



LUTHERAN STUDY BIBLE

An Introduction

Lutherans share with other Christians this foundational understanding: The Bible is the Word of God, and through it God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world. The Bible shapes our lives individually and together as the church of Christ. The "Confession of Faith" in The Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America states:

This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life. (2.03)

With this clear view of the Scriptures comes the impetus to develop a new study Bible for use in the church. We are a gifted church with many talented and influential teaching theologians. This study Bible provides a means to display these gifts and insights for the sake of all who seek to study, read, and reflect on God's Word. Like other study Bibles, the notes utilize the best of modern biblical scholarship. To this are added Lutheran perspectives and articles that make Lutheran Study Bible truly unique. Drawing on the rich catechetical traditions of Martin Luther, this study Bible brings together Bible insights with theological reflection on foundational teachings important to Lutherans and relevant for all.

Book of Faith Connections

Development of this Bible was well underway when the ELCA decided to support a new initiative called Book of Faith in 2007. The emergence of this initiative lent further support to the need for this new study Bible. In fact, the guiding principles of the initiative have helped shape the ongoing development, design, and content of Lutheran Study Bible. The release of Lutheran Study Bible to coincide with the Book of Faith initiative is truly an opportune moment for the church. The initiative's vision is "that the whole church becomes more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture . . ." What better way to support this vision than by reading and studying Scripture together under the guidance of some of our very best Bible teachers.

The Book of Faith initiative invites all to "Open Scripture. Join the Conversation." In the spirit of this invitation, Lutheran Study Bible also includes questions for individual reflection and group conversation. The Bible comes alive and God's Word does its work of renewing and changing lives, especially when we talk about it and share it with one another. In this way Lutheran Study Bible is also a study guide.

What to Look For

Lutheran Study Bible has several unique features that can be used to support individual study and reflection as well as group study ranging from confirmation to various adult learning settings. You will note the following features:

Introductions

Each major section and each book of the Bible will begin with a summary introduction. Here you will discover historical and contextual background, as well as insights into the key themes and messages. Use these introductions as helpful guides to approaching the sections or books of the Bible.

Study Notes

Each book of the Bible is accompanied by three types of study notes and by faith-reflection questions. These study notes and questions are designated by the following icons and provided in the margin near the corresponding Bible text.



World of the Bible notes explore people, places, events, and artifacts that are mentioned in the Bible. These may also describe how a particular book may have been written and what literary form it takes.



Bible Concepts notes focus on ideas and theological insights. Here you will find connections between how such concepts are expressed in different books and how Old Testament themes influence the New Testament.



Lutheran Perspectives notes are introduced by a key question that connects a Bible verse or passage with Lutheran theological perspectives, teachings, or practices.



Faith Reflection questions encourage individuals and groups to think about and discuss the meaning of some Bible texts or study notes.

Charts, Illustrations, Diagrams, and Maps

Found throughout the study Bible, these resources will provide helpful summaries and views to help you picture what is introduced in the Bible text.

A set of four-color maps and occasional spot maps are provided to help you follow the action.

Bible Reading Plan and Subject Guide

For those who wish to engage in a daily Bible reading plan, a detailed plan is provided for three different levels (see pp. 2081-2093).

The Subject Guide (pp. 2055-2078) provides a concordance-like listing of key Bible terms and cross-references.

Articles

Many helpful articles can be found in the first and second four-color sections of the Bible (pp. 15–32 and 1537–1568). The first section includes a detailed Introduction to the Bible, a chart describing the various canons of the Hebrew Scripture (Old Testament), and a helpful three-page Bible History Timeline. The second section highlights Martin Luther and the Bible, provides a helpful view of Luther’s Small Catechism and the Bible, and offers several short articles that focus on how Lutherans and others may read, interpret, and study the Bible. Helpful hints for personal Bible reading and study can be found here as well. Be sure to spend some time reviewing this rich collection of articles and resources.

A Word about Dates

In Lutheran Study Bible, dates are designated by the initials B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era). These correspond to the traditional dating convention of B.C. and A.D. The abbreviation B.C. stands for “before Christ,” while A.D. stands for the Latin phrase *anno domini* (“in the year of our Lord”). A monk named Dionysius Exiguus invented this dating system in Rome in 525, based on his work on calculating the date of Easter. While the system attempted to mark Jesus’ birth as the transition point in history, it was later discovered that the calculation of Jesus’ birth year was incorrect. It is now believed that Jesus was more likely born in about 4 B.C. (B.C.E.).

We recognize that some readers may prefer the traditional dating abbreviations, which call attention to the importance of Christ’s incarnation and center human history around that event. We also recognize that we share history with people of many faiths, including Jewish brothers and sisters with whom we share sacred Scripture. Therefore, we have chosen to follow the lead of several other study Bibles and scholars today and use the B.C.E. and C.E. dating abbreviations.

A Word about the Translation

The New Revised Standard Version translation of the Bible (NRSV) was chosen because of its continued wide use in the church. Research revealed a strong preference for the use of this translation in a new Lutheran Study Bible. The NRSV is acclaimed for its accuracy, clarity, and inclusivity. It continues to be an important translation for use in various teaching settings.

Using this Bible

Lutheran Study Bible has been designed to support confirmation study and various adult learning settings. Here are some additional ways to use the resources:

- Consider using various articles as the basis for teaching activities.
- Make use of the helpful hints for individual study.
- Discuss the Faith Reflection questions with others.

- Adopt a personal reading plan. Use the study notes for guidance as you read. Consider writing your reflections and your questions in a journal.
- Read and think about the many Lutheran Perspectives notes. Use them to learn or review important Lutheran teachings and practices. Those who are new to the Lutheran faith may find these perspectives to be particularly helpful.

The Bible is an exciting but challenging book. It can be difficult to understand. We hope Lutheran Study Bible will be a valuable guide and companion to your reading and study of the Bible. We hope it does indeed help you become more fluent in Scripture, the first language of faith. As we become more fluent in God's life-giving, renewing Word, we are better equipped to live out our Christian faith for the sake of the world.

Acknowledgments

You will see the large number of contributors on pp. 10-11. We thank them for their work and for their willingness to participate in this major undertaking. We also thank the board of consultants for helping shape the design of the project and for reviewing selected material. Their insights and ongoing counsel were invaluable.