

# LCMS

## Frequently Asked Questions

### LCMS Views – Contemporary Issues

*(To navigate the document, hold down your control key and click the appropriate heading)*

Contemporary Issues.....	2
Acupuncture .....	2
Alcohol.....	3
Christmas trees.....	4
Demonic possession .....	5
Gambling .....	6
Gideons.....	7
God allowing tragedy (2 pages).....	8
Halloween.....	10
Horoscopes.....	11
Lodges, Fraternal Organizations and Fraternities .....	12
Luther’s anti-Semitism.....	13
Madalyn Murray O’Hair (Petition 2493).....	15
Marijuana .....	16
Masons .....	17
Not sinful to lie? .....	18
Tattoos.....	19
Walk to Emmaus.....	20
Yoga .....	21

## Contemporary Issues

---

### Acupuncture

**Q. Given the Eastern origins of acupuncture, does it have occult connections, or is it something a Christian can freely use without harm?**

**A.** In his 1994 book *THE NEW AGE IS LYING TO YOU*, Pastor Eldon Winker, Executive Director of the former Commission on Organizations, has a section on acupuncture in his chapter on New Age Health Care. In that section he notes that "of New Age therapies, acupuncture has the most visible connection to the practice of energy manipulation associated with the Taoistic philosophy of ancient Chinese medicine" (167). Pastor Winker indicates that although "there is evidence that acupuncture does act as an analgesic in reducing the sensation of pain," "the best advice is to avoid involvement with any practice that might lead to occultic influence" (168). If you are interested in reading this section, you may obtain Pastor Winker's book through [Concordia Publishing House](#) (800-325-3040).

In reading evaluations of the practice from a Christian perspective, we too have discovered some uncertainty regarding what precisely we as Christians can or should say about it. The evangelical cult-watch group "Watchman Fellowship" says the following by way of "A Christian Response":

"Because of acupuncture's origins, many Christians may be more comfortable choosing an alternative treatment. It should be noted, however, that some reputable medical doctors reject the Taoist theories of acupuncture and have developed psychological theories that may justify its practice."

Christians who are considering acupuncture treatment should note that even the Western physicians who do accept a limited use of acupuncture as a pain killer or anesthetic almost always see it as a temporary treatment for symptoms and not a cure. At the very least, Christians should avoid practitioners who claim to manipulate invisible energy, or base their practice on Taoist dualism or other Chinese metaphysical assumptions. These speculations are the foundation for traditional acupuncture theory and are incompatible with both known science and the Christian view of the human body and the universe." This seems to be pretty good advice on the whole, and of course, suggests that some individual judgment will have to be exercised to determine the context and intentions of the practice in the given case.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Alcohol

**Q: *What is the LCMS view on the consumption of alcohol?***

**A:** The Bible nowhere condemns the proper and responsible use (consumption) of alcoholic beverages, and neither does The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Scripture does warn strongly and repeatedly against the abuse, misuse or excessive use of alcoholic beverages, and the Missouri Synod has also repeatedly warned against such dangers.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Christmas trees

**Q: *A friend of mine insists that Christmas trees are pagan and false idols because of scripture in Jeremiah 10. Any thoughts?***

**A:** In response to your friend's concerns about idolatry, it must be emphasized that the warnings contained in Jeremiah 10 (and similar passages) have to do with "worshipping" physical objects as "gods" and seeking help and guidance from these false idols. Nowhere does Scripture condemn the proper use of religious art, symbolism, etc. to remind us of the true God and his blessings. It would certainly be wrong to "worship" Christmas trees, pray to them, seek help from them, or attribute to them any spiritual "power." But there is nothing wrong with simply using them as reminders of the beauty of God's creation and of the wonder of his incarnation in Jesus Christ, who "became flesh" for us so that we might be saved.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Demonic possession

**Q: *Does the LCMS hold an official position as to the existence of demonic possession? Does the LCMS retain the Rite of Exorcism as practiced in the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches? Does the LCMS have special clergy assigned to this task?***

**A:** The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod certainly believes in the existence of Satan and of demonic beings, and individual LCMS pastors have participated from time to time in rites of exorcism. The LCMS has no "official position" on "demonic possession," however, nor does it subscribe officially to any formal rite of exorcism or have "special clergy assigned to this task."

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Gambling

**Q: *What is the LCMS view of gambling?***

**A:** In February 1996 our Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations adopted a report titled [Gambling](#), a 14-page document that discusses the practice of gambling in light of six scriptural principles. These principles are as follows:

Gambling encourages the sins of greed and covetousness.

Gambling promotes mismanagement of possessions entrusted to us by God.

Gambling undermines absolute reliance on God for His provision.

Gambling works at cross purposes with a commitment to productive work.

Gambling is a potentially addictive behavior.

Gambling threatens the welfare of our neighbor and militates against the common good.

The document stops short of saying that every form of gambling is in and of itself contrary to the Word of God and therefore sinful.

Read former Synod President Barry's [statement on legalized gambling](#).

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Gideons

**Q: *Has the LCMS taken an official position regarding the Gideons? Our congregation often invites Gideon representatives to give formal presentations during our worship service.***

**A:** The LCMS has taken no official position regarding the Gideons. In evaluating the Gideons, the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations has not found the objectionable features of fraternal brotherhoods (lodges) present in the Gideons.

Judgment as to whether to invite Gideons International representatives to give presentations in or at the end of LCMS worship services (which is fairly common) is a matter left to the judgment of individual pastors and the local congregation. There should be no objection to LCMS members supporting the Bible distribution program of the Gideons.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## God allowing tragedy (2 pages)

**Q: *I am a Lutheran, and at church yesterday I was horrified to find out that my church believes that God let this tragedy and all the other horrible things in the world to happen. I went to church looking for a strong message that God is still there for me, for the families that lost someone, still there for our country. But instead I hear that He let this happen. It sickens me to think that God allows all the horror in the world to happen. How can He allow a little child to die of child abuse? Why not just let the child die sooner, mercifully? Or why does He allow a woman to be raped and murdered, why not just let her die wit out knowing that evil? I always believed that evil and sin make the horrible things in the world. But now I am told, "Almighty God, merciful Father, a very present help in time of trouble, again we are brought to realize that Your thoughts are not our thoughts, Your ways are not our ways. In Your wisdom You have permitted these disastrous events...." What kind of help is God if He caused the problem? I thought man brought sin into the world.***

**A:** You are right when you say that man brought sin into the world. With sin came all the horrible consequences which pervade the whole world. God did not cause sin; He did not CAUSE the problem. One must distinguish between CAUSE and PERMIT/ALLOW. In this sinful world in which we live God at times allows the horrible consequences of sin to happen, in order to discipline those whom He loves (Hebrews 12) for our good. "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" Heb. 12:11. For those who do not know God and remain in their wicked ways, God allows the consequences of their sins to be punishment. If they do not repent and believe and trust in Jesus they will suffer eternal punishment in hell. God is a just God as well as a loving God. He disciplines us in love. We submit to His discipline and live (Heb.12:9). Even though God allows the evil consequences of sin, He still loves us in Jesus and will never forsake or abandon us. He will bring good to us out of the evil consequences of sin. No evil will be able to snatch us out of His hand.

Consider another tower in the Bible that fell on people and killed them. In Luke 13:4-5 God allowed the tower in Siloam to fall on 18 people and crush them to death. Jesus said about that: "Do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish." God allowed that to happen, so that others would repent and live eternally. So it is with us today. God can turn evil to good.

We don't dwell on all the evil that can happen to both Christian and non-Christian in this sinful world, but on all the good which God motivates those who love Him to do. Don't blame God; lay Him to heart, trust unwaveringly in Him and His Savior, even though you may not understand completely all that He allows, and He will give you life now and forever with Him. Don't throw His love and salvation overboard, just because you are not God.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Halloween

**Q: *Has the LCMS said anything officially on the celebration of Halloween? May we permit children to dress as goblins and ghosts, etc.? What should we teach our children concerning this celebration?***

**A:** The LCMS has not officially spoken to the observance of Halloween in any of its resolutions or statements. Frankly, opinions differ in our church regarding the appropriateness of Christians observing Halloween customs. Those who oppose the observance of Halloween by Christians argue that its origins are pagan and that emphasis on the Occult in our society finds expression in various kinds of Halloween symbols, parties and activities. Others argue that, generally speaking, current Halloween customs have little to do with pagan roots in the minds of most, and that there is no harm done in permitting our children to enjoy such customs.

In general, this is a good example of an issue where "sanctified common sense" and a balanced approach are necessary--with sensitivity to the "witness value" of a given action or activity in a specific context. On the one hand, we do not want to minimize the potential dangers of involvement with occultic symbols and practices. At the same time, we do not want to lay a burden of conscience on others in matters that lie in the area of Christian freedom and sound Christian judgment.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Horoscopes

**Q:** *Could you please send me the Synod's official statement regarding horoscopes?*

**A:** Luther explained the Second Commandment ("You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God") in this way: "We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks." The explanation in the official catechism of the Synod further states that using "satanic arts by God's name" includes "depending on horoscopes or similar ways to foretell the future." Thus, using horoscopes is included among sins against the Second Commandment.

We may add that the Commission on Theology and Church Relations has in its files writings on the topic by theologians in the Synod. These writers have placed the practice of astrology into the category of the occult. They have pointed out that since astrology is a form of divination it comes under the condemnation of such passages as Deuteronomy 18:9-14 and Isaiah 47:14-15.

These writers also point out that Christians are urged to entrust themselves and their lives to their all-powerful and gracious God, in whom the Psalmist places his heartfelt trust by declaring, "My times are in thy hand" (Psalm 31:15; see Eccl. 7:14). Christians remember that neither the daily course of their lives nor their future lies in the hands of unseen forces or movements of heavenly bodies. Rather, they are urged to believe that everything in their life is directed according to His gracious purpose: "In everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28; RSV). In light of these considerations, Christians who consult horoscopes "just for the fun of it" need to be aware of the spiritual dangers involved in such a practice.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Lodges, Fraternal Organizations and Fraternities

**Q: *What is the Synod's view of membership in lodges, fraternal organizations and fraternities?***

**A:** It has consistently been the position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod throughout its history that membership in fraternal lodges is incompatible with membership in a synodical congregation. Bylaw 3.925 of the Synod's Handbook summarizes the rationale for the Synod's longstanding position on the lodges: "Pastors and laypeople must avoid membership or participation in any organization that in its objectives, ceremonies, or practices is inimical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ or the faith and life of the Christian church." The Commission on Theology and Church Relations has prepared detailed discussions of the reasons for the Synod's opposition to membership in various lodges. They may be found online at <http://www.lcms.org/ctcr>.

There are fraternal organizations (e.g., Kiwanis, Lions Club) or community clubs that do not have the objectionable features of the lodges in their rites, ceremonials, and membership requirements. There are generally no objections to membership in such organizations.

Since there are so many college fraternities, and since their membership requirements vary, the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations has advised that judgments must be left to individuals based on the particular case.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Luther's anti-Semitism

### **Q: *What is the Missouri Synod's response to the anti-Semitic statements made by Luther?***

**A:** While The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod holds Martin Luther in high esteem for his bold proclamation and clear articulation of the teachings of Scripture, it deeply regrets and deplors statements made by Luther which express a negative and hostile attitude toward the Jews. In light of the many positive and caring statements concerning the Jews made by Luther throughout his lifetime, it would not be fair on the basis of these few regrettable (and uncharacteristic) negative statements, to characterize the reformer as "a rabid anti-Semite." The LCMS, however, does not seek to "excuse" these statements of Luther, but denounces them (without denouncing Luther's theology). In 1983, the Synod adopted an official resolution addressing these statements of Luther and making clear its own position on anti-Semitism. The text of this resolution reads as follows:

WHEREAS, Anti-Semitism and other forms of racism are a continuing problem in our world; and

WHEREAS, Some of Luther's intemperate remarks about the Jews are often cited in this connection; and

WHEREAS, It is widely but falsely assumed that Luther's personal writings and opinions have some official status among us (thus, sometimes implying the responsibility of contemporary Lutheranism for those statements, if not complicity in them); but also

WHEREAS, It is plain from scripture that the Gospel must be proclaimed to all people--that is, to Jews also, no more and no less than to others (Matt. 28:18-20); and

WHEREAS, This Scriptural mandate is sometimes confused with anti-Semitism; therefore be it

Resolved, That we condemn any and all discrimination against others on account of race or religion or any coercion on that account and pledge ourselves to work and witness against such sins; and be it further

Resolved, That we reaffirm that the bases of our doctrine and practice are the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and not Luther, as such; and be it further

Resolved, That while, on the one hand, we are deeply indebted to Luther for his rediscovery and enunciation of the Gospel, on the other hand, we deplore and disassociate ourselves from Luther's negative statements about the Jewish people, and, by the same token, we deplore the use today of such sentiments by Luther to incite anti-Christian and/or anti-Lutheran sentiment; and be it further

Resolved, That in our teaching and preaching we take care not to confuse the religion of the Old Testament (often labeled "Yahwism") with the subsequent Judaism, nor misleadingly speak about "Jews" in the Old Testament ("Israelites" or "Hebrews" being much more accurate terms), lest we obscure the basic claim of the New Testament and of the Gospel to being in substantial continuity with the Old Testament and that the fulfillment of the ancient promises came in Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That we avoid the recurring pitfall of recrimination (as illustrated by the remarks of Luther and many of the early church fathers) against those who do not respond positively to our evangelistic efforts; and be it finally

Resolved, That, in that light, we personally and individually adopt Luther's final attitude toward the Jewish people, as evidenced in his last sermon: "We want to treat them with Christian love and to pray

for them, so that they might become converted and would receive the Lord" (Weimar edition, Vol. 51, p. 195).

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295

888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Madalyn Murray O'Hair (Petition 2493)

**Q: Recently I received an e-mail alerting me to efforts by Madalyn Murray O'Hair to ban the word "God" and the television show "Touched By An Angel" from the airwaves. It included a form letter to send to the FCC and specified "Petition 2493" be put on the envelope. Is this another false alarm?**

**A:** The Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations states:

Since 1975, a rumor has been circulating that Madalyn Murray O'Hair sponsored a petition RM 2493 to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in which she proposed limiting or banning religious programming. Another rumor has circulated that she was granted a federal hearing to discuss this proposal.

The continued research of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations and its staff has repeatedly confirmed that these rumors are entirely false.

Since 1975, the FCC has received and responded to millions of inquiries regarding the rumor. An FCC "Fact Sheet" (see below) indicates that the agency has made every effort to advise the public of the falsehood of this rumor.

Christians are urged not to contribute to the spread of unsubstantiated rumors, a practice prohibited by the Eighth Commandment that enjoins them not to bear false witness against their neighbor. Incidentally, Madelyn Murray O'Hair disappeared in September 1995 and is presumed to be deceased.

### **Taken from the FCC Fact Sheet:**

A rumor has been circulating since 1975 that Madalyn Murray O'Hair, a widely known, self-proclaimed atheist, proposed that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) consider limiting or banning religious programming. This rumor is **not** true. It also has been circulated repeatedly that Ms. O'Hair was granted a FCC hearing to discuss that proposal. This, too, is **not** true. Every effort has been made by the FCC to advise the public of the falsehood of this rumor.

There are several web sites that exist to debunk such rumors. One of these is Urban Legends and Folklore. From the home page, click on Current Net Hoaxes, and a listing of headings will appear, including the O'Hair rumor.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faq](http://www.lcms.org/faq)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Marijuana

**Q: A friend of mine claims that, other than being a 4th commandment violation, marijuana smoking is not biblically prohibited. I can't help but feel it's not okay biblically but have not been able to come up with verses to refute him. An obvious implication is that if marijuana were made legal that there would be absolutely no problem in its use. Would you be able to offer me any assistance in disputing his claim?**

**A:** Your question is a very important one and it touches on a matter that ought to be of much concern to Christians as they seek to live in a way that pleases God. We must remember, of course, that the Scriptures do not always specifically address many issues that Christians confront today. Nothing specific is said about the use of marijuana. However, this is not to say that the Bible provides us with no guidance regarding the use of a drug such as this. Quite the contrary, the Scriptures speak quite directly to the general moral question involved in drug usage.

Take, for example, Galatians 5:19-21 where Paul provides a sample list of "acts of the sinful nature." Included at the end of the list are things such as "drunkenness, orgies, and the like." Common to all of the items in the list is self-indulgence, the pursuit of pleasure, euphoria, and happiness through acts that serve our fleshly desires. Those who cave in to a life style ruled by such acts endanger their own spiritual welfare and may even through impenitence jeopardize their inheritance in the kingdom of God. Note, too, that in the list of the "fruit of the Spirit" in the verses that follow is the quality of "self-control." It is not difficult to see that the use of drugs falls into the category of self-indulgence, which is the characteristic of all "acts of the flesh." It may be important also to note that not everything that is legal is morally permissible. For example, that abortion is legal does not mean that it is morally permissible in God's eyes.

God promises to those who believe in Jesus Christ the gift of His Holy Spirit so that they may live on a higher level. St. Paul provides a great summary of this life style when he says in 1 Corinthians, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (10:31).

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Masons

**Q: *Could someone please explain briefly why Masons are not allowed in the Lutheran Church?***

**A:** Bylaw 3.925 of the Synod's Handbook summarizes the rationale for the Synod's longstanding position on the lodges: "Pastors and laypeople must avoid membership or participation in any organization that in its objectives, ceremonies, or practices is inimical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ or the faith and life of the Christian church." It is because tenets and practices of Freemasonry conflict with the biblical Gospel of Jesus Christ that our church from its very beginning has held that membership in this organization conflicts with a faithful confession of this Gospel.

Many examples from the official rites and ceremonies of Freemasonry could be cited to illustrate the reasons for the Synod's position, but the following is one example. The second section of the Entered Apprentice degree reviews what has taken place in the initiation rite and closes with this definition of the Lambskin of White Leathern Apron given to the candidate: "The Lamb has, in all ages, been deemed an emblem of innocence. He, therefore, who wears the Lambskin as the badge of a Freemason, is constantly reminded of that purity of life and conduct which is so essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides." This statement holds out the promise that "purity of life and conduct" is "essentially necessary" for entry into life hereafter with the divine being called the "Supreme Architect." Such an assertion stands in direct conflict with the apostolic Gospel, and therefore endangers faith. St. Paul affirms in his epistle to the Galatians that "by works of the law shall no one be justified...for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose" (Gal. 2:16, 21).

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Not sinful to lie?

**Q: *Is it ever not sinful to lie? Take the example of not telling a dear spouse or relative about an illness they have. I site the case of Jonathan and David where Jonathan told his father, Saul, that David had to go to his family - that was why he was not at the dinner. God did not seem to reprimand either of them for this lie which was to save David's life. We were having a discussion about this and would like to know what LCMS teaches on this.***

**A:** We are not aware of any kind of formal “LCMS teaching” on this specific question. Yet, it is not a new question in our midst. In his 1932 book *Pastor and People* LCMS professor Theodore Graebner comments on the issue in response to a pastoral conference discussion of the question. He responded briefly to the question, “Is every untruth a lie?” Dr Graebner wrote: “Unless it can be shown beyond a doubt that an evasion in concealment of the truth or the statement of an untruth is under the circumstances clearly demanded by the law of love to the neighbor, it is to be adjudged, no matter how good the intention or how great the benefit, an immoral act and in the proper sense of the word a lie.” Here Dr. Graebner does allow for the possibility that in this fallen world of ours and in certain extraordinary situations telling one's neighbor something that is an untruth may be “clearly demanded by the law of love.” The words “clearly demanded” serve as a caution against allowing one's own personal “good intentions” to become a rationalization for committing sin. In the end, decisions in this regard will have to be a matter of personal judgment, according to one's conscience and in light of circumstances of each case (which will vary in nature and degree).

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Tattoos

**Q: *What is the Synod's stance on tattoos and body piercing? If my son or daughter asks for a tattoo or pierced lip or tongue, what Scripture may I rely on?***

**A:** The Synod has no position on this subject. It should be kept in mind that the prohibition in Leviticus 19:28—"Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord"—belongs to Old Testament Levitical or ceremonial law—which has been set aside or annulled with the coming of Christ (Colossians 2:16-17; Acts 15). Leviticus is full of such laws, including the command one verse earlier: "Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard."

For Christians, matters such as this lie in the area of Christian freedom and wise judgment (such as, for example, taking into account health concerns, the perceptions and sensitivities of others, and the counsel of Christian parents and advisors).

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Walk to Emmaus

**Q: *How does the Lutheran Church see the Emmaus Community and the Walk to Emmaus? Are there any conflicts between the Lutheran Church and its teachings with the Emmaus Community?***

**A:** As you perhaps are aware, "The Walk to Emmaus" is the title given in the Methodist church to renewal weekends or schools that have their origin in the Cursillo ["little school"] Movement. The Cursillo Movement itself originated in the Catholic Church in Spain in the 1940s and spread to the U.S. in the 1950s. Other denominations have developed their own counterparts based on the Cursillo model.

The LCMS has not prepared a specific evaluation of The Walk to Emmaus from a Lutheran perspective. However, in recent years we at the International Center have received correspondence and calls from persons who have participated in or who have firsthand information on the retreats. Among the concerns most often mentioned in the letters and calls received are the following: joint participation in Holy Communion (held daily) by individuals belonging to church bodies not in church fellowship with each other; Emmaus' objection to the discussion of denominational differences on the ground that this obscures unity in the body of Christ and must be viewed as "narrow" and "legalistic"; fostering a kind of "elitism" on the part of those who have participated in the Walk, in contrast to other members of local congregations who have not come to experience "Jesus as Lord"; the insistence on secrecy as to what happens during the weekend retreats; and, excessive focus on emotion, as participants "really experience" a new relationship with Jesus.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Yoga

**Q: *I'm interested in Yoga and the practice of meditation (meditation meaning the quieting of the mind to allow the "voice of God" to enter). Is there anything in the church guidelines that discourages or forbids these practices?***

**A:** Let us share briefly an LCMS perspective on the practice of Yoga (of which, of course, there are several forms—e.g., Karma, Bhakti, Juana, Raja). While the initial stages of Yoga may be focused on physical exercises involved, Yoga has its roots in Hinduism and the philosophical aspects of Yoga are integral to it--something that becomes more apparent in more advanced stages. In Hinduism, Yoga is a means of striving for personal salvation, the ultimate goal being the human soul's union with "the world soul."

In contrast to assumptions intrinsic to Yoga, Christianity teaches on the basis of the Holy Scriptures that salvation becomes the personal possession of an individual through faith alone in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world (Eph. 2:8-8). And, spiritual enlightenment comes not through external bodily discipline, activities of the mind, or union with a divine "soul," but through the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who hear the Word of God and receive the sacraments (Lord's Supper, Baptism). Jesus promised, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:25-27).

In summary, from our theological perspective, techniques of relaxation and/or exercise (mental as well as physical) are not, of course, problematic in and of themselves. But it is the religious aspects of a practice such as Yoga that raises concerns for Christians.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.  
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295  
888-843-5267 • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org) • [www.lcms.org/faqs](http://www.lcms.org/faqs)



[Return to Table of Contents](#)