



REDEEMING QUALITIES: Learning to Share Our Mission



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF THE REDEEMER
Gastonia, NC



by Candice A. Johnson

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⁶ *Just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.*
⁷ *Let your roots grow down into Him, and let your lives be built on Him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.* (Colossians 2:6-7)

Throughout this study in God's Word, you will be encouraged to accept God's welcome, to grow in receiving His grace, and to boldly respond to His call. These actions will result in an increasing awareness of God's power working through you and others as your congregation takes intentional steps toward WELCOMING, GROWING, and SENDING as a way to fulfill your congregational mission.

Our Mission is to welcome people in, to help all grow in God's gracious gifts and abilities, so that we may be sent out to care for others in our families, our congregation, our neighborhood and in the world, sharing the Good News in Christ's name.

WELCOME, GROW, SEND

A continuing cycle begins when soil WELCOMES seed, providing a medium for nutrients that cause GROWTH. This makes it possible for a seedling to mature into a plant that blooms, bears fruit, and SENDS out pollen and seed.

God the Father WELCOMED creation, speaking things into being. He shared the very Breath of His Spirit and walked in the garden with those He created in His own image. The Word then became flesh to live and GROW among us, SENDING us out empowered by the very Breath that began the process.

Jesus began a cycle that continues today when He WELCOMED twelve unlikely folks into relationship with Him. They GREW in understanding and knowledge as their relationship with Him and with each other deepened. The One who initially welcomed them, then SENT them out to continue the cycle by welcoming other unlikely folks into this holy and amazing relationship.

WELCOME – It's all about relationship ... aka Grace and Response!

GROW – No Kidding. It's all about Grace and Response!!

SEND – Seriously! It IS all about Grace and Response!!!

THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND FOR THIS STUDY

When exploring the Scripture passages in this study, our focus will be centered on God's grace and our response. Grace and response are central in Luther's teachings. The Lutheran Doctrine of Grace states, "We are justified by grace through faith, apart from works of the law." (Talk with Pastor Jeff, and read Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 3:21-26 if you want to explore this doctrine more deeply.)

Luther wrote in his *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*:

Faith is a work of God in us [WELCOME], which changes us and brings us to birth anew from God. It kills the old Adam, makes us completely different people in heart, mind, senses, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it [GROW]. What a living, creative, active powerful thing is faith! It is impossible that faith ever stop doing good. Faith doesn't ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them. It is always active [SEND].

Thus, God bestows grace upon us through His love, His forgiveness, and access to His presence – neither because we have earned it nor because we have done anything to deserve it. Bestowing grace is simply God's nature.

God freely gives this costly gift – and when we open ourselves to receive it, our response naturally flows. As this response grows, it impacts all our relationships, thus bringing into everyday life what Luther calls Grace and Response.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES PRACTICED THROUGH THIS STUDY

- Establishing a daily discipline of reading God's Word is essential to our Christian walk. This study is one that requires preparation in advance to meeting with your group. It is our hope that you will use these nine weeks as an opportunity to cultivate a daily "quiet time" 1) for reading and studying Scripture; 2) for reflection and prayer; and 3) for listening as God instructs and guides you.
- Mention of working with a prayer partner is made throughout this study and designated with a ☩. You may already have someone with whom you regularly pray – or you may choose to ask someone in your group to fill this role for you. Jesus said, "For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:20)

By praying together – seeking God's guidance and will, we have not only the promise of Jesus' presence, but also the perspective of each other's gifts and experiences. In addition, prayer-partnering offers a level of accountability to our Christian walk that is typically absent unless we intentionally create this avenue to help us grow into responsible Christ-followers.

- Memorizing Scripture is a discipline that helps us grow and mature in our faith. As you read the following words of the prophet Jeremiah, open your

mind and heart to soak in God’s message to WELCOME, GROW, and SEND. Commit this verse to memory before the end of this nine-week study.

⁷ “... **blessed are those who trust in the LORD
and have made the LORD their hope and confidence.** [WELCOME]

⁸ **They are like trees planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach deep into the water.
Such trees are not bothered by the heat
or worried by long months of drought.** [GROW]

**Their leaves stay green,
and they never stop producing fruit.”** [SEND]

Jeremiah 17:7-8

PRIMARY SOURCE FOR THIS STUDY

The primary source for this study is Holy Scripture. In order to mature in our Christian walk, it is important that we familiarize ourselves with God’s Word in its entirety, exploring passages of Scripture in light of the whole – and trusting Scripture to interpret Scripture. While the knowledge and study of scholars is indeed valuable, it is important to ultimately consider the whole of God’s Word over secondary interpretations.

The New Living Translation of the Holy Bible (NLT) is presented throughout this study; however, you might find it interesting to explore other translations as you study the texts presented. Allow God’s Holy Spirit to draw you deeply into His Word, opening your mind and heart to His message as well as to His mystery.

♪ A FINAL NOTE AS YOU BEGIN

Music is an effective tool that opens our hearts, minds, and spirits to God’s Word. Below are a few examples of hymns and songs that you might find helpful as you work through each section. There are many others; listen to God’s guidance – and enjoy!

Welcome

- *All Are Welcome* (ELW 641)
- *By Your Side* (Tenth Avenue North)
- *Children of the Heavenly Father* (LBW 474)
- *Day by Day* (WOV 746)
- *Great is Thy Faithfulness* (WOV 771)
- *People Like Me* (MIKESCHAIR)
- *Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us* (ELW 789)

Grow

- *Even If* (MercyMe)
- *Keep Making Me* (Sidewalk Prophets)
- *Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us* (ELW 707)
- *Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil* (WOV 713)
- *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less* (LBW 293, 294)
- *Voice of Truth* (Casting Crowns)
- *When Peace Like a River* (ELW 785)

Send

- *Do Something* (Matthew West)
- *Go My Children, with My Blessing* (WOV 721)
- *Lift High the Cross* (LBW 377)
- *Live Like That* (Sidewalk Prophets)
- *O Zion, Haste* (LBW 397)
- *The Motions* (Matthew West)
- *Until the Whole World Hears* (Casting Crowns)