

Prayer

We Speak to God

The Lutheran Spirituality Series

John W. Kleinig

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE • SAINT LOUIS

Copyright © 2006 Concordia Publishing House
3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
1-800-325-3040 • www.cph.org

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 John W. Kleinig

Edited by Robert C. Baker

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The Lutheran Confessions quotations are taken from *Concordia Triglotta*, copyright © 1921 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Quotations marked AE are from Luther's Works, American Edition (56 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955–86).

This publication may be available in braille, in large print, or on cassette tape for the visually impaired. Please allow 8 to 12 weeks for delivery. Write to the Library for the Blind, 7550 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63119-4409; call toll-free 1-888-215-2455; or visit the Web site: www.blindmission.org.

Manufactured in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06

Contents

About This Series	4
Participant Introduction.....	5
Our Secret Vocation	6
The Intercession of Jesus	10
The Gift of Prayer	14
Praying with Jesus.....	18
Complaining	22
Praying Together.....	26
Leader Guide Introduction	30
Answers	31
Appendix of Lutheran Teaching	55
Glossary	62

Hymnal Key

LSB=Lutheran Service Book

ELH=Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary

CW=Christian Worship

LW=Lutheran Worship

LBW=Lutheran Book of Worship

TLH=The Lutheran Hymnal

About This Series

In the West, spirituality is as nebulous as it is popular. Having succumbed to humanism, rationalism, and Darwinism, communities once known for a genuine Christian piety now provide a fertile breeding ground for self-made theologies, Eastern religions, the worship of science and technology, or even a resuscitation of the old pagan gods. In a highly competitive environment, each of these spiritual philosophies seeks to fill the vacuum left by the seemingly departed Christian spirit.

Even among faithful Christians, and at other times and places, spirituality has run the gamut from the mystical to the almost sterile. From the emotional to the pragmatic, the experiential to the cerebral, the all-too-human desire to experience (and control!) the divine has proven to be especially resilient. Influenced by modernism, postmodernism, and whatever comes next, even those who try faithfully to follow Jesus Christ may find defining *spirituality*, or at least what is distinctively Christian about their own beliefs and practices, a significant challenge.

Do Lutheran Christians have a spirituality? Indeed they do! This adult Bible study series explores the rich depths of a distinctively Lutheran spirituality that begins in Baptism and is founded upon God's Word. There, the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected Lord proclaims His victory over sin, death, and the devil, and from there flows the proclamation of His Gospel and the administration of His Sacraments. It is through these means presented within the liturgy of His Church that Christ communicates not merely spiritual energies, an emotional high, a method of reasoning, or a stringent morality, but truly Himself—God in human flesh.

Written by respected Lutheran scholars in the United States and Australia, this adult Bible study series emphasizes the Bible, Luther's catechism, and the Lutheran hymnal as concrete and integral resources for a truly Lutheran spirituality. May God richly bless those who study His Word, and through His Word may they experience the genuinely enlightening and life-giving spirituality found only in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Editor

Participant Introduction

Since Christian spirituality depends on God's grace, it differs from all pagan forms of spirituality. They all promote spiritual self-development and self-improvement. Christian spirituality is not based on our performance but on our reception from God. We are not producers of spiritual growth but receivers of spiritual life. We have nothing that we have not received from God (1 Corinthians 4:7), who has sent His Son and His Holy Spirit to give of Himself to us. In keeping with this, our praying has to do with our ongoing reception from the God who interacts with us in Word and deed in His means of grace. Our reception has to do with faith, our faith in Jesus and His Spirit-giving Word.

In His three years with them, Jesus taught His disciples, and us, about the close connection between faith in Him and prayer. Before He healed them, He commended the faith of those who asked Him for help. From this they learned that faith was something like the empty hands of a beggar that had nothing to give, but everything to receive from Jesus. Faith in Him, they discovered, led to prayer that received what He promised to give. So when we pray, we live by faith, we act in faith, we exercise our faith in Jesus. We, who are justified by faith in Jesus, have access to the grace of God the Father through Him. We use our faith and our access to God's grace to pray for ourselves and for others.

As disciples of Jesus, we therefore are called to live by faith in a life of prayer. If we stop praying we fall asleep spiritually. We may still be spiritually alive, but we become unaware of God's gracious dealings with us. So He does His best to keep us awake and watchful in prayer. In everything that happens to us God is training us to become people of prayer, wakeful people who take Him at His Word and receive from Him His gifts. God is equipping His people who are sure that He withholds nothing good from us and all His creatures.

To prepare for "Our Secret Vocation," read John 15:9–17.



Our Secret Vocation

Sons are entitled to speak in the family of the Father. Prayer is the permission which God accords His sons to join their voices in the discussion of His affairs.

Peter Brunner, Worship in the Name of Jesus, 202

Just imagine that you received a written invitation from the President to join his administration as the secretary of a department in Washington! What's more, if you accepted the offer, you could choose the department that you wished to run. You would be a member of the President's cabinet, having access to the President and all the other people who governed the United States. You would have a say in the administration of this land and would help to decide how its resources were distributed. Think of all the good that you could do!

1. How would you feel about such an invitation? What area would you choose, and why? Under what conditions would you take up the invitation?

Friends of the King

In our contemporary democracies, department secretaries are close to, and assist, the president. In the ancient world, the person who was closest the king, his personal advisor, was called the Friend of the King. He didn't just sit in the royal council; he lived with the king as his secretary, his chief of staff, the man who had his ear.

2. Read Exodus 33:11 and Isaiah 41:8. How were Old Testament leaders and prophets "friends of the King"?

Our Secret Vocation

Objectives

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, participants will (1) rejoice in prayer as a great privilege rather than a burdensome obligation; (2) understand the call to pray as part of their secret priestly vocation to reign with Christ here on earth; and (3) serve as priests together with Christ by praying for the people whom God has placed under their care in their family, social group, and congregation.

Opening Worship

Grant, merciful Lord, to Your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve You with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord. Amen.

Sing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (*LSB* 770; *CW* 411; *LW* 516; *LBW* 439; *TLH* 457).

(Focus)

When we Christians think about prayer we normally consider what we do or what we should do. We think about our obligation to pray as Christ has commanded us and our failure to fulfill His command to pray. This topic therefore touches the conscience of every disciple. It can arouse a sense of guilt that disheartens us or the determination for improvement that results in further failure. So a study on prayer can all too easily end up focused on our performance, a self-justification before God and others by measurement of progress in piety.

This study is designed to shift the focus away from ourselves and our efforts at spiritual self-improvement to God's grace and the privilege of involvement in the administration of His grace. The comparison of a Christian to a member of God's royal cabinet is therefore meant to highlight the honor and privilege of prayer.

1. Answers may vary. This initial discussion should lead to consideration of our partnership with Jesus in prayer and His support for us in becoming people of prayer. The answers to this question will

vary with the character of the participants. Some people would be honored by such an invitation to govern the United States and be excited by the prospect of improving the way its resources are used. However, most people would feel far too ill-equipped to accept the invitation. They would only agree to take up this task if they could choose a familiar area of responsibility and if they received a high level of support from the president.

Friends of the King (Inform)

2. In the Old Testament, God chose leaders and prophets like Moses and Abraham to be members of His cabinet, His courtiers, His royal servants. As intercessors, they spoke up for God's people and advised God on the decisions that He made for them. They had the privilege of working with God in the administration of His Word in wrath and grace, in judgment and salvation.

3. Through faith in Christ, we are even more privileged than Old Testament leaders and prophets. We are friends of Jesus, the Son of the King, His personal advisors. Yet we have no power by ourselves. We depend on Him for our position and our vocation. He does not just call us to work with Him; He gives us His full backing.

4. By His comparison of us to the branches of a vine in John 15:1–8, Jesus teaches us about our total dependence on Him. We receive everything from Him; we achieve nothing spiritually apart from Him. His description of us as His friends unpacks the practical implications of our total dependence on Him.

5. In a royal bureaucracy with its chain of command, servants did what they were told to do. They carried out the decrees of the king even if they did not make sense to them. The friends of the king, however, differed from them in two ways. They were involved in the discussion that led up to the decision and so had their say in what was decided; therefore, they knew why the decision was made and how it fitted in with the policy of the king. As a result, they could speak for the king and act on his behalf. They did not just work for the king; they worked with him and so shared in his rule.

As disciples of Jesus we are in a similar position. Through His Word, we know what He is doing and why. He has taught us everything that He has learned from His heavenly Father; He has briefed us fully on His Father's policy, His good and gracious will for us and His whole creation. We therefore know our Master's business. We do not merely work for Jesus by carrying out His commands; we work