

Luther's Legacy for Laity
Disc 4: Dr. Kathryn Kleinhans
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This study guide will follow the 7 parts of Dr. Kleinhans's DVD. Each part will include a brief summary, a list of Biblical passages (when applicable) and questions for discussion. Key glossary terms will be listed at the end of each section.

Part 1: Introduction to Bondage of the Will

Summary:

Luther's text on The Bondage of the Will was part of a debate with another church reformer, Desiderius Erasmus. Erasmus believed humans had free will to believe in God, but Luther believed that free will after the fall existed in name only.

Biblical References: Romans 6:1,2; John 8:31-38

Confessional References: Heidelberg Disputation 1518, LW 31:40

Activities/Questions for Discussion:

1. Why would many (then and now) choose to side with Erasmus rather than Luther in their debate?
2. If humans lack the ability to not choose sin, how can we be held responsible for the sins we commit?
3. If indeed, humans do lack the ability to not choose sin and are held responsible for their sins, are they not in some sense victims?
4. If humans are victims, what does this imply about the nature of God?
5. Can a master craftsman build a masterpiece with broken tools?
6. What comes to your mind when you hear "bondage of the will?"
7. Have you had an experience when you've been vulnerable enough to need help instead of being the caregiver?

Part 2: The Necessity of Grace

Summary:

According to Luther, nothing can exist without the will of God and we are in bondage to sin. Therefore, God's grace is our only means of salvation.

Biblical References: Luke 19:10; Romans 5:6-8; 7:19

Confessional References: none

Activities/Questions for Discussion:

1. Do we really need God, or can we deal with issues, including the concept of salvation, through other means, e.g. humanism, morality, science, etc?

2. If grace given by God is the only means to attain salvation, why doesn't every faith or religious tradition (particularly Protestants other than Lutherans), accept this concept?
3. Define "theology of the cross" and "theology of glory."
4. What is the purpose of the laws in the Bible? Why do we have them?

Part 2: The Necessity of Grace continued

Glossary: *Immutability:* a condition of never changing or varying;
Omnipotent: all-powerful; having unlimited power or authority

Part 3: Luther on Sin

Summary:

Luther took issue with the Roman Catholic Church over its belief that baptism takes care of original sin.

Biblical References: none

Confessional References: none

Activities/Questions for Discussion:

1. According to the Roman Catholic Church, what is the difference between actual and original sin?
2. Discuss the "natural state" of humans.
3. How does concupiscence affect our ability to know which god to trust? Give examples.
4. What does congruence have to do with sin and the grace of God?
5. Why was it necessary for God's own son to die?
6. React to this statement: "The question isn't whether or not there's a God, but rather whether the God you put your trust in has the power to save!"

Glossary: *Concupiscence:* self-centeredness

Congruence: Two things are congruent when you can superimpose one over the other and you have an exact match.

Purgatory: According to the Roman Catholic Church, purgatory is a place where some people go after death. There, they are given an opportunity to "work off" the sins they have committed during their life time. Only people ultimately destined for heaven will go to purgatory.

Part 4: Theological Anthropology (part one)

Summary:

According to Genesis 1 we are/were created in God's image, However, all humans have rebelled against God and our actions of rebellion have put mankind in its present state or condition.

Biblical References: Genesis 1,3

Confessional References: none

Activities/Questions for Discussion:

1. What does it mean to be human?
2. Does your answer to question number 1 change when you add God to the picture?
3. How does Theological Anthropology define “joyful exchange?”

Part 5: Theological Anthropology (part two)

Summary:

According to Theological Anthropology man is not independent but defined by his/her relationship to God and one another.

Biblical References: Exodus 3:14

Confessional References: The Freedom of the Christian, 1520

Activities/Questions for Discussion:

1. How can any human be both saint and sinner simultaneously?
2. If “good works” won’t get you to heaven, why do them?
3. Why is it only appropriate for God to say, “I am who I am?”
4. How can we be “subject to none” and “subject to all” at the same time?
5. Of the 56 volumes of Luther’s writings, he wanted to be remembered for the Small Catechism and the Bondage of the Will. Why do you think that is?

Part 6 Ethics (part one)

Summary:

This portion of the DVD begins the conversation about the roles different kinds of law play in our lives.

Biblical References: Romans 14:2

Confessional References: none

Activities/Questions for Discussion:

1. Compare the roles of civil and theological law in society today.
2. Why shouldn’t you allow yourself to become paralyzed by fear of not making a “right choice?”
3. When and where in your life have you been or are currently paralyzed?

Glossary:

antinomian: Someone who believes in the Christian doctrine that faith alone, not obedience to the moral law, is necessary for salvation.

Part 7: Ethics (part two)

Summary:

God deals with us through promises and we respond through faith. God doesn't need us to do anything for him; our neighbor needs the works.

Biblical References: none

Confessional References: LW 36:42

Activities/Questions for Discussion:

1. How do we use Deontological, Teleological, and Character ethics in society today?
2. Identify a major problem with Teleological ethics.
3. Explain how the heart of Christian ethics is baptism.
4. What "sending" message is most often used in your church?
5. What is our "vocation" as Christians?

Glossary:

Deontology: is an ethical doctrine, which holds that the worth of an action is determined by its conformity to some binding rule.

Teleology: is a process of evaluation of conduct in relation to the end or ends it serves.

Character: In this application, Character equates to moral strength, self-discipline and/or fortitude.