay close attention to God's Word (see Heb 2:1), lest we drift away from it and find ourselves numbered among the lukewarm Christians God threatened to spit out of His mouth (see Rv 3:16). As Christians, we, like those who have gone before us, should receive God's Word eagerly and examine the Scriptures daily (see Ac 17:11).

The second danger with the question is the words "need to know." Not only does the question approach the faith minimalistically, as if to say, "I have learned all that I need to, so I am good," but it also reduces the faith to mere knowledge and intellect. When that happens, the faith becomes an act of memorizing information, acquiring knowledge, learning facts, and knowing doctrinal content. Sadly, a good number of churches' current modules of Christian formation tend to reinforce this view of the Christian faith.

That is not surprising since, over the past four hundred years, the Church's catechesis, or process of Christian formation, has undergone

substantial changes as an effect of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment's emphasis on reason shifted the focus of the Christian faith away from "the revelation of God's wisdom in the words of Holy Scriptures" and toward "the rationalistic abilities of man."³ Moreover, the rationalists of the Enlightenment went so far as to alter the classical Evangelical school curriculum, which had traditionally emphasized the authority of the written Word, so that the students would then be more open to new rationalistic teachings and resistant to classical Lutheran orthodoxy.⁴ Inevitably, the process and terminology of Christian formation changed from "talking and teaching" to "lectures and instruction." "Formation" gave way to "education." "Home Altars" gave way to "Sunday School," "Confirmation Classes," and "Adult Instruction Classes." "Narrative" gave way to "facts." "Faith" gave way to "knowledge and intellectual assent." The crowning complexity of God's creation, a fearfully and wonderfully made person (Ps 139:14), is treated as a brain on a stick. And a minimalistic attitude toward Christianity comes to say that "when I have learned everything I need to know, then I can be done with Church. Like school, I can graduate, move on, and never return."

Now, please don't misunderstand me. Memorization, knowledge, facts, and doctrinal content are vital to Christian formation and the faith. But when the faith is reduced to mere knowledge, then the unified, overarching story of the biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation, in which the knowledge, facts, and doctrine of the faith are given, is chopped into disconnected, independent, seemingly unrelated, and trivial pieces. And when you cannot see and know how the story connects, God's story becomes anthropocentric. This means that the faith begins to revolve around you.

The "I" in the question "Isn't that all I need to know to be saved?" is the last and greatest danger. "Why?" you might wonder. I suppose I could simply say that it's idolatry and move on. But I don't think that a two-word answer particularly helps you see the intricacies of that danger on a practical, everyday level. So allow me to illustrate by taking a beloved Scripture passage, sometimes called "the Gospel in a Nutshell," and changing the

3 Thomas Korcok, *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 94.

4 Korcok, *Lutheran Education*, 94.