


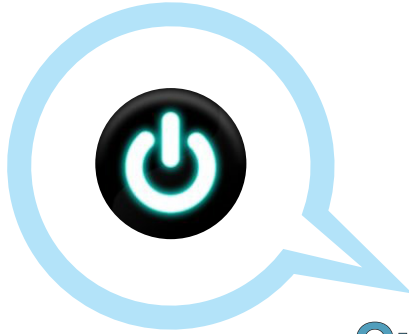
REBOOT: The Reformation at 500

Part 1: Reformation Then and Now

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —*Psalm 145:11*
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —*Joshua 22:5*

Questions for Reflection

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why?**
- Read 2 Corinthians 10:8. Paul refers to the legitimate God-given authority he had, which had the goal of building others up rather than tearing them down. Describe an example of this in parenting.

Describe a time when you think you experienced church leadership which crossed the line from constructive to destructive.

Describe an example of constructive use of authority by a church leader. Did you recognize it as beneficial at the time? If not, when and how did you come to that realization.
- Martin Luther literally risked his life to reform church practices (other reformers died for their stands). What's an example of a personally costly stand you've ever taken for biblical truth? Were you surprised that you took that stand? Why or why not? What was the outcome?

Luther clearly was successful in taking that stand—how should we define "success" in this realm?
- Review Luther's pull-quote in the sermon summary ("*Unless I am convicted by Scripture...*"). What do you respect most about his commitment?
- How have you personally benefitted from the Protestant Reformation?

How can you personally contribute to the reformation of Christianity locally?

Need a "reboot" in your faith?

Go to: TCC.ORG

Keyword: EQUIP

Application-Challenge

- Do you need a spiritual reboot? If you are stuck, don't keep "waiting for the wheel to stop spinning"—talk to one of your pastors, to your Community Group leader, or write to < counseling@tcc.org >.
- Make sure to catch the rest of this series. Join us for a healthy reboot of our foundational beliefs.

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

As soon as I saw Justin Long's "Get a Mac" ad, I immediately ditched my PC and bought a refurbished Macbook. I thought I had it made—until this pretty little spinning wheel thing kept popping up and I'd have to restart my computer. It got worse, and so I took it into the Mac store. My small fix wasn't doing the trick; they ended up totally wiping it and reinstalling the operating system. The whole system had to be rebooted. This is where Christians in the 15th and 16th centuries found themselves. The church didn't just need a small tweak here or there, they needed sweeping reforms. The Roman Catholic Church was at the height of its' influence. Entire governments were under the thumb of the Pope and other church officials. Any whisper of dissent was quickly stamped out with excommunication or worse. At that time you would have been hard-pressed to find similarities between the grassroots movement of Christianity depicted in the New Testament and the vast, powerful empire of the Catholic church and its theological errors.

Priests postured themselves as the educated sources of truth, teaching, and even forgiveness from sin. They abused their responsibility to clearly communicate God's truth to His people. They saw the opportunity to consolidate their power and make some money and they exploited it. The Catholic Church sold "indulgences" (essentially a "get out of jail free" card for your sins). They even sold to prayers for the dead and assurances of salvation. Christianity was in desperate need of a reboot.

The first major step the widespread distribution of the Greek New Testament so that access to God's Word was significantly increased. Access to God's Word loosened the iron grip of the clergy. At the same time, a German monk named Martin Luther was wrestling with how he could ever be accepted by a perfect, righteous God. While studying the book of Romans, he came to a life-changing realization: through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us through faith. As Luther put it: *"You Lord Jesus are my righteousness, but I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and have given to me what is yours."*

There had been reformers who spoke out against the practice of selling indulgences and other ethical problems within the church, but Luther was the first to go straight to the source of the problem: their incorrect doctrine of salvation. On October 31, 1517, Luther could remain quiet no longer: he nailed his list 95 "theses" (plural of "thesis". A "thesis" is a point of debate; Luther had 95 of them!) to the church door. Many of Luther's criticisms centered around the selling of indulgences and on the incredible power and authority wielded by the Pope and other clergy. In this statement, he declares that the authority of the Pope is not equal to the authority of God. Only the cross pays for sin.

Luther was called to a series of debates and councils in order to answer for what he had written. Instead of backing down or recanting, he became even more eloquent about the true nature of salvation. After being repeatedly bullied, threatened, and ordered to recant, Luther concluded with these eloquent words:

"Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."

Out of Luther's words began the Protestant Reformation. Today access to the Scriptures and to God's salvation has been made available to each of us. The church has come a long way—and is much closer to what God intended it to be than it was 500 years ago.

The Reformation wasn't a one time event. It was sparked by a hammer, nail and 95 Theses in the hands of Martin Luther, but the church continues to reform itself even today. Over the next few weeks we'll explore each of the five key concepts of the Reformation, the five "*solas*" (Latin for "alone"): "Scripture Alone", "Christ Alone", "Grace Alone", "Faith Alone", and "For God's Glory Alone". *Don't miss a week!*

Christendom in the 15th and 16th centuries wasn't the first time spiritual decline had plagued the people of God. And Martin Luther wasn't the first person to spearhead religious reformation. Israel's history has a similar story. Here's the backstory: King David's son, Solomon, brought Israel to the pinnacle of splendor, fame, and respect. Foreign kings and queens came to marvel at Solomon's Temple. But in his later years, Solomon's zeal for God diminished as his pagan wives turned his heart away from worshiping God. Solomon's divided heart soon led to a divided kingdom. A string of ungodly kings brought God's wrath first on the Northern Kingdom, and eventually on the (slightly more godly) Southern Kingdom. But before that happened, a reformation temporarily stilled God's anger. What does reformation look like in action? Let's study one of Israel's godly kings to find out.

Monday—Read 2 Kings 22:1-7

- Verse 2 gives a summary of godly King Josiah's life. How is his life summarized?
- How old was Josiah when he became king (v. 1)? How old was he when the action of v. 3-7 took place?
- In what condition was the Temple (v. 5c)?
- Now let's get an idea of how the Jews had neglected the Temple, so that by Josiah's time it was damaged: Read 1 Kings 6:21-22, 30 for a description of the Temple when Solomon built it. Read 1 Kings 8:27-29 and 54-63 for the prayer of dedication and opening ceremony.
- **Less than 300 years elapsed** between Solomon and Josiah. Orton Plantation (Wilmington, NC—pictured here) **is 300 years old!** What does it say about the Jews' religious affections that they let God's Temple go to ruin (when all that's needed is a bit of attention)?
- How confident are you that you would have taken better care of it?



Tuesday—Read 2 Kings 22:8-11

- Verse 9 records the accomplishment of Josiah's orders to provide money to the workers for the repair of the Temple. What else took place at that time (v. 8, 10)?
- This "Book of the Law" was the Old Testament—**they'd misplaced the Bible!** (Apparently **the only copy** they had!) What does this (as well as the deteriorated condition of the Temple) tell you about the condition of Israel's religious life?
- What did Josiah do when he got this news? When and why did Jews tear their clothes (cf. Gen. 37:29, 34; Josh. 7:6; 2 Kings 5:7; 6:30; 11:14; 19:1; Job 1:20; 2:12)?
- How long could your Bible go missing before you'd notice? When you find it, would you "tear your clothes" in repentance?

Wednesday—Read 2 Kings 22:12-20

Backstory: Because of the string of evil kings between Solomon and Josiah, God had already declared that he would destroy the Jewish nation—but it hasn't happened yet. Now Josiah is wondering, "If we repent, might God relent and spare us?" (v. 13).

- What was God's answer to Josiah's question (v. 16-17 & 20b)? But what is God's promise to Josiah personally (v. 18-20a)?
- From v. 19, list the reasons God gives for being willing to spare Josiah.
- Have you ever responded that way to any of your sins (either sins of commission or of omission)? If not, why not?

Thursday—Read 2 Kings 23:1-3

- Josiah had authority over (and was responsible for) the entire nation. Who did he gather to himself at the Temple (v. 2)? Over whom do you have authority, for whom are you responsible? How have you exercised spiritual leadership in their lives?
- What did Josiah read to them (v. 2b)? How long do you imagine that took? What impression would that leave on the people?
- What did Josiah do next (v. 3a)? How is this covenant (solemn promise of love, loyalty, and obedience) described in v. 3a-b?
- What response do the people have to Josiah's covenant commitment to God (v. 3c)? Now, think again of those for whom you have authority/are responsible: How have they responded to your leadership? How do you explain any differences there might be between their response and those who responded to Josiah?

Friday—Read 2 Kings 23:4-20

- Yesterday we observed Josiah's **positive** leadership (reread 2 Kings 23:3)—he first reformed and recommitted himself, and then his people followed his example. Today we'll see that there are **negative** (disciplinary) elements in spiritual leader as well. In v. 4, what action did Josiah take? In v. 5, he moves on from the **items** used in pagan worship and now gives attention to the **people** who led in idolatry! What do v. 5 & 20 say he did to them? From the following verses, what evil practices were they involved in...
v. 5 _____
v. 7 _____
v. 10 _____

Did you realize that the Jews had corrupted the worship of God to such a degree that they utilized prostitutes as part of their religious ceremonies, they burned their own children on pagan altars, and they worshiped the sun, moon, and stars?

- What do you think about Josiah's zeal against these filthy pagan practices?
- According to Psalm 101:7-8, what was a king of Israel supposed to do whenever he found wickedness among the people over which he had authority? What would God think of Josiah if he "went soft" on wickedness? What would you think?
- Reread 2 Kings 22:2. What is God's evaluation of Josiah's zeal for righteousness and against wickedness?

Saturday—Read 2 Kings 23:21-25

- With the covenant renewed (23:3) and the land purified of wickedness (23:4-20), Josiah called the people to celebrate the Passover. What does the Passover commemorate?
- Josiah poured as much positive zeal into celebrating the Passover as he had poured out negative zeal purging the land of idolatry! Why do you think that is? What lessons from the life of Josiah do you need to apply?