

Raising Children in the Lutheran Faith

You can find books with good suggestions for raising children in many sources: Lutheran, Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelicals, and probably even in the Mormon, Moslem, Buddhist, and secular press. This paper is not intended to deal with all the good recommendations for developing the characteristics we would like to see in our children. This paper does intend to examine why a Lutheran's approach to teaching our children about God is different than the modern Evangelical's.

Lutherans believe that an infant can achieve full salvation through baptism. Almost all Evangelicals will not. They have a hodgepodge of ideas about babies including that babies are innocent and would not be condemned by God or other non-scriptural ideas. They will start to teach their children with the idea of preparing them for the time when the children will be old enough to make their own decision to follow Christ and be partakers of salvation. Lutherans do not feel that assurance of salvation should rest upon a decision or conversion experience, because there is no verse in the Bible that shows where even one person trusted it or where it is commanded, either.

Babies can hear before they are born. The gospel has to power to save, and the name of Jesus and the assurances of the cross should begin to be spoken before the baby is born. The word will make an impression even then. After the baby is born, it should be baptised, providing a source of lifelong assurance of salvation. These children should then be raised with the conviction that they have a new life and nature in them that will respond to the teaching of the law and gospel. They should be treated as equal heirs of salvation with the adults. This will also help preserve the correct view of salvation in us, as adults. Children need to be corrected with the law. Children need to be reassured of forgiveness with the gospel. So do we.

Since in communion, we not only receive forgiveness of sins (as we do in baptism), but also experience a oneness with those who hold similar doctrinal convictions, children should receive instruction in the central doctrines of the Bible, summarized by Luther's catechism first.

Raising children in the faith is one of the greatest responsibilities placed upon us. Exposure to the gospel may produce in them a life of service to God. Someday in heaven we may be their servants. That should probably be our goal. But, in the meantime, even though they are in our care, they are really God's children.

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