

# ***Lutheran Mission Matters***



Volume XXVIII, No. 2 (Issue 57) November 2020

# For Whom Is Theological Education?

Miriam Carter

**Abstract:** This article asks the question, what do we mean by Theological Education? Seminaries do good and important work but who else can be involved?

When I first thought of this theme, Theological Education, I wondered right away whether this was mostly aimed at pastors or church leaders. In thinking about theological education, a person often thinks of studies in a seminary. Theological education for training our church leaders is a huge and extremely necessary task. Is this the only place though where we really need to be putting our emphasis? My first question was whether this term also can be directed to those who are teaching small children. When are people old enough to start their theological education? My conclusion is that theological education is for everyone. Theology is about the study of God and religious beliefs. Is this not done throughout our lives, from little on to our senior days?

Let's look at the meanings of the words according to the New Oxford American Dictionary: *Theological* means "relating to 'the study of the nature of God and religious belief.'" One meaning given for *education* is "the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at school or university." A second meaning is "an enlightening experience." The second meaning of education really caught my attention. I will come back to it later.

A story about a church leader who shared in a personal conversation that, yes, Baptism can also be for children, but we don't teach or train the children in the ways of God until they begin asking questions. This practice seems to be the opposite of what we, Lutheran parents and teachers, have learned about teaching children. In Proverbs 22:6, it says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he



*Miriam Carter is a retired, LCMS-trained elementary teacher. She has lived in several different countries with her husband when he taught in seminaries overseas. Even when in the United States where they spent twenty-five years in St. Paul, Minnesota, Miriam would try to work with refugees or immigrants to share Jesus and to help with English. Now this work has continued in Hong Kong where she and her husband are working. Miriam is married to Richard and they have two children who have shared in cross-cultural work. [miriam.carter@gmail.com](mailto:miriam.carter@gmail.com)*

Copyright 2020 Lutheran Society for Missiology. Used by permission.

View Lutheran Mission Matters 28, no. 2 (2020) at <https://lsfm.global/>.

Membership in LSFM is available at <https://www.lsfm.global/join-the-society-for-missiology/>.

E-mail [lsfmissiology@gmail.com](mailto:lsfmissiology@gmail.com) to purchase a print copy of a single issue.

will not turn from it.” Besides the fact that what we learn as a child really does become part of us, how much joy is missed by not having children walking with Jesus throughout childhood? This brings up another point which is easily forgotten. All of us in our daily lives, as parents or teachers—even neighbors or co-workers—impart theological education by the way we live out our Christian calling or fail to live out our faith.

Going back to the second meaning of *education*, that it is “an enlightening experience,” makes me think that theological education is also very important for those who train and teach children. How many children and teenagers get bored in Sunday Schools and confirmation instruction classes? This theological education can involve enlightening experiences, but this takes creative work and training in how to do it. How do we make the study of God and our Christian faith “enlightening”? How do we help make God real to children, young people, and people at every stage of life? My conclusion is that this is all included in theological education.

How do we make  
the study of God and  
our Christian faith  
“enlightening”?  
How do we help make  
God real to children,  
young people, and people  
at every stage of life?

All around us are distractions that can drown out theological education. For children and even adults, what are some of these distractions? These would be whatever takes control of our minds so that we don’t see God’s light in Jesus. For children it can be video games, phones, Marvel comics, or cartoons. I have seen how people, including adults, can be drawn into the many video games that are available. These are really exciting and if chosen wisely and used within time limits can be fun for a family. However, if the video games control the family, this is a problem. Today children and adults are being trained in very new ways of learning. How do we share the light of Jesus in this setting?

Another big concern in most educational systems, even theological education, is the lack of listening. Many educators think they have the answers and know what needs to be learned. Listening in education, even in many ministries, is very underrated. In the home, in church, in our schools, we need to be listening to our students to understand what they need. This is all part of theological education. Jesus knew what His disciples and others needed to hear. We don’t know what our hearers need unless we spend some good amount of time listening.

I work in a Lutheran school of about 800 students in Asia. These students all take religion classes throughout their time in our school and yet very few of them are Christians. How can we make this theological education an enlightening experience? And when I say this, I don’t just mean, how do we make Sunday School and religious

Copyright 2020 Lutheran Society for Missiology. Used by permission.

View Lutheran Mission Matters 28, no. 2 (2020) at <https://lsfm.global/>.

Membership in LSFM is available at <https://www.lsfm.global/join-the-society-for-missiology/>.

E-mail [lsfmissiology@gmail.com](mailto:lsfmissiology@gmail.com) to purchase a print copy of a single issue.

training fun? The question is, how do we help our children and all people to see God as a true friend and their Savior?

I really like this meaning, “an enlightening experience.” Jesus is the light of the world. How do we have this special Light in our lives and how do we share, train, or teach others to really see Jesus as their Light?

I propose that we all, young to old, need theological education. We need the Spirit-given joy and light of Christ in our lives. Theological education can be much more than the important theology courses at a seminary. It can include teaching and learning about God in our lives, hopefully through enlightening experiences.

It can include teaching and learning about God in our lives, hopefully through enlightening experiences.



*Lutheran Mission Matters* serves as an international Lutheran forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion of issues related to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ globally.

Read • Share • Engage

<https://www.lsfm.global/>

Copyright 2020 Lutheran Society for Missiology. Used by permission.

View *Lutheran Mission Matters* 28, no. 2 (2020) at <https://lsfm.global/>.

Membership in LSFM is available at <https://www.lsfm.global/join-the-society-for-missiology/>.

E-mail [lsfmissiology@gmail.com](mailto:lsfmissiology@gmail.com) to purchase a print copy of a single issue.