

Lesson: Martin Luther and what he did for the church (Ephesians 2:8-9)

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Why don't we conduct our church services in Latin and pretend to buy our way into Heaven and pray to saints and call ourselves Catholic? As Protestants of any denomination (or even as Catholics!), we owe a lot to Martin Luther and his daring acts of reform. We often do not take the time to study much of our founding fathers (and mothers) of faith, but examining church history can educate, encourage, and inspire our efforts as people of God. This lesson peeks at the life and contributions of Martin Luther, author of the Protestant Reformation.

Lesson focus: Martin Luther challenged a lot of things that people were doing wrong; sometimes it is okay to go against people in charge if it means following God.

Passage: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this not from

yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

Target Audience: Pre-k through fifth grade (adaptable)

Materials Needed: Candy (candy corn/small things) or crackers; pictures of Martin Luther and Germany map; paper towel rolls; paper and pencils; gummi worms.

Lesson Opening: Start with a little illustration of the silly nature of “indulgences...” provide each student with a handful of candy corn, but then inform them they are not to eat it right away. Start going through a list of potential offenses, and with each one have students hand over a piece if they have done it...has anyone ever told a lie or fib? Been disrespectful? Misspelled a word? Been unkind to a sibling? With each deed, remove another candy. Does that seem fair? If the candy was a gift, should we have to earn it and deserve it? Explain that people used to think of God’s love and forgiveness as something that had to be earned. They thought if you worked or prayed or payed hard enough you could get God’s love. Fortunately, we know better now, and a lot of that is thanks to a man who protested the old church: Martin Luther.

Bible Lesson:

This lesson takes place with some interactive elements as it goes through the stages of Luther’s life. Feel free to follow along or adapt as best suits the group.

-Martin Luther started out on the path to becoming a lawyer. One day he got caught in a bad rain storm and begged God to save him, promising he would become a monk.

-Luther worked hard at the monastery. He often made himself feel very guilty about his life, and would spend hours praying and repenting. **Have students kneel and get up several times. If possible, play some choral or monk-ish background music.**

–Martin went away to school and earned his doctorate degree. He studied theology and the Bible and realized that a lot of the things the church was doing were wrong.

-Luther decided he needed to tell people about God’s grace and how the church wasn’t doing what it should. He wrote a series of statements about what was going on and what he believed. **Allow students to decorate and wrinkle up the paper for their paper towel tube “scroll” and attach to tubes.** His writings had to do with what he didn’t like about the Catholic practices. He also posed five “solas”– things of utmost importance. What were these?

1.) “Sola Scriptura” (Scripture Alone: 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

2.) “Sola Gratia” (Grace Alone: Ephesians 2:8-9)

3.) “Sola Fide” (Faith Alone: Galatians 3:11)

4.) “Solus Christus” (Christ Alone: 1 Timothy 2:5)

5.) “Soli Deo Gloria” (To God Alone Be Glory: 1Peter 4:11).

–Luther continued to tell people about God’s grace and stir things up with his statements. However, the church leaders of the time were not too pleased with that. Hmmm...Who else do we know that didn’t get along well with church leaders of the time?? (Jesus!)

-In 1521 (four years after his theses), Luther was brought to be questioned by the Diet of Worms and challenged to take back his statements. **Pass out gummy or rubber worms**, if desired.

-Luther affirmed what he had already said about grace and God, and refused to take his statements back. This certainly did not win any support from those in charge! In fact, they basically made him a convict and put a ban on his writings.

-Martin Luther had a friend who helped him escape by taking him away to a castle in Wartburg Germany. He hid there for almost a year. **If possible, take a quick walk around the room and “hide” under a table or wherever possible.**

–While hidden away, Martin Luther translated the Bible so people could read it. **Hold up (or pass around) a paper with some Latin writing.** Who can read that or understand it? Back in Luther’s time, people believed only certain priests should be allowed to read the Bible, and no one had it in their language. Luther made the Bible available to regular people, too!

-Later on, Luther married a former nun and went on to have several (six!) children. He wrote many important things, including the church catechism and several hymns. He died in 1546.

So why does this matter? If not for the Protestant Reformation, many people would likely not have the opportunity to practice their faith as they do today. And after all, we are called **Lutherans... J**

Craft:

Have students finish up the “scrolls” by writing (older students) sentences about what they believe, or drawing a picture. Attach the pictures to the paper towel tubes.

Close with prayer and thank God for all He has given. Remember to pass out parent notes, verse of the week, and prizes for any who remembered last week’s verse. J

Additional activities to celebrate Luther:

- Develop an obstacle course and play “rescue Luther” by running through the course to capture and re-place an object representing Martin Luther. Hide him in a “Wartburg Castle.”
- Enjoy a tasty snack “worm diet” with pudding and gummi worms!
- Play “pin the theses on the door” a la pin the tail on the donkey...cut printed copies of the original statements into strips and blindfold students and help them attach the strips to a pole or door representing Wittenberg.
- Play “toss the papal bull,” using scrolled papers and tossing into a bucket or other target.
- Color a Luther rose or stained glass-style window.