

## Seven secrets your Lutheran pastor never told you

**Your pastor won't tell you these secrets because he knows that we must go through much tribulation to enter the kingdom of heaven.**

Many today want their Christian life to be easy and think, "There's got to be an easier way!" Sadly, some discover these seven "secrets."

**Eat whatever you like and gain nothing!** Spiritually, just take in whatever pleases your palate and, seriously, you won't see any spiritual growth anywhere. Forget about getting nourishment from the Scriptures and don't concern yourself at all with the Lord's Supper. If you find a writer or preacher whose ideas make you feel good or if you just have some great thoughts of your own, just fill up on those!

**Only go to church when you have to.** After all, there's no law that requires you to be there on any given Sunday, and surely you've heard about "Christian freedom." You know that the pastor is going to talk about Jesus and people are going to sing, so it's not like you don't know it all already. Just go to church when your mom or dad gets a little too pushy or on major holidays when things are more fun. Go just often enough to keep the pastor and elders off your back. You'll find not going only gets easier the longer you stay away!

**Never grow up!** Peter Pan was a clever guy. If you never make any effort to grow up in your faith or life as a Christian, then you can use ignorance—"I just didn't know!"—and immaturity—"What did you expect from me? You know what kind of Christian I am!"—as ready excuses throughout your life.

**Since we are justified by grace, let grace justify anything!** Why worry about whether something is a sin or improper or might hurt someone else when you can just act now and ask forgiveness later? It might even turn out that no one cares what you've done or said. But even if God is bothered, count on his love to mean he doesn't really care.

**Treat your baptism as a get-out-of-hell-free card or good luck charm.** Remember just enough of what your baptism means so you can say, "I've been baptized, so all my sins are washed away and I'm God's child." Then forget everything else. Believe and live however you want, and if anyone ever tries to correct you, just say, "Hey, don't worry about me—my parents got me baptized."

**Claim neutrality.** Whenever and wherever being a Christian means taking some kind of uncomfortable stand or puts you in an awkward situation, just take a step back. Leave God's Word completely out of your considerations and just remain neutral. After all, who really is to say what's right and what's wrong?

**Run from responsibility.** Even if you ignore the other six secrets, this one is so simple anyone can do it. Once you get started, it just gets easier. If something goes wrong, don't worry about it. It's not your fault. You didn't do anything wrong. No need to repent and try to do better. Find someone else who can take responsibility. Don't take responsibility for your marriage, children, church, or society. They all serve you, and whatever is wrong must be someone else's responsibility. When something needs to be done, only worry about yourself. Let other people take care of everything and everyone else.

### **The real secrets are not secret**

These "secrets" are indeed not anything you really want to know. Yet every one of them is a real approach to the Christian life followed by real believers. Every one has the potential to starve or strangle faith and to leave souls unsaved and headed to hell.

Your Lutheran pastor would never tell you these "secrets" because, as your shepherd, he wants to keep you from all spiritual harm. He does not follow the latest Gallup Poll or the lowest-common-denominator approach to Christianity. His goal is to be faithful to the Lord Jesus.

And your pastor will keep these "secrets" from you because he is a confessional Lutheran who has vowed to teach and preach nothing but the truth from the Word of God and about the Christian life.

Your pastor has another list designed by God for your spiritual health and growth:

**The only diet for a Christian is one that feasts on the means of grace.** The Holy Spirit promises to work in our hearts only through the gospel in Word and sacraments.

**Church is where believers *want* to be every week.** That is where they are fed, where they worship, and where they encourage others even as they are encouraged.

**Growth in knowledge and maturity in faith are the goals of every child of God throughout life.** Like any living thing, a faith that is not growing is dying.

**God's grace makes us eager to please God.** Paul wrote to refute the idea that grace gives a Christian license to sin: "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" (Romans 6:15). We are forgiven and have eternal life. That makes us all the more eager to please and obey the One who has forgiven us.

**Baptism means we struggle with sin.** It's not a get-out-of-hell-free card. Martin Luther taught us in the Small Catechism "that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever" (Fourth part of Baptism).

**Where God has spoken, there can be no neutrality or compromise.** We who have the Word must stand on it, and neither the ignorance nor intransigence of others offers any excuse for unclarity. Differences of doctrine or opinion among Christians are not evidence that the truth cannot be known, but proof that some don't know or have rejected the truth.

**Christians can no more run from responsibility than they can slip from their skins.** We all have callings that are our joyful privilege to carry out. We serve God by serving our neighbor in our roles as parents and children, sisters and brothers, teachers and students, laborers and bosses, citizens and soldiers, church officers and members, teachers and pastors, ushers and greeters, witnesses and workers.

Don't believe those who say following Jesus is easy. Bliss and comfort are what await us in paradise. But this side of heaven, we still have to live with the reality of sin in the world, in ourselves, and even in the church. That's why Jesus didn't call us to the couch or the coffee shop; he called us to the cross. As his disciples, we each pick up our own cross and follow him through pains, struggles, and all the hardships of the Christian life to joy and eternal life