

## Until you get the answer you want. . . studying the ordination of women in the Lutheran Church in Australia<sup>1</sup>

I love the scene in the movie *Moonstruck* in which the character played by Olympia Dukakis keeps asking her question until she gets the answer she thinks is correct. In her case the question is why men chase women (personal since her husband is having an affair). Her almost son-in-law finally blurts out “Because they are afraid of death!” “That’s it!” she insists. Her almost son-in-law is not so sure but she is. It is the one answer she thought correct and she had waited for someone finally to confirm it.

We do exactly the same thing in so many different ways. Children ask the same question to both parents in search for different answers, one of which will be the one they want to hear. It happens in politics and it happens in church. We study things until end up with the conclusions that confirm what we entered the study to find. In other words, we are less interested in the fruits of our study and where it might lead that confirming the presupposition with which we began this study. We study ourselves into the answers we want.

Conservative Christians are usually accused of doing this. Because we give weight to tradition, we study things with a view toward maintaining the position of Scripture and tradition and it takes a great deal to convince us that we got Scripture wrong or that tradition erred. The masters of the idea of studying something until you get the answer you want, however, are on the other side. Those in favor of the ordination of women study and study and study until they find something that supports their initial position in favor of the ordination of women. Those in favor of same sex marriage keep reviewing the old passages and perspectives of the Judeo-Christian tradition until they come up with a different way of reading those passages that will justify their own acceptance of the GLBTQ agenda. In my own Missourian circles, we have studied close(d) communion in this way, “lay” ministry, deacons doing Word and Sacrament ministry, and a host of other hot button issues -- usually looking for a way to calm things down if not settle them but few minds seem to be changed.

In the Lutheran Church in Australia, the issue of women’s ordination (once settled before the merger that created that church body) has now become a hot button issue again and, sure enough, it is being studied and restudied in the pursuit of a different answer than the one settled on when that church body began. In other words, the goal of the study is not to come to consensus but to find enough doubts and questions about the current position and enough support for changing to give cover to those who are intent upon foisting this upon the Lutheran Church in Australia.

In 1989 the LCA CTICR (Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations) established a subcommittee to study the issue of women’s ordination. The deck was stacked already then. Among the five members, only one upheld the teaching of Scripture and the church for the ordination of

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men only. The study ended as so many designed for changing doctrine -- it was neither pro or anti the ordination of women but began the slide by suggesting that it was not such a big deal, perhaps not even church dividing but the arguments for the ordination of women were now fully introduced into that church body.

It was followed later a more popular study booklet for the church as a whole and it was, of course, written by a proponent of women's ordination. In the year 2000, the first official vote took place and it did not prevail (not because there was not support for the ordination of women but because the threshold to make the change was high -- a 2/3 majority).

While that might have signaled defeat, instead it only heralded a call for more -- you guessed it -- study. Members of the CTICR went on the road throughout Australia holding seminars in every District -- under the guise of information, to be sure, but by failing to offer an opinion, the door was opened to considering the move to ordain women as a legitimate one.

So another vote came and went without the 2/3 majority but with the advance of the cause for the ordination of women simply by the fact that the voting tally narrowed considerably and encouraged those who believed that with more study (really an agenda pro the ordination of women), the next vote might well give the necessary majority approval to the introduction to a practice already settled when the church began life.

A third vote taken last year -- encouraged by prayers that the LCA be led into the truth of the matter by the Holy Spirit -- still ended up shy. So, again, you guessed it. Another study was begun with even more overt direction to support the change and ordain women as pastors. Another vote will be taken next year and another study booklet will try to prevent the Holy Spirit from coming up a few votes shy again. In other words, the LCA must study this issue until they get it right (that is, until they change enough minds to support rejecting the position of Scripture and tradition.

It is happening in Australia among Lutherans but it happens everywhere. The position of the enlightened is that enlightenment (generally heresy or at least diversion from Scripture and tradition) will come after study (study that masquerades as neutral but is, in reality, the most potent arguments in favor of the change that they changers can make!).

So the change moves from being wrong to not so clearly wrong to perhaps not even forbidden to it could be acceptable, to perhaps good to it must be right, god-pleasing, and we have no choice but to approve it. . . and the Spirit must be throwing his wings up in disgust!

<sup>1</sup> Taken from <http://pastoralmeanderings.blogspot.com.au/2017/05/until-you-get-answer-you-want-studying.html?m=1>. Authored by Pastor Peters, an LCMS pastor.

