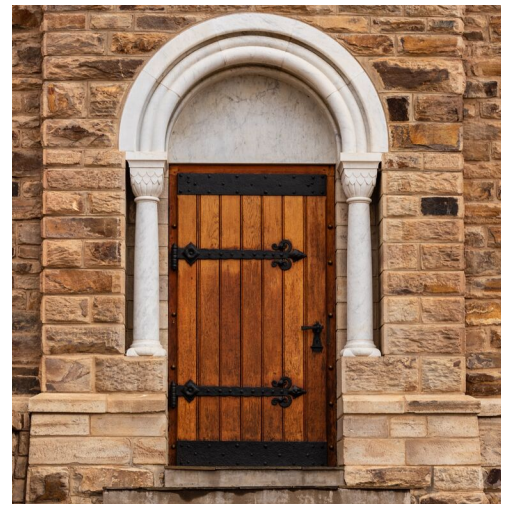


Reformation Month

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, monk and professor, nailed 95 Theses to the wooden door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

Theses were a list of thoughts or beliefs. By nailing the list of thoughts to the church door, Martin Luther was asking for a *debate*, or a back-and-forth discussion, to be had on the list of thoughts. This was a normal practice and custom in his day.

In many churches today, October 31 marks the day we celebrate the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. The *Protestant Reformation* was a time period in which many groups broke off from the Catholic Church because of one or more theological thoughts - theses.



Today, the term **Protestant** is given to any Christian group who does not belong to the Catholic Church or the Eastern Orthodox Church but still holds to the main tenets of the Creeds (Nicene and Apostles). A number of those tenets that we all hold - Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant - are the beliefs

- in one God who is three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)
- that the Son - who is fully God - became fully man and died for our sins on the cross
- that He was raised from the dead after 3 days and later He ascended into Heaven
- that the Holy Spirit - who is fully God - came upon all who believe

These are the beliefs that make us all Christians.

Other beliefs are important but are not essential to our salvation. Some of those beliefs are:

- style of worship (hymns or choruses, instruments or none, just organ or many instruments)
- Baptism (infants or adults, full immersion or sprinkling)
- Communion (grape juice or wine, fresh bread or wafer)

These beliefs are personal preferences or differences in how we interpret the Bible.

They help aid our understanding of being Christian, but they do not change our identity as Christians.

During the Protestant Reformation, those who broke off from the Catholic Church saw a number of issues occurring in the Catholic Church and wanted to make the Catholic Church better. When they realized they could not "fix" it, they became Protestants and sought to change those issues in their new churches.

Some of the reasons people became Protestant were:

- the belief that a priest is not essential to confession and a person can come before God on their own (*priesthood of all believers*)
- faith alone in God is needed to receive forgiveness from God
- grace alone (*unmerited favor*) from God gives forgiveness - it cannot be earned
- the traditions and authority of the church must be built on Scripture
- all should be able to read Scripture in their own language

9 . 5 T H E S E S

In honor of the Reformation, here are 9.5 theses (*or activities*) to do during Reformation Month.

1. Watch or Read about the life of Martin Luther

Watch: *Luther*, 2003

Read: (adults) *Here I Stand*, Roland Bainton

(children) *Martin Luther: A Man Who Changed the World*

2. Eat Sausage

Ulrich Zwingli was a reformer from Switzerland (*from whom the Anabaptist come*). During Lent he preached a sermon called, *Regarding the Choice and Freedom of Foods*. In the sermon he said "Christians are free to fast or not to fast because the Bible does not prohibit the eating of meat during Lent."

3. Sing "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"

This is a popular hymn in many Protestant hymnals. Martin Luther wrote this hymn between 1527 & 1529 and based it on Psalm 46.

4. Play "Nail the Theses to the Door"

Just like Pin the Tail on the Donkey, "nail" with tape, theses to a door in your house. Read some of the theses while playing!

5. Memorize the 5 Solas

Part of Luther's theology was the establishment of the 5 Solas: *Sola Gratia* By Grace Alone, *Sola Fide* Through Faith Alone, *Solus Christus* In Christ Alone, *Sola Scriptura* According to Scripture Alone, *Soli Deo Gloria* For God's Glory Alone

6. Memorize TULIP

John Calvin is one of the other notable Reformers. Calvin began his work in the early 1530s. His main theologies became known as TULIP: **T**otal Depravity, **U**nconditional Election, **L**imited Atonement, **I**rresistible Grace, **P**reservation of the Saints

7. Drink (Root)Beer

As was the custom in those days, many of the Reformers met at pubs to discuss the ideas of the Reformation with other reformers and their students. Drink a (root)beer and toast the reformers!

8. Read the Book of Romans

While teaching a class on Romans, Luther had his Reformation breakthrough.

9. Attend a Different Faith Tradition

This is a great way to learn more about our own tradition as well as those around us! You can visit in person or watch a service online.

9.5 Eat (Gummy) Worms

In 1521 the Diet of Worms took place to decide the fate of Martin Luther. A *diet* is a trial and *Worms* is the location in Germany. The Diet declared Luther a heretic and forbade anyone from helping him.