



CAN'T
BUY ME
GRACE!

Higher Things
DARE TO BE LUTHERAN

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A Bible Study on the
Lutheran Reformation

Background:

In the year 1517, the Roman Catholic Church taught that if you paid money to buy an “indulgence,” you could be forgiven for all of your sins and get out of “purgatory” a place where you had to suffer for your sins before you could go to heaven. Martin Luther, a young monk and professor of the Bible, learned from studying the Scriptures that we are saved only by grace, through faith, for Christ’s sake, as taught in the Scriptures. Martin Luther taught these truths faithfully, even though the Pope kicked him out of the Roman church for doing so. Reformation Day celebrates the day (October 31, 1517) that Luther began to publicly teach the Gospel as well as the four “solae” or “alones”: Grace alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone, Christ alone. And don’t forget: *Sola!* Is the theme for the 2009 Higher Things Conferences!

Begin by discussing what you know about Martin Luther and the Reformation.

1. Read **Ephesians 2:8-9**. What does St. Paul say is the basis for our salvation?
2. Read **Romans 3:29**. Through what are we saved?
3. Read **John 14:6**. Who is the only person through whom our salvation comes?
4. Read **2 Timothy 3:16-17**. What is the source of our faith and knowledge of Christ?
5. In Martin Luther’s day, the Roman Church sold indulgences like TV salesmen sell knives and gym equipment. One famous phrase went like this: “As soon as the coin in the box goes clink, the soul from purgatory springs.” Should we be worried about where we go when we die? What promise does the Lord give us? See **Job 19:25-27** and **Luke 23:39-43**.

6. Many people, after they bought an indulgence, thought they could go ahead and do whatever they wanted and commit any sins they wanted, since they were “covered” by the Pope’s piece of paper. Is our forgiveness given so that we can just do what we want? For an answer, read **Romans 6:1-4**.

7. Most people in Luther’s day thought of Jesus as a harsh judge who was ready to smite them at the drop of a hat! That made them more inclined to spend their savings on an indulgence! But what does Jesus Himself say about who He is and why He came? See **John 3:14-17**.

Many clergy would preach and talk about Jesus in a frightening way with the purpose of getting them to obey and give money to the church. Read the explanation of the Second Article from the Small Catechism:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

Why is this a comforting description of our Lord? How does it compare to the notion most people have of Jesus even today?

8. As Martin Luther continued to preach and teach the Gospel, his enemies began to refer to those who followed him as “evangelicals” or “Lutherans.” Luther never wanted to have anyone take his name as if they followed him! But he said he didn’t mind if by “Lutheran” was meant “people who trust the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake.” How should we as Lutherans emphasize to others that we don’t follow “Luther” but God’s Word alone? See **Romans 1:16-17** and **1 Corinthians 1:22-24**.

9. How would you answer someone who says, “I’m Christian first, Lutheran second?”

10. Martin Luther did have enemies only in the Roman church. Many other “reformers” tried to change the church but for the worse. Many of these so-called “reformers” preached and taught against the Sacraments. They said that Baptism was just a symbol of our believing and that the Lord’s Supper is not really the body and blood of Jesus but just a symbol of His death. Luther fought against these false teachings by pointing, as always, to God’s Word. What does Jesus Himself say about His Holy Sacraments? Read **Matthew 28:18-20**; **John 3:1-6**; **1 Corinthians 11:23-27**; **John 6:51-58**.

11. The church often suffers through periods of persecution and even trouble from within when preachers wander from the Word of God and Christ is obscured. Martin Luther was used by the Lord to bring the Gospel back to light. What comfort do we have that the Lord’s church will always stand against such false preachers and troubles? See **Matthew 16:13-18**.

Close the Bible Study by singing:

“Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word.” (LSB 655)