

# Reformation

## Lesson 1

### The Story

Close your eyes. Pretend you lived in a time with no T.V., no computers, no cars, airplanes, or trains, no electricity, no movies, and no video games. Your life would be very different. Today we are going to talk about a man who lived during a time like this. This man lived over 500 years ago in the late 1400's and early 1500's. He lived after Jesus was alive, but he is not in the Bible at all. He is a very important man because God used him to teach people that they are saved only because Jesus died on the cross for their sins. This man's name was Martin Luther.

Martin Luther lived in Germany. He was born on November 10, 1483, in a city called Eisleben. His parents, Hans and Margareta Luther, did not have much money. They did take Martin Luther to church, but the church in Luther's day was not teaching what the Bible said. They taught that people would be forgiven of their sins if they believed in Jesus **and** did good works. The church even preached in Latin, a different language than the people spoke, so the Luthers and other Germans did not understand what was being said. The Luthers and other Germans did not have a Bible to read because Bibles were expensive and written in Latin. Hans and Margareta wanted Martin Luther to go to school. Hans Luther wanted him to become a lawyer, so when he got older, he went to the University of Erfurt.

One day when Martin Luther was coming home from the university, he was caught in a thunderstorm. A bolt of lightning almost hit Martin Luther. Instead of praying to Jesus for help, Martin Luther prayed to St. Anna. Because he was afraid of dying, Martin Luther said that if she would keep him safe from the storm, he would

become a monk. A monk was a person who lived in a monastery away from his family, prayed, read the Bible, and promised never to marry or become rich. St. Anna did not keep Martin Luther safe; God kept Martin Luther safe from the storm because God had a special job for Martin Luther to do.

In 1505 Martin Luther became a monk because he felt guilty about his sins. He viewed God as an angry judge ready to punish him because of his sins. Martin Luther was taught that he had to be good in order to have his sins forgiven. But Martin Luther realized that he could not be good enough. The more he tried to do what was right, the more he realized that he could not keep God's law perfectly. The Bible says,

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). He tried to satisfy his guilt by sleeping on the floor and praying and cleaning and even beating himself. But these things did not help him to find peace from his sins. A friend told Martin Luther to read the Bible to learn more about his sins. Luther did, and the more he read the Bible, the more he found out that the church was not teaching what the Bible said. He read that people are forgiven of their sins **not** by the good things they do for Jesus but by the good thing that Jesus did for them. Sins are forgiven because Jesus died on the cross to take away the sins of the whole world. The Bible says that this forgiveness is a gift from God called grace. Grace is God's love for people even though they do not deserve it. (Ephesians 2:1-10)

While in the monastery Luther studied to become a priest. Then in 1508 he left the monastery to preach and teach at the University



of Wittenberg. While preparing for his classes, Martin Luther found more truths about God's salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Martin Luther was realizing that the church's teaching on forgiveness and salvation was opposed to God's teaching in the Bible. This became very clear when the church wanted to raise money to build St. Peter's Church in Rome, Italy.

The church started to sell special pieces of paper called indulgences. A man named John Tetzel sold these indulgences that said if the people bought them, their sins were forgiven. This is not what the Bible says. The Bible says that forgiveness of sins is free for everyone because Jesus died for all people. Martin Luther did not like the selling of indulgences. He wrote 95 theses or sentences that told the church what they were teaching was wrong. He took them to the church in Wittenberg, and nailed them on the church door. The door of the church was a place where people read important announcements. These 95 theses were nailed on October 31, 1517. On this day we say the Reformation started. The Reformation was a changing from what the church taught to what God taught in the Bible. God showed Martin Luther in the Bible that sins are forgiven because Jesus died on the cross for us. He washed them all away. Sins are not forgiven because people do good things.

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## Passages

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

## Hymn Hymn 342, v. 1

Chief of sinners though I be,  
Jesus shed His blood for me;  
Died that I might live on high,  
Lived that I might never die.  
As the branch is to the vine,  
I am His, and He is mine.

## Prayer

Dear Father in heaven,  
We sin every day and have not lived up to the perfection You demand in Your holy law. Forgive us of this. Ease the guilt and shame that comes with our sin by giving us the words of peace found only in Your Word. Remind us never to try to satisfy our sins by the works we do ourselves. Let us trust only in You for forgiveness and salvation.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## What the Story Tells Us

As a monk, Luther tried to do good works in order to earn forgiveness from God because that is what the church taught. Later, Luther studied God's Word and found that this teaching was against what God taught in His Word.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Based on these passages, write a paragraph telling why we are not saved by good works.

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### Activity -Color Luther's seal.

**Cross**

*black* Christ's death on the cross forgives our sins.

**Heart**

*red* Faith in Christ's death is found in the heart.

**Rose**

*white* Faith in Jesus gives us peace, forgiveness, and joy.

**Background**

*blue* Faith in Christ's death gives heaven.

**Ring**

*gold* Life in heaven brings happiness and will be eternal.

