

Martin Luther on Praying God's Word

And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

- *Luke 2:47 English Standard Version*

Amazed is not always the adjective that comes to mind when we think about reading the words of Jesus or reading all of Scripture. In the window of "The Child Jesus in the Temple" (see page 2), we see faces reflecting wonder or deep pondering the words of the young Savior.

Luther wrote instructions to his barber, Peter, on how to prayerfully engage the Word of God. "So, a good and attentive barber keeps his thoughts, attention, and eye on the razor and hair ... How much more does prayer call for concentration and singleness of heart."¹ Luther goes on to give the example of a concentrated way of praying through the Ten Commandments.

I divide each commandment into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands. That is, I think of each commandment as, first, *instruction* ... Second, I turn it into a *thanksgiving*; third, a *confession*; and fourth, a *prayer*.²

Luther's "Four Stranded Garland" can be a guide to praying any passage of Scripture individually or as a group, like those pictured gathered around Jesus in the church window.

A Guide to Praying Scripture with Luther's Four Stranded Garland

Read a selected passage slowly four times.

First Reading: Listen for the instruction God is giving you.

Second Reading: Listen for something for which you would like to give God thanks.

Third Reading: Listen for a way in which you may sinned against God. Confess to God.

Fourth Reading: Listen for people or situations for which God is calling you to pray.

Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 1535, Trans. Carl J. Schindler. (Weincke, Gustav, Ed. 1968. *Devotional Writings, Luther's Works: American Edition, Vol. 43.*), 199.

² Luther, 200.

The Child Jesus in the Temple

