



We Lutherans believe, teach and confess

- + that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet one God
- + that God is the Creator of all things, Preserver, and Sovereign
- + that the Bible is God's Word to call people to Jesus Christ and to correction in righteousness
- + that the Spirit of God stirs people to believe in God

Thus, we Lutherans believe, teach and confess

- + that all men, good and bad, are debtors to and "beggars before God," that man cannot make himself right with God by better behavior because no human behavior is ever perfect in thought, word and deed
- + that God by grace, in mercy, and moved by His perfect love created a plan to save His separated creatures
- + that all who repent and believe that Jesus Christ by His perfect life and His sacrificial death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead restored them completely to God's good favor and automatically they are God's people
- + that the lines of this one and only true Church cannot be drawn clearly because "the just shall live by *his faith*," and only the individual knows his or her faith

As to faith really working, we Lutherans believe, teach and confess

- + that faith permeates the whole person and is therefore active in love toward others especially the poor, the needy, and my neighbor
- + that faith delights in God's Ten Commandments as a way of life
- + that faith has the built-in urge to multiply itself

- + that faith accepts government as God's ordained representative, and that obedience and taxes are God pleasing and vital to civility, but none of these may encroach on obedience to God

Finally, we Lutherans believe, teach and confess

- + that the world will come to an end
- + that Jesus Christ is coming again to judge the living and the dead, and that those who did not believe in Jesus Christ for whatever reasons will perish in hell eternally
- + that those who did believe will live "life after life" forever with God in heaven.

What does The Family of Faith believe about Christ's "Passion"?

We know that a lot of people are going to have an interest in Christ's "Passion," thanks in large part to Mel Gibson's new film, *The Passion of Christ*. The "Passion" of Jesus is simply the chronicle of the last day of his life on earth leading up to his crucifixion and death for the sins of the world, and ultimately to his resurrection from the dead for the hope of our eternal life! Gibson's film vividly portrays the injustice, the pain and suffering of Jesus' crucifixion in visual terms. The meaning behind it all is explained in the Bible -- primarily in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Where does The Family of Faith stand in regard to the Bible as God's Word?

Our understanding of the Bible is simple: It *is* the Word of God, written by writers that were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down the words God wished to express to his people. We unapologetically affirm the historic translations and interpretation of the Scriptures which focuses upon the person of Jesus Christ, the "Word made flesh" as John introduces him in John 1. Likewise, we believe, teach and confess that the Bible alone is the basis of our faith and life.

What does it mean to be "Lutheran"?

The basic understanding of the Lutheran church deals with the concept of GRACE -- that is, we believe, teach and confess that a person is saved by the grace of God through their faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior from sin, death, and hell. Such "grace" ("unconditional love," "unmerited favor," "undeserved goodness") comes from God to men as his "gift." Likewise, the "faith" that accepts and connects a believer to saving grace is also a "gift" of God that comes from and through his "means of grace" -- i.e., the Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. While the Lutheran church teaches many other things according to the Bible, this doctrine of being "saved by grace" (also known as *justification*) is the central teaching of Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

Why is it important for people to belong to a church?

Saving faith is something that is *individual* -- that is, I cannot believe for you, and you cannot believe for me. That is why historically the church of Christ has confessed, "*I believe...*" instead of "we believe." Faith connects me with Jesus Christ; and it is through that relationship with the Savior by which a person is saved from their sins and receives the hope of forever life in heaven.

At the same time, once I have come to saving faith through the working of the Spirit, I am now a part of a corporate community of faith -- what we call "church." Because of my faith-connection to Jesus and by my rebirth and renewal in the waters of Baptism, I am now united with all believers of all places and times who have faithfully confessed Christ as Savior. As part of my connection to Jesus individually, I will seek out connections with fellow believers corporately, and together we form communities of believers that make up Christ's "body on earth." That's what the church is.

When believers form communities of the saints, together they begin to live out their mutual witness to God's goodness through Jesus Christ by their acts of service and by reaching out in love to their fellow man. Together they are "fed" by God's means of grace in order to be encouraged and strengthened in

their faith. Additionally, faithful Christians respond to God's love by practicing that same love in their church family, homes, neighborhoods, communities, and nation, impacting others with the grace and love of Jesus Christ in a corporate and meaningful manner. While a person can do a lot on an individual basis, just think of the increased effectiveness that results from people bringing their gifts and witness together in Jesus' name!