

“Him We Proclaim”

Sermon Notes

➤ **Paul’s essential mission as an apostle of Christ differs very little with ours as disciples of Christ**

Colossians 1:28 → 3:16

**So, like Paul, let’s...*

1. Pursue the heart of our mission (v.28a; 1 Peter 2:9; 3:16)

“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom...”

2. Know the goal of our mission (v.28b; Ephesians 4:13)

“...that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

3. Pay the price of our mission (v.29a; 1 Corinthians 15:58)

“For this I toil, struggling...”

4. Burn the fuel of our mission (v.29b; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

“...with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”

Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of October 31st - November 6th

“Where Did the Reformation Really Begin?”¹

Written by David Mathis on the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation

Today we mark the 504th anniversary of the event that, in God’s providence, served to ignite the flame of the Protestant reformation: Martin Luther’s famous nailing of the 95 Theses to the castle church door in Wittenburg, Germany on October 31st, 1517. And yet, you can’t ignite a flame without a spark. Before the reformation came to Europe, it came to Luther. And before it came to Luther, it came to key forerunners before him. In this insightful and encouraging article, Twin Cities pastor David Mathis leads us on a brief and fascinating tour of what this all means for us today living as we do over 500 years on the other side of Wittenburg.

Queso at Chipotle. What a time to be alive. So reads the new billboard not far from our house. This October is quite the time to be alive, even if the new menu item at our beloved Mexican grill is not really one of the reasons why.

For those of us who embrace the moniker *Protestant*, and have some faint sense of the history that made such a wonderful reality necessary and possible, we have the privilege of being alive to mark this 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Right? It may have seemed exciting from a distance, but now that we’re here, will October come and go with us feeling mildly dissatisfied?

As we have been telling the stories of 31 reformers this month through the [Here We Stand](#) series, we’ve discovered one insight — one “secret” — one timeless lesson that made this all possible 500 years ago, and makes it real every waking day of our twenty-first-century lives. One powerful thread unites these men and women as much as any other and is at the very heart of the Reformation: a personal encounter with God himself in his word.

Before there could be Reformation in the church, and Reformation in the world, first there had to be reformation in the soul. How did that begin for Martin Luther, and for the many who stood with him? It came, time and time again, through gaining access to his living and active word, and there meeting God himself.

Long before Luther himself came on the scene, the common thread ran through the four pre-Reformation figures. What changed [John Wycliffe](#)? He “applied himself rigorously to the study of theology and Scripture. As he did, he realized how much the church had veered off in so many wrong directions.” So also for [Peter Waldo](#). His personal reformation, dramatic as it was, revolved around access to Scripture:

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/where-did-the-reformation-really-begin> . Accessed 10/29/21 @ 10am.

The first thing he resolved was to read the Bible. But since it only existed in the Latin Vulgate, and his Latin was poor, he hired two scholars to translate it into the vernacular so he could study it. Next, he sought spiritual counsel from a priest, who pointed him to the rich young ruler in the Gospels and quoted Jesus: “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Luke 18:22). Jesus’s words pierced Waldo’s heart.

[Jan Hus](#) lived a similar story: “As Hus read Scripture and watched the popes of his day abuse their power, he concluded that papal authority was not ultimate. He needed a sturdier foundation than was built from the straw and sticks of men’s opinion — no matter how highly regarded those men were. He built his life and ministry on the word of God.” And for [Savonarola](#), it wasn’t only access to God’s word, but literally taking it to heart: “As a young friar, he soaked deeply in the writings of Thomas Aquinas and in Scripture, quickly demonstrating a capacious mind, which allowed him to commit most of Scripture to memory.”

As we move from the forerunners into Luther’s own day, we find that those who led the Reformation were largely priests and humanists. Why humanists? Ironically, their fresh optimism about the capabilities of humanity not only made them willing to lay aside the weight of tradition and think for themselves, but their learning and study of the classics enabled them to read the Scriptures for themselves. In the sixteenth century, it was the priests and the humanists who had access to God’s word. They were the ones who could experience personal reformation as they came into contact with God’s word, and they, then, were the ones who emerged as leaders in the fledgling movement.

Erasmus, of course, was the paragon of humanism, and many of the reformers admired his learning, or even worked with him. [Wolfgang Capito](#) “was trained as a Christian humanist, becoming a student and a close friend of Erasmus. As a humanist, he loved the biblical text and biblical languages.” And [John Oecolampadius](#), as “one of the rising tribe of humanist scholars, thoroughly trained in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew,” even “worked as an assistant to Erasmus — the project being Erasmus’s first edition of the Greek New Testament, for which John wrote the epilogue.”

Luther’s longtime sidekick, [Philip Melancthon](#), was trained as a humanist, and [William Farel](#), who led reforms in Geneva and famously recruited Calvin to the city, had “encountered the humanist scholar Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples, a man whose devotion to Christ inspired Farel.” But what, in particular, catalyzed Farel’s personal reformation? “He studied Scripture over several years.” And so it was with the Italian humanist [Peter Martyr Vermigli](#).

However, [Menno Simons](#) — like Luther and the other Martin, Bucer — came into contact with Scripture not in the academy but the priesthood. He had been “a Catholic priest who had never read the Bible.” In fact, he “had *never* read the Scriptures themselves.” He said, “I had not touched them during my life, for I feared if I should read them they would mislead me.”

Then everything changed when he finally took up the Book and “reluctantly began to study the Bible.”

And when we come to what we might call “the big three,” we find the same story: personal contact with God’s word. What changed for [John Calvin](#)? He “saw and tasted in Scripture the majesty of God.” And for [Huldreich Zwingli](#)? He “had been an ardent student of the Greek New Testament recently compiled by Erasmus of Rotterdam. Now in Zurich, Zwingli spent six years preaching straight through the New Testament.”

And finally, brother Martin. “Luther set to work reading, studying, and teaching Scripture from the original languages.” And specifically, in his own words: “At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words.” What effect, then, did it have in his ministry? “The record bears witness to how utterly devoted he was to the preaching of Scripture.” According to [John Piper](#), “Luther had one weapon with which to rescue this gospel from being sold in the markets of Wittenberg — Scripture. He drove out the moneychangers — the indulgence sellers — with the whip of the word of God, the Bible.”

In 1545, a year before he died, Luther wrote, “Let the man who would hear God speak, read Holy Scripture.” Yes, this is the legacy of the Reformation. Among other things, yes, but don’t let this one thing be lost. God speaks to his people in the Book. Here is where we know him, here is where we hear his voice, here is where his Spirit works in us internally and subjectively to bring to life his external, objective word in the Scripture. Here is where we hear God — but not just hear. We taste. We see. We feel. And as [Hugh Latimer](#) testified about his life-changing personal encounter with God’s own word, we even smell. “I began to smell the Word of God, and forsook the school doctors and such fooleries.”

The one insight and secret I’m taking away from this 500th-anniversary month is the essential gift of knowing God personally through his word, and making the most of the many media we have today for accessing God himself in his word. As we peer back at the Reformation through all the layers and legends, through all the dust and debris of history, might this one ray of light catch our eye, pierce through the portals of time, and land with earthshaking significance in our own day?

The secret to reformation in 1517, and still in 2017, is the people of God meeting personally with him through his very words. That simple formula is strong enough today to reform any heart, any church, any neighborhood, and any nation.