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During Confirmation studies, I became interested in the importance of the Bible. It is a most intriguing book, and I want to share with you some of the knowledge about the Bible that I have acquired:

Lutherans accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith and life. As stated in the ELCA Constitution: *The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.*

Lutherans believe that the Bible is the most important of all the ways God's person and presence are revealed to humanity. That is because it is in reading the biblical books that we most reliably hear and encounter the living Word of God, who is the risen Jesus. Lutherans understand that the Bible contains various kinds of testimony to God's purpose for humanity. Included in its literary forms are history, story, parable, legal codes, hymns, inspirational and instructive letters, and personal faith testimony.

The Bible's very name begins to tell us what we have between its covers. In Greek "the Bible" literally means "the books." The Bible that Lutherans use is a collection of 66 books produced over a period of as much as 1,500 years. Each of these books had a life and use of its own prior to its incorporation into what we know as the "sacred canon."

The Bible contains the story of God's interaction with humankind, first through the understanding of the Jewish people (Old Testament, 39 books), and subsequently to all people through God's self revelation in Jesus (New Testament, 27 books).

Lutherans believe that people meet God in Scripture, where God's heart, mind, relationship to - and intention for - humankind are revealed. Through an ongoing dialogue with the God revealed in the Bible, people in every age are called to a living faith. Lutherans confidently proclaim with all Christians that the authority of the Bible rests in God. Lutherans believe that God inspired the Bible's many writers, editors and compilers. As they heard God speaking and discerned God's activity in events around them in their own times and places, the Bible's content took shape.

Here are a few fun facts:

Did you know that the Old Testament consists of 17 historical, 5 poetical, and 17 prophetic books? The New Testament consists of 4 gospels, Acts, 21 Epistles, and Revelation.

Did you also know that the Bible contains 1,189 chapters, the Old Testament contains 929 of

those and the New Testament has 260?

Did you know that the middle chapter of the Bible is Psalm 118? The longest chapter of the Bible is Psalm 119, while the shortest chapter of the Bible Psalm 117. There are 594 chapters which precede Psalm 118, and (since it is the “middle” of the Bible) then there are the same number following Psalm 118. This adds up to a total of 1,188 chapters which precede and follow Psalm 118. This number (1,188) is important - because the verse at the center of the Bible is Psalm 118:8. A strange coincidence, huh?

I don't know if that makes Psalm 118:8 a more significant verse than others in the Bible, but maybe it is a verse that you can use if you need to get “centered”:

“It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in mortals. (NRSV)”

The very center of the Bible reminds us to trust in God over trusting in ourselves or other people, and to continue our FAITH JOURNEY always.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. (NRSV)”