

# IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS

## CLASS 2 and POWER POINT 2:

1. **"The Original Evangelicals,"** Lutheran spirituality is "Evangelical," It means good news, taken from the Greek that means Gospel and refers to someone who focuses on the Gospel of Christ, His death and resurrection and he has won forgiveness and offers free salvation.
2. For many, "Evangelical," means conservative protestant. This covers a wide variety of protestant churches and non- denominational 'para-church' ministries, and they all stress salvation through Christ and emphasize, "Evangelism," so the term is apt.
3. In the Reformation, Evangelicals followed Luther and the Reformed followed Calvin. There was an attempt to merge the two which became the "Evangelical and Reformed Churches." In Europe today, Lutherans are not called that, Lutheran is a term Luther hated, but Evangelical. The American usage of any Bible-believing, salvation in Christ person is starting to catch on in Europe. But right now, American tourists who go to any European or Scandinavian Church that says "Evangelische," is surprised to find chorales and liturgy, not altar calls and revival songs.
4. All are entitled to call themselves Evangelicals, but Lutherans were the first to use that term. From the NT to The Early Church to the Middle Ages and even during prior to the Reformation era when the Gospel was confused, Christians always focused on the Gospel. Lutherans not only spoke about it, but were the first to emphasize that to every level of doctrine and practice. This Evangelicalism over against Medieval Roman Catholicism opened the door to every other "Protestant," church body, but Evangelical Lutheranism remains distinct.
5. EV, (Edward Veith) who wandered from denom to denom, from liberal to conservative churches, believed to have discovered the Gospel and its implications, he became a Lutheran. This book is that account of that journal partially and that account is similar to what post modern America have found to be an inestimable help and value in this Lutheran Spiritual Tradition. This tradition is mostly unknown in America, even among Lutheran Americans, but it deserves consideration. The teaching of the original Evangelicals may prove to be helpful and relevant to problems vexing much of American Christianity and a voice that can speak in a powerful way that meets the needs and cravings to today's younger generations.
6. SPIRITUALITY AND THEOLOGY: This book is more about spirituality. This is misleading. Many today say they are not interested in creeds, doctrines and institutions, but are interested in 'spirituality.' They are in the market for pleasant mystical experiences with a sense of meaning and well- being, w/o making uncomfortable demands on their minds, behavior, or social position, they want religious experience without religious belief.
7. Those who want 'feel good,' subjective gratification without objective truth, open themselves up to every kind of exploitation and flying saucer cult and New Age seminar. The fact is that there can be no spirituality w/o theology, no experience, w/o belief. Even flying saucer cults and New Age Seminars aren't only selling a mystical jolt, but a world view with assumptions about the nature of reality that underlie their messages.

8. Spirituality is not content free or filled with theological empty quests for their own sake. Spirituality must have content, that fills abstract theology, mundane institutions and everyday life of a Christian with real substance. This quest is genuine and important. EV thinks in our shallow society of materialism, mass produced stuff, people yearn for depth, richness and transcendence. Many don't find this in their own churches (What do they do then?) EV believes that many churches have adopted slick superficialities and manipulative commercialism that has mutated in the modern pop religion of America. Interesting the casualties of this pop religion is that people are finding their ways into older faiths that offer substance. A huge exodus is taking place from Protestantism into Roman Catholic Churches and more significantly into Orthodoxy.
9. This book will show that Protestantism does not lack the vital tradition of inner spiritual life. It is true that the media driven pop American culture has made the Protestant spiritual legacy to be nearly forgotten. Exploring an older and far-less Americanized theological and spiritual tradition should prove helpful for Christians to keep their bearing. Evangelicals of every stripe would do well to uncover the legacy of the first Evangelicals.
10. Lutherans don't like stealing other sheep from other churches and this is not the point of this book. Any Christian can draw insights from this book and there will be disagreements. For example, Calvin has had far effects on Protestants all the way to Baptists. While they may disagree on an issue or two, they have acknowledged his insight. When Christians deal with hot topics like politics, how to live in a sinful world, and the how to deal with suffering, Dr. Luther has penetrating insights, and he deserves his say. The full dose of Lutheran spirituality can only be found in a Lutheran Church.
11. EV writes as a layman. His approach to what he found helpful with this Lutheran tradition is for ordinary folk to grasp as well. This approach will by no means avoid theology. He will avoid the full blown theological and polemical work of theology. He will say virtually nothing about Dr. Martin Luther as interesting as that can be. Lutherans are grounded in history and some might mistake us worshipping Luther rather than Christ. This book will be no less relevant in the 21st<sup>h</sup> century as it was in the 16th century. It may be more, because of the emptiness of our modern age. He is not here to attack or defend against opposing theologies, but to simply lay out Lutheran Spirituality. Take it or leave it, all will come away with a clearer view of Christian tradition.
12. No doubt defense and rebuttal of false theologies are important. Lutheran theology is serious and has been thoroughly worked out. There is much sophisticated theology/Biblical scholarship among Lutherans. He will reference those deep resources if anyone is interested in follow through. But this is not EV's vocation, (A notion made clearer later) If one wants to go deeper, consult a Lutheran pastor, the office of the "cure of souls," can be more concrete than any book. Spiritual life is lived, not conceptualized, and it takes place in an ordinary (mundane) church.