

**Luther's Legacy for Laity**  
**Disc 1: Dr. Timothy Wengert**  
**Ministerium of Pennsylvania Professor**  
**Reformation History**  
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This study guide will follow the 10 parts of Dr. Wengert's DVD. Each part will include a brief summary, a list of Biblical passages and citations from the Book of Concord (Wengert Edition) when used, and questions for discussion. Key glossary terms will be listed at the end of each section.

**Part 2: Down Religion**

**Summary:**

Down Religion is very good news, since it is all about God's coming all the way down to us on the cross. No more ladders to climb or decisions to make. Dr. Wengert, quoting Luther, uses the example of our ears being the most passive of our senses to describe how salvation works. Paul does the same in Romans 10:17 where he says that faith comes by hearing. It is from this radical understanding of salvation that Luther drew his inspiration for the now famous trilogy of "word alone, faith alone, and grace alone." Luther believed that something happens to us when we hear the word in our ears. Faith is born inside of us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Like falling in love, it is not something that we decide would be a good and prudent choice for our future. Faith, like love, happens to us. Certainly, once we have fallen in faith/love we can decide all sorts of things. We can even decide to run away from faith/love. But we can't create the relationship in the first place. God comes to us in Jesus in our baptisms and names and claims us as his own.

**Biblical References Part 2:**

John 1:14  
Romans 10:17  
John 3:16

**Confessional References in Part 2:**

Page 355 paragraph 6

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Down Religion is good news. Why?
2. What impact might Dr. Wengert's dream of highlighting the phrase of the Nicene Creed "who for us and our salvation came down from heaven..." in all our hymnbooks have on our understanding of salvation?
3. Read Romans 10:17. Then read it a second time and replace "hearing" with "deciding." What difference would that make in our understanding of grace alone?

4. Dr. Wengert used the example of falling in love with his second wife to describe what faith is. In what ways is faith like falling in love? Does that free us from the Up Religion trap of deciding for Jesus? How?
5. Drs. Jensen and Gritsch call Down Religion, “Because...Therefore” Religion. Compare/contrast that with If/Then religion.
6. Many faith traditions object to infant baptism, since a baby is too young to decide for Jesus. Why is infant baptism practiced by Lutherans?
7. Compare/contrast Dr. Wengert’s two drawings of Up Religion and Down Religion. Which one describes where you think most people of faith are at?
8. What impact might this understanding of the importance of hearing the word have on your own worship attendance patterns and your personal Bible reading practice?
9. Read Luther’s explanation of the third article of the creed. Does this sound like Up Religion or Down Religion? (Page 355 paragraph 6)

**Glossary:**

*Nicene Creed* – It was written during an ecumenical council held in Nicea in 325 to combat Arianism at the request of Emperor Constantine. It was probably based on an early baptismal creed. In ecumenical councils held in Constantinople in 381, Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 451 this Nicene Creed was refined and affirmed.

*Unconditional Religion* – Down religion or Because...Therefore religion is based solely on God’s love for us, and God’s willingness to give up his very self on the cross so that we might have eternal life.