

**Lesson**

**7**

---

***The Reformation***

---

**LESSON DESCRIPTION:** In this lesson the students will explore the history of the Reformation and how it reshaped the church and gave rise to new denominations, including The United Methodist Church.

The students will explore the disagreements that led up to the Reformation, key Reformation figures, and the ways in which the Reformation affected the trajectory of church history all the way to the present day.

<b>Lesson</b>		
<b>SECTION</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>DURATION</b>
Connect	Telephone Drawings	10 minutes
Explore	The Protestant Reformers	25 minutes
Reflect	Always Reforming	5 minutes
Create	Three More Theses	15 minutes
Next	At home, at school, and in your community	Ideas to try this

## **Supply List**

### **Connect: Telephone Drawings**

- \_ Slips of paper (7 for each student)
- \_ Writing utensils

### **Explore: The Protestant Reformers**

- \_ Internet-capable devices such as smartphones and tablets
- \_ Paper
- \_ Writing utensils

### **Reflect: Always Reforming**

- \_ Dry-erase board or projector
- \_ Student Guides
- \_ Writing utensils

### **Create: Three More Theses**

- \_ Student Guides
- \_ Writing utensils

### **Next**

- \_ Student Guides

# - C O N N E C T -

## **Telephone Drawings** 10 minutes

[**LEADER PREP:** Before the lesson, prepare slips of paper for the opening activity. You will need 7 slips of paper for each student. You may use sticky notes, or you can cut regular sheets of paper into 16 even sections. Also for this activity, students will need to be seated around a table so that they can write and draw.]

**SAY:** Last week, we went on a whirlwind tour of the first 1,500 years of Christian history. We talked about some of the key figures, what they believed, and the things they accomplished. However, we didn't discuss some of the problems. We didn't mention the mistakes and flaws that sprang up in the church over hundreds of years. To explore that idea a little further, we're going to play a game.

[Hand out 7 slips of paper to each student along with a writing utensil.]

**SAY:** Write your initials on the top corner of each of your seven slips of paper. Make it small! Then stack your papers. [Wait until students are done initialing each paper]. On the top piece of paper I want you to write a short sentence telling your favorite thing about going to church. It should just be a few words, short and sweet.

[Allow the students a minute to write out their sentence.]

**SAY:** Once you've written your sentence, pass your stack of papers to the person on your left. They will silently read your sentence, then place that slip of paper at the bottom of the pile. Now, it's their job to draw a picture of the sentence that you wrote.

[Allow the students a minute to draw a picture of the sentence they received.]

**SAY:** Pass the stack of papers to your left again. Look at the picture. Move the slip of paper to the bottom of the pile, then write a sentence explaining what the picture means.

[The students will continue this process, alternating between drawing and writing, until all of the slips of paper have been used. Then they will pass the stack of papers to the person who wrote the original sentence.]

**SAY:** Do any of you want to share how the meaning of your sentence changed and shifted during the course of the game?

[Ask three or four students to share.]

**SAY:** Over hundreds and hundreds of years something similar to this happened to the church as well. As each generation passed the faith on to the next, meanings, beliefs, and practices inevitably shifted. Sometimes it was intentional, but often it was accidental like the way your sentence changed as it was passed around the room. These changes weren't necessarily good or bad, but some were quite significant and caused major problems and controversies in the church when people disagreed about how to understand the Christian faith.

At the highest level, these major problems and controversies, these shifts, are what lead to the period we call the Reformation.

## - E X P L O R E -

### ***The Protestant Reformers*** 25 minutes

[Divide the students in four groups of equal size. Make sure each group has paper and at least one student with a smartphone or tablet so that they can do research on the Internet. Also, make sure all of the students have a pen or pencil to take notes on what they discover in their research.]

**SAY:** When the church first started after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, it faced a lot of persecution. It was largely made up of poor and powerless people, and it also presented a political obstacle to the ruling Roman Empire. As time passed, the church continued to grow and became more powerful. The persecutions ended and Christianity was eventually named as the official religion of Rome.

This meant that, far from being persecuted, many Christians, including many Christian leaders, were now in positions of privilege. The church became a powerful player in politics and also grew extremely wealthy. When the Roman Empire eventually fell, the church helped to fill the vacuum of power.

Over time, the power and wealth of the church came into conflict with a number of groups that wanted change. These groups and their leaders

believed that the church had lost its way and shifted too far from Jesus' original message. They wanted to redirect the church

to the path they believed Jesus had intended. This was not the first group with such ideas, but this time their message was amplified by the invention of the printing press, which allowed books, essays, and pamphlets to be printed and widely distributed for the first time. Today, we are going to investigate four of the men who played a significant role in the Protestant Reformation. Each group will quickly research and make a short three-minute presentation about how each of the following leaders played an important role in the Reformation: Martin Luther, Thomas Cranmer, John Calvin, and Jacob Arminius. Your presentation can be anything from a short play to a song to a quick PowerPoint presentation. Be creative with what you learn!

[Assign each of the four groups one of the Reformers mentioned. Give the groups 10 minutes to research the person they are assigned. Walk around the room providing assistance while the groups do their research. If you have enough volunteers, place one with each group to aid them. When there are 2 minutes remaining, remind the students to prepare their quick presentation.]

**SAY:** Let's have our first group come up and tell us what they've learned about Martin Luther.

[Limit the presentations to 3 minutes. Use the summaries provided on page 62 to correct or fill in any important information that may have been left out. Continue on to the next presentations in the following order: Thomas Cranmer, John Calvin, and Jacob Arminius.]

**SAY:** These men and the movements they led have shaped the church immensely over the past 500 years; and their influence is still being felt today, including within The United Methodist Church.

## - R E F L E C T -

### ***Always Reforming*** 5 minutes

[**LEADER PREP:** Either write on the board or project the following saying in Latin and in English: "*Ecclesia semper reformanda est*" = "The church is always to be reformed."—Augustine]

**SAY:** Those words are attributed to Augustine; but over the centuries, scholars and church leaders have used them as a way to explain that the work of the church is never done. The church is always in pursuit of holiness, always striving toward its ultimate goal. In The United Methodist Church, we pursue this goal by using Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, which is referred to as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. We'll get into more detail about the Quadrilateral in the weeks to come, but it's important to mention today because it's the way Methodists think theologically about the direction of the church.

Today I want to invite you to think about what it means to be a church that is always reforming, always in pursuit of truth and holiness.

Write your answers to the following questions (from the Student Guide):

- What, do you think, does it mean that the church is always to be reformed?
- Why, do you think, is this important?

## **- C R E A T E -**

### ***Three More Theses*** 15 minutes

**SAY:** Who'd be willing to read aloud the instructions for the Create activity in your Student Guide?

[Ask the volunteer to read the instructions.]

**SAY:** Take about 10 minutes to complete this activity. Go!

[Allow time for the students to work on their own.]

**SAY:** Let's come back together and share our creations.

### ***Discussion Questions*** As Time Allows

- Who'd be willing to share what you created?
- What did you like about this activity? What was challenging?

- What did you learn today that will stay with you?

# - N E X T -

## ***Ideas to Try This Week***

[Point out the ideas to try during the week.]

**At home:** Choose someone from the list of people in the Explore section. Go online and look up even more information about him until you find something that you don't think your pastor or confirmation leader knows about this person. Share it with them at your next confirmation class.

**At school:** The Reformation reminds us God works through ordinary and everyday people. Talk with your friends at school about the ways that God can work through you. Make a list of three things you can do to continue to bring the love of God to the people around you.

**In your community:** The Reformation reminds us that the church is reformed and always being reformed by God. Take a prayer walk around your neighborhood, reflecting on the ways God is continuing to move in your community. How is God inviting you to be a part of this movement?

# REFORMER SUMMARIES

## ***Martin Luther***

- German theologian, professor, priest, and monk
- He sparked the Reformation with the posting of the Ninety-Five Theses in Wittenberg, Germany.
- The theses were a call for a public debate on the church's usage of indulgences, a method where the church granted forgiveness of sins for a monetary gift.
- This became a larger conversation about the authority of the church and led to Luther's excommunication by Pope Leo X.
- Luther believed that salvation could not be earned through good deeds, but was only given by God's grace through faith.
- Luther believed that the Bible was only source of knowledge about God, and translated the Bible into German, making it more accessible to the common people.
- Every Protestant reformer, and every Protestant denomination was inspired in some way by Martin Luther.

## ***John Calvin***

- French theologian and reformer, most of his well-known work was done while serving in Geneva
- Heavily influenced by Augustine, he wrote a systematic theology called Institutes of the Christian Religion.
- He advocated the absolute sovereignty of God and that salvation and faith could only be granted by the grace of God, not through the act of free will.
- His theology also discussed political topics like how to organize and run a city and

his work in Geneva put many of these practices into place.

- His theological beliefs, often referred to as Calvinism, are still very influential in

many Presbyterian, Reformed, and Baptist congregations.

## ***Jacob Arminius***

- Dutch professor of theology
- He is most well known for his criticisms of Calvinist theology and advocacy for the importance of free will.
- He emphasized that salvation required believers to choose to believe, and that salvation and God could be both accepted and rejected.
- He introduced the idea of “prevenient grace,” the idea that God’s graceful action precedes human decisions, and exists without them needing to do anything to receive it.
- He is especially important for United Methodists because he heavily influenced the theology of John Wesley, who adopted his views on free will and prevenient grace.

## ***Thomas Cranmer***

- The father of the English Reformation
- He became the Archbishop of Canterbury under Henry VIII and Edward VI.
- Was a key figure in the Anglican Church’s separation from the Catholic Church
- He created the first doctrinal and liturgical structure for the Church of England.
- He wrote the Book of Common Prayer, which is still used, with revisions, in the Anglican Church.
- Heavily influenced by Martin Luther’s beliefs and reforms
- He died as a martyr when Queen Mary I (Bloody Mary), a Roman Catholic, took the throne after Edward VI.
- (Cranmer is particularly important because the Methodist movement emerges from the Anglican Church.)