

# Growing Discipleship and Leadership

*Mission Inreach Endowment by Eloise Kuhlman*

During the summer of 1998, the president and recording secretary of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League Texas District, by direction of their Board of Directors and working with the Lutheran Foundation of Texas, signed into place a Mission Inreach Endowment. This Endowment, administered by the Lutheran Foundation of Texas (later renamed Legacy Deo) was established to provide ongoing funding for "spiritual enrichment, member development, and leadership training opportunities for members of the Texas District Lutheran Women's Missionary League."

While the Scholarship and Mission Goal endowments seek to provide funding for sharing the Word of God to those outside of the membership, this endowment reaches to the members themselves to increase the mission we have to women and grow their discipleship and leadership skills. It is altogether fitting, in examining this Mission Inreach Endowment, that we turn to Scripture to see our motivation to fulfill the Endowment goals.

Let's take a look at what the Lord has to say regarding each of the endowment's concepts, beginning with spiritual enrichment.

Since the days of Mary and Martha, women disciples of Jesus have listened to and studied His word. Jesus honored Mary's attention to His words by calling her actions the "good part" (Luke 10:38-42 NKJV).

## **Read 2 Peter 3:17-18**

The apostle Peter writes to an early church that is infiltrated with false teaching and philosophies that run counter to Christ's gospel. Sound familiar? He brings this encouragement to them in chapter 3:

*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.*

1. Verse 17 carries a warning for us. How does that apply to the church of today?
2. How can we protect ourselves against losing our stability in Christ?
3. God's grace is always there for us when we waver. Do we take grace lightly or cheapen it because we know it is always available from God?

### Consider Dietrich Bonhoeffer on the subject:

“Grace without price; grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?”

“(But costly) grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: “ye were bought at a price,” and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.”

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1976, pps.45,47)

4. We can never fully fathom the love God has for us in sending Jesus to pay the price for our sinful nature. Nor can we ever earn it – that is all grace!
5. Growth in grace and His Word guards us against the temptations of the evil one. But growing in grace has many blessings. List some that have come to you in your life.
6. Discuss the old adage, “If you don’t use it, you lose it.” Does it apply here?

Faith may grow, love increases, and hope and patience may be perfected in us. That is God’s work in us, it is all His to accomplish. As we “grow in grace and knowledge” we grow in love toward God and others. We can encourage others to remember the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus so that we can all together be preserved against the errors of the world and our flesh.

7. Peter writes: *To him be glory both now and forever* (2 Peter 3:18 NKJV)! How is God ultimately glorified in us?

### Read Hebrews 6:1

*Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ, and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead work, and of faith toward God,*

The writer to the Hebrews challenges the early church to move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and move toward greater maturity in the faith. In the previous chapter he tells them they do need milk when they first are taught the faith. But now it is time for the solid food of the Word.

1. How does the study of Scripture help you “go on to maturity” in the Word?
2. What other practices enrich your spiritual life?

The Mission Inreach Endowment also supports member development and leadership training. Let's consider those two together as they are discussed in Scripture. Specific examples of leadership exist in both the Old and New Testament. (The book of Nehemiah and the book of Esther.) The elder churchman, Paul, training his young protégé, Timothy, outlines several characteristics he sees as important for this young leader.

### **Read 1 Timothy 1:5-7**

*The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.*

In instructing Timothy, Paul tells him to remember two important truths – a) the aim of making new disciples is love and b) to always affirm the faith they share.

1. Why must leadership always emanate from a posture of love?
2. Why is affirming our faith so crucial within the LWML organization?

Paul reminds Timothy to remain faithful to the sound doctrine of the Gospel. We have been given that great gift as well. In remembering God's love for all the women in our care and recognizing the faith **HE** has created in them, we can celebrate what we have been given as a mission in our organization.

### **Read 1 Timothy 2: 1-8**

Whatever the style or system of leadership we teach, it is always important to pray for one another. What does praying for someone do for you, the one who prays?

Spiritual growth and member development/leadership training: necessary tools in an organization rooted in Christ. It is no small wonder that LWML leaders of the past sought to insure the ongoing pursuit of these goals. To that end, the Mission Inreach Endowment was established that, in future gatherings of the women of LWML, funds might be available to further these goals in the Texas District. To God alone be the glory!



Additional Bible studies and information about the LWML Texas District Endowment Funds may be found at [lwmltxdist.org/endowments-lwml-texas-district](http://lwmltxdist.org/endowments-lwml-texas-district) or requested by email to [endowment@lwmltxdistrict.org](mailto:endowment@lwmltxdistrict.org).