

The Reformation

AD 1500–1600

So many influences came together in the sixteenth century to bring about gospel renewal in Europe. Wycliffe and Hus had packed a powder keg. Erasmus had woven a fuse. On October 31, 1517, a hotheaded monk named Martin Luther lit the fuse and rocked the world.

Soon after, other reformers, like John Calvin and William Tyndale, in defiance of church and state authorities didn't let up in their mission to spread the Word of God to peasant and noble alike. Meanwhile, a radical group known as the Anabaptists arose and began to press the limits even further.





Outline

1. How reformation began with the righteousness of God.
 - a. Martin Luther:
 - i. Became a monk and sought righteousness (Ps. 31:1; Rom. 1:17).
 - ii. Posted 95 Theses to protest the sale of indulgences (October 31, 1517).
 - iii. Defended his writings at the Diet of Worms (1521).
 - b. John Calvin wrote *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in Geneva, Switzerland.
 - c. Ulrich Zwingli challenged church practices in Zurich, Switzerland.
2. How reformation turned radical.
 - a. Anabaptist Felix Manz became the first Protestant martyred by other Protestants (1527).
 - b. Menno Simons led a group of Anabaptists who later became known as Mennonites.
3. How reformation reached England.
 - a. William Tyndale translated the New Testament into common English (1525).
4. How reformation looked in the Roman Catholic Church.
 - a. Colloquy of Regensburg failed to unify Catholics and Protestants (1541).
 - b. Ignatius Loyola founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuit Order).
 - c. Council of Trent (1545–1563):
 - i. Denied justification by faith alone.
 - ii. Affirmed that the elements of the Lord's Supper become the body and blood of Jesus Christ.
 - iii. Proclaimed that the Bible is to be interpreted according to and with church tradition.

Key Terms

Anabaptists – (from Greek, “again-baptizer”) They taught—contrary to infant baptism—that only believers should be baptized (“believers’ baptism”). Mennonites, Quakers, and the Amish have their roots in the Anabaptist movement.

Colloquy of Regensburg (1541) – Conference held in Regensburg, Germany to bring Protestants and Catholics together. But after weeks of theological debate, the conference ended in a stalemate.

Council of Trent (1545–1563) – After the failed attempt at unity in the Colloquy of Regensburg, the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent formally rejected Protestant teachings.

Indulgences – In Roman Catholic theology, it’s a release from the temporal (earthly) penalties that a person must endure to demonstrate repentance from his or her sins.

Jesuit Order – Religious order founded by Ignatius of Loyola in the sixteenth century. Today, Jesuits are one of the largest religious orders of the Catholic Church. They are known for their missionary work, social justice, and colleges and universities.

Lutherans – Protestant denomination emerging from the work of Martin Luther in the sixteenth century. Lutherans today number more than 60 million worldwide.

Mennonites – Anabaptist group founded by Menno Simons in the sixteenth century. Today, Mennonites are the largest of the Anabaptist groups. They are sometimes known as “peace churches” because of their emphasis on non-violence and pacifism.

Protestants – Groups during the Reformation that rejected the supreme authority of the pope later became known as Protestants. Today, Protestants include denominations such as Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, and many others.

Purgatory – Roman Catholic teaching about an intermediate state of death where souls can be purged of sins and thereby become ready to enter heaven.

Solas – (from Latin, “alone”) Five statements that summarize the Reformation understanding of salvation: *sola fide* (salvation is through faith alone), *sola gratia* (salvation is by God’s grace alone), *sola Scriptura* (written witness to God’s way of salvation is Scripture alone), *solus Christus* (salvation is in Christ alone), *solus Deo gloria* (salvation is for God’s glory alone).

Transubstantiation – In Roman Catholic teaching, transubstantiation is a way of explaining how Christ is truly present in the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. The substance of the elements—which is invisible—becomes the blood and body of Jesus, while the visible things of the elements—such as shape, taste, color, texture—remain unchanged.

Before the Gathering

- Preview *The Reformation* video.
- Study Acts 15:35–41; 16:4–5; Galatians 1:6–9; 2:11–14. Incorporate into your notes and discussion a few facts that you learned from this study.
- Complete the lesson in the Participant Guide for this session.
- If you will be using the video, ensure that components are connected and tested beforehand.
- Pray for guidance as you lead this session.

Goals for the Gathering

Through this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the primary leaders and events of the Reformation.
- Identify three types of conflict in the church.
- Consider how God may use conflicts to multiply his mission.

Get Them Talking (10 minutes)

Read Acts 15:35–41; 16:4–5; Galatians 1:6–9; 2:11–14. Consider the following questions and statements for group discussion:

- From these Bible verses, three types of conflicts can be observed:
 1. Conflict between Christians over an issue of how best to accomplish God's mission (Acts 15:35–41; 16:4–5)
 2. Conflict between Christians over an issue of sin or acting in a way that is not in line with biblical truth (Gal. 2:11–14)
 3. Conflict between Christians and people who claim to be Christians but who have denied the gospel (Gal. 1:6–9)
- How should Christians deal differently with each of these three types of conflict?

- How did God work through the conflict that separated Paul and Barnabas? [Their separation resulted in two mission teams instead of only one, Acts 15:39–41.]
- What was Paul’s perspective on John Mark near the end of Paul’s earthly life? [John Mark became a valued companion of Paul; Col. 4:10; Philem. 1:24; 2 Tim. 4:11.]

Take a Closer Look (30 to 60 minutes)

Watch *The Reformation* video. (35 minutes)

Seek the Central Truth (15 minutes)

Disagreements happen! Paul disagreed with Barnabas over John Mark, Paul confronted Peter (known in Galatians by his Aramaic name, Cephas) over eating with non-Jews, and Paul clashed with unnamed teachers in Galatia who claimed that Gentiles who truly trusted Jesus must also keep the Jewish law. Yet God worked even through these disagreements. Paul’s clashes with false teachers led to a clear articulation of the gospel in his letter to the Galatians. Paul’s confrontation with Peter made it clear to all that God’s plan included both Jews and non-Jews.

The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas led to a multiplication of God’s mission. This is not to suggest that sin or heresy is excusable! It is, instead, to recognize that God works even through human failures.

In the sixteenth century, disagreements ripped apart the established church. Yet God used these disagreements to multiply his mission throughout the world.

Together: List as many conflicts as you can recall that occurred during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Then, review the three types of conflict. Determine which of the three categories best describes each of the conflicts that occurred during the Reformation.

Wrap It Up (5 minutes)

End your time together with a prayer similar to this one: “God, so many conflicts still separate your people from one another. Make us both humble and strong: strong to stand for your truth, but humble so that we never stand for our own sakes or in our own strength. Bring us together for the sake of your mission. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and the head of the church, Amen.”

Strongly encourage class members to complete the Participant Guide activities for this week.

Optional: Pray together as a group for persecuted Christians or, if time is short, ask participants to commit to praying at least once in the coming week for a specific region or country where our brothers and sisters face persecution.

Work Together

For centuries prior to the Reformation, many church leaders saw marriage, childbearing, and adoption as necessary evils. The Reformers recognized anew the goodness of these gifts. Martin Luther saw the family as “a school for character”—a God-ordained context for Christian formation and discipleship. In your group, help one another to make plans for effective family devotional times during the upcoming week. If one or more group members are single and have no children, provide opportunities for them to be included in one or more family devotional times this week.

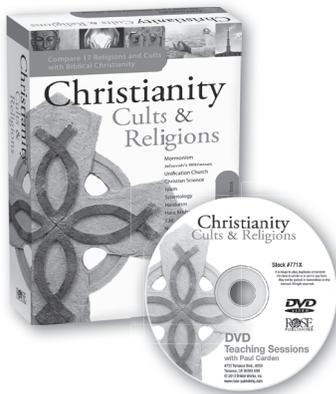
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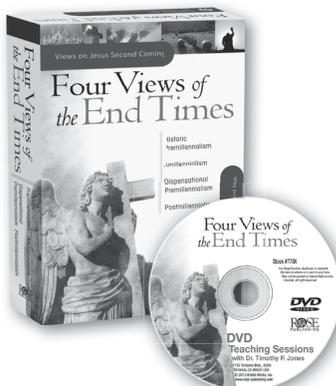


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Feasts of the Bible

Connect the Hebrew roots of Christianity and the symbolism within each feast

Some Christians miss the importance of the biblical feasts, seeing them as merely "Jewish" holidays, but Scripture says these are the Feasts of the Lord God, established for all people for all time. Now you can connect the Hebrew roots of Christianity and the symbolism within each feast that points to Jesus Christ. The Feasts and Holidays of the Bible will also show you how to conduct your own Christian Passover Seder, where you will learn how all the Old Testament Passover activities point symbolically to Jesus.

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