

# "God's Directions"

Text: 1 Timothy 4:6-11

Grace, mercy and peace be multiplied to you as heirs of Everlasting Life – a Life that you even now enjoy as Children of God our Heavenly Father, and as joint heirs with Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, later this week a good number of your fellow Christians in the Church of the Lutheran Confession will head to Eau Claire, WI to take part in the 37<sup>th</sup> Convention of the CLC. I too, together with our two delegates, plan to head west on I-94 to represent St Paul Congregation and to participate in the process.

Do you see any problems with that plan? The problem, of course, is that if we get into our cars and head *west* on I-94 we will never get where we want to go – not in the time allotted for our travel anyway. East would work much better.

In much the same way each one of us travels day by day through this vale of tears enroute to an indescribably joyful gathering of all the saints on the Last Day. We have been brought to life (converted) by the Holy Spirit and that life that lives in us now will, by the grace of God, never be taken from us – ever. The problem is not destination; the problem is direction. All Christians are agreed on where we want to end up; an ever-increasing majority seems confused about the path laid out by our God on how we get there. Again, not destination, direction.

That is where *doctrine* comes in (disparagingly known as "the D-word" in some circles.) In fact many now hear the word "doctrine" as something disagreeable and outdated, something that Christians just shouldn't talk about at any great length or in any great detail. Doctrine, simply defined, is anything and everything the Bible teaches. Christians today are often strong on faith and focused on their ultimate goal, but weak on doctrine. Using the image we mentioned earlier, here's the problem with that: Christians are strong on the vehicle and the destination, weak (in the extreme) on directions. Many in our society seem to be of the opinion that any old route will get you there – it's faith in Jesus that is the key. Christians have obviously taken their cue in all of this from the unbelieving world, which believes that any old vehicle and any old route will get you to the place you want to go.

But Christians aren't *lost*, like unbelievers in the world. By definition a *Christian* is someone who believes that what Jesus Christ did for us,

through his perfect life and innocent death on the cross, paid the full penalty for all sins. A Christian is an heir of heaven through faith in his Savior Jesus. That being true, is doctrine really all that important? Aren't there, in fact, different interpretations of God's Word that make different doctrinal paths to heaven not only a reality but a necessity? Is there any real problem with that?

Our text for this morning addresses this and other weighty matters, and therefore we read it now with great interest, thought, and care. That text is found in Paul's First Letter to Timothy, the Fourth Chapter:

ESV **1 Timothy 4:6-11** *If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. <sup>7</sup> Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; <sup>8</sup> for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. <sup>9</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. <sup>10</sup> For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. <sup>11</sup> Command and teach these things.*

This is God's Word - the words of our kind and merciful God. *Kind*, because he has here reached out to us poor, hopeless, helpless sinners, and *merciful* because it is we who have rebelled against him, and therefore deserve only his anger, rejection, and punishment. So we strive to make careful use of the gift of these words, and to that end we pray, "**Sanctify us in the truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth.**" Amen.

You may all have heard similar accounts from your own acquaintances. A dear Christian man from another city lamented the fact that almost none of his children attend a conservative, Christ-centered church faithfully. In fact one son had already died, tragically, and not one of his grandchildren goes to church at all. Sadly, but not surprisingly, the family seems to have quite a laundry list of serious temporal problems. While one can certainly sympathize with the pain such a thing must bring to that Christian man's heart, we would all do well to examine what brought about that sad situation. What could have been done differently? How can we learn from any mistakes he might have made and thereby avoid such heartache and looming calamity?

While it is most certainly true that sinful human beings can, all on their own, abandon the good path on which their parents led them, many times the seeds of the problems were sown by the parents themselves. In this case the man tipped his hand when he admitted, *"I don't pay much attention to doctrine. I leave that up to the Pastor. I just go to church and listen to the gospel."* Does that sound so bad? How many here today could use those same words to describe his or her own attitude or feelings about religion? Now ask yourself, how many here would like to trade places with that man and carry the dread he feels concerning the family he loves? How many would do anything in their power to avoid such catastrophe?

God gave us doctrine for a reason. Arrogant mankind today believes that society could and should dictate not only right from wrong, even many Christians believe that we should be free to pick and choose which parts of God's Holy Word we will believe and follow. Returning to the comparison between *doctrine* and *directions*, while it is certainly true that faith in Jesus Christ alone saves, it is also true that the quickest and surest way to destroy saving faith is to abandon doctrine. What exactly does that mean?

For starters, saying *"I don't bother with doctrine; I just believe in Jesus"* is nonsensical on the face of it. To *"believe in Jesus"* means to believe that Jesus was punished for sin in our place. It means believing that God visited the punishment for all of our sins on his Son and has declared that the debt of man's sin has thereby been paid in full. That's not only *doctrine*, it's the chief Christian Doctrine of Justification. Using again our analogy of destination vs directions, since heaven is our destination or goal, the Doctrine of Justification is the most important direction God has ever revealed to mankind on how to arrive at that destination – like the difference between heading east instead of west.

Returning to our text, listen again to what Paul told Timothy: ***"If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed."*** Note the two things Paul emphasized here to the young pastor, Timothy. He spoke of being ***"nourished in the words of faith,"*** (remember we are saved by grace through *faith* alone) but he also added, ***"and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed."*** Note two other things about these words. Not any doctrine would do, and not just any old haphazard following would do. Timothy was to hold to and instruct the ***"good doctrine."*** It is *good* because God made it good by causing it to be recorded in his Word. *Bad doctrine* is the nonsense manufactured by men. Paul dismisses that sort of thing with these words: ***"But reject profane and old wives' fables..."*** Jesus also condemned and dismissed such nonsense in Matthew 15:8-9,

***"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; <sup>9</sup> in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."***

Doctrine is God's direction, and just as bad directions will get you lost, so also bad doctrine will can get you eternally lost. That's also why not any old interpretation of God's Word is fine with God. There are directions that will get us lost; directions that will guide us where our Lord does not want us to go. It is for good reason that God in his Word continually stresses *fully* and ***"carefully"*** following the right doctrine. Why? Why is it important to God that we fully and carefully follow everything that he taught us in the Bible? It is important because he loves us with a pure and holy love – an amazing love beyond our full comprehension. Sinners though we are, God's desire is that we spend eternity with him in heaven. God in his wisdom knows that the best and safest route to an eternity with him is the path he has outlined in his Word. That's what doctrine is all about. It is never supposed to be an end in itself. It is his loving directions to the most blessed destination imaginable.

So what are we talking about here in practical terms? We already defined doctrine as anything the Bible teaches, but how does that really affect us day by day here in time? Pick a doctrine at random – a truth that the Bible teaches. Holy Communion for example. The Bible teaches that only those who can properly examine themselves should come to Communion. Why? Because we are running some sort of exclusive club here? Hardly. God has given us this *doctrine* because communing in an unworthy manner (not recognizing that we there receive the very body and blood of our Savior Jesus) can lead to our spiritual harm. A loving God does not give us doctrine to harm us. He gives us doctrine because he loves us and wants to protect us. Another doctrine connected to Holy Communion is the use of wine and unleavened bread (rather than grape juice and crackers.) Why do we need to fuss about such things? Because God wants to give us spiritual strengthening from this sacrament. At some point this benefit would be lost if we tampered with God's plan. Why not walk as our loving God instructed us to walk? What could possibly be good or positive when we fail to follow his directions?

Take a moment and pick a doctrine – any teaching found in the Bible. You will find that it was given out of love and compassion, never anything else. Why do we baptize infants? Because infants are sinners and need forgiveness, and the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit works saving faith through the Word and water of Baptism, and with faith

comes forgiveness. Why keep this great gift from the youngest of sinners? The Doctrine of Fellowship? God knows that error leads us away from faith in Jesus Christ. All error erodes saving faith, and the only way to safely protect ourselves from error is to separate from it. Man sees this as cold and exclusive. God sees it as loving and tragically necessary. The Doctrine of the Last Things? Why does it matter what we believe about how the world will come to an end and whether or not there will be a rapture and a 1000-year rule of Christ here on earth? God loves us too much to allow us to imagine that there will be an obvious time to repent after the so-called rapture. He knows how tempted mankind will be to “put off all that religion stuff” until that so-called rapture. And since that rapture is a myth that is not taught in God’s Word, precious souls will delay until it is too late. God’s solution is to be ready at all times – for temporal death or for our Savior’s return on Judgment Day.

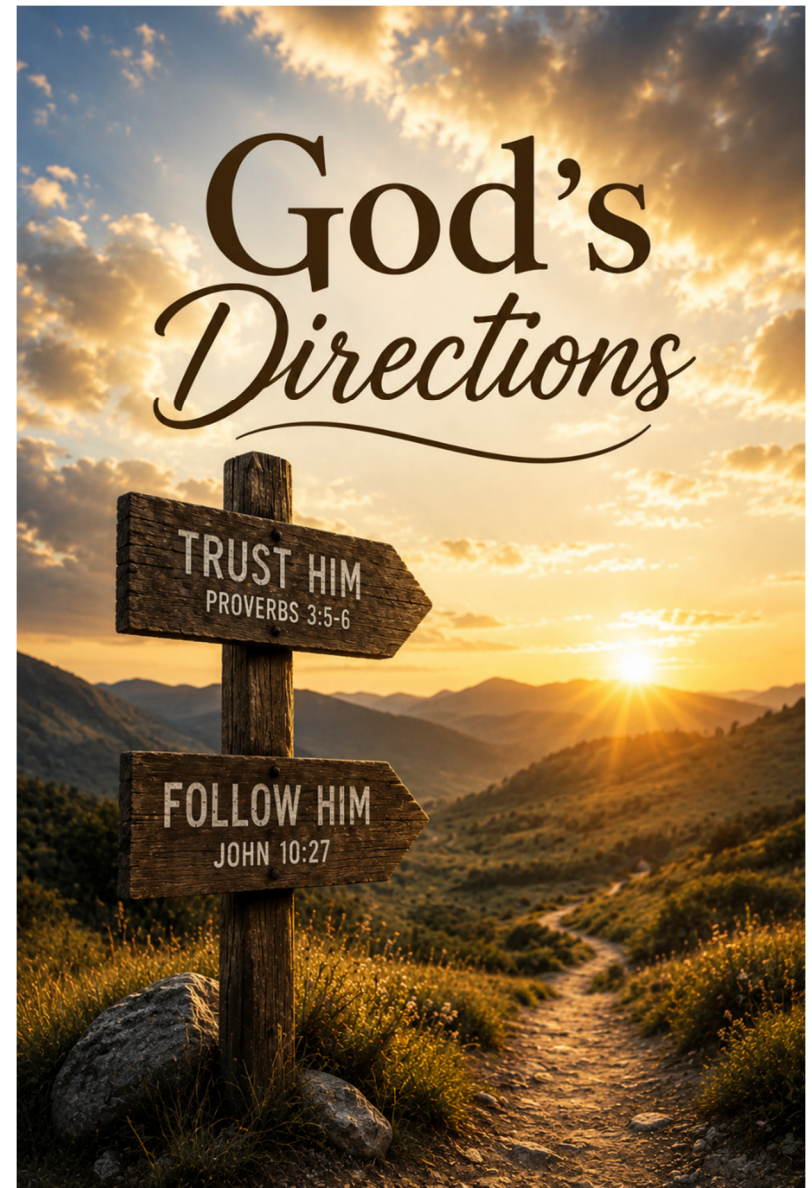
God our Father not only demonstrates his love in the gospel message of Jesus Christ, he also demonstrates his love for us in every Biblical doctrine. What child of God would want to reject that love and choose another path?

Finally, our text tells us, ***“But godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”*** Don’t miss the full import of these words and all that they teach us. We will not one day inherit eternal life; we have it right now. ***“The life that now is”*** will never end for the Child of God. This body of ours may have to pass through temporal death (if Christ does not return before our time of grace on earth is ended) but that spirit he has brought to life in us will never die. Never. It will simply go on living in eternity with God, never passing through death. Jesus, our Savior, has given us the life that never ends. It is our possession and no one can take it from us. That is why Paul says in our text, ***“For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.”*** This is the message we want to now share with the world – a positive, up-beat, glorious message that we all share the same Savior, Jesus Christ. He died for all sins, theirs as well as ours. Thanks be to God for the vehicle of faith by which we are saved, the destination that is now certainly ours, and the loving path he has laid out for us in his Word. Amen.

ESV **Romans 6:12-23** Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. <sup>15</sup> ¶ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. <sup>19</sup> I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. <sup>20</sup> ¶ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup> But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. <sup>22</sup> But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ESV **Matthew 9:35–38, 10:5-8** And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. <sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup> therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." <sup>5</sup> ¶ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

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# ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

# ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist  
Michael Roehl, Pastor

**The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – June 21, 2026**

## The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

### The Opening Hymn – 384

"Let All Things Now Living"

### The Order of Service – Hymnal page 1ff. *(Blue Hymnal)*

### The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

**The First Lesson:** (Romans 6:12-23) One of the most misused and misunderstood passages in the Bible is "judge not." Our society rips those words from their context and promotes the idea that Jesus thereby told us never to condemn any action as sinful. Yet not only did Jesus once say, "Go, and sin no more," our first reading condemns sin as that which belongs to our old Adam, not the new man. We want nothing to do with the sins that used to enslave us, and which God himself condemns.

### The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 119 (Page 99)

**The New Testament Lesson:** (Matthew 9:35-38, 10:5-8) Though our society disparages God's Word as flawed and outdated, they will often quote it out of context to "prove" their misconceptions. One of those popular misconceptions is that the gospel is all about the promotion of what is today called "social justice." Jesus however told us that his kingdom is not of this world. Christians naturally practice love and compassion, but as a fruit of faith, and it is by faith alone that we are saved. The Christian faith is not "do this" but "Christ paid for all of your sins."

### The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed *(Blue Hymnal page 5)*

### The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 198

"O Word of God Incarnate"

### The Sermon – Text: 1 Timothy 4:6-11 *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

"God's Directions"

### The Offertory – (Blue Hymnal page 7)

### The Post-Sermon Hymn – 200

"God Has Spoken by His Prophets"

### The Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer

### The Benediction

### The Closing Hymn – 385

"Children of the Heavenly Father"

### Silent Prayer

**Welcome!** - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

### Attendance – Sunday (31) Average (35)

#### This Week at St. Paul:

<b>Today</b>	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service
	<b>-11:00 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour
	<b>-11:20 a.m.</b>	– Church Council Meeting
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– CLC Convention
<b>Next Sunday</b>	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service
	<b>-11:00 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour

**CLC News** – Pastor John Schnose is considering calls both to Mapleton/Ponsford and St. Luke's of Lemmon, SD. Pastor Roehl has returned the call to Messiah of Eau Claire, WI. Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer is considering the call to Mt. Zion of Detroit, MI. St. Paul's of Austin, MN has called Pastor Timothy Daub.

**CLC Convention** – This summer's CLC Convention is scheduled to begin on Thursday of this week and run through Sunday at noon. St Paul is being represented at the Convention by Pastor Roehl and our two delegates, Mark Johnson and Mick Johnson. We thank Mark and Mick for serving their Lord and our congregation in this way. Since the Convention is scheduled over the weekend to accommodate lay delegates, a lay service is scheduled for next Sunday at St Paul.

**CLC Women's Retreat West** – This year's western CLC Women's Retreat is scheduled for September 18-20 in Oacoma, SD. For more information or to register, go to:

[www.womensretreat.clclutheran.net/womens-retreat-west](http://www.womensretreat.clclutheran.net/womens-retreat-west)

**Lutheran Spokesman and Daily Rest** – Last chance to renew, begin, or cancel subscriptions for both the Lutheran Spokesman and Daily Rest. The sign-up sheets for each are on the mailbox table, along with instructions on how to fill out the forms.