

PAPA LUTHER

A GRAPHIC NOVEL

PAPA LUTHER: A GRAPHIC NOVEL

Leader Guide

Copyright © 2016 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May be reproduced for local use only.

Quotations from Luther's Small Catechism are from Luther's Small Catechism Study Edition, translated by Timothy J. Wengert. Copyright © 2016 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced.

Writer: Rebecca Ninke

Illustrator: Caitlin Like

Design and typesetting: Tory Herman

HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE?

Germany in the sixteenth century was a time of transition from the thousand-year medieval period to the modern era. ("Modern," of course, is a relative term, especially for kids 500 years later.) Like most periods of transition, it was noted primarily in hindsight, though the Reformation triggered some rather sudden changes that would have been perceptible to ordinary folks. And most people were just that—ordinary peasants living hard lives, eking out an existence in an era with limited medicine, high death rates of children, poor sanitation, scratchy clothes, and reliance on the earth. The population wasn't as dense as most kids experience now; Germany's populace was still rebounding from the Black Death plague that wiped out over a third of the population of Europe. Whatever was happening in the struggles between princes and principalities, the majority of people worried most about keeping their families clothed, fed, warm, and alive.

- FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE, LIFE IN MARTIN LUTHER'S TIME WAS PRIMITIVE AND HARD.
- THE BLACK DEATH (OR PLAGUE) HAD KILLED OVER A THIRD OF THE PEOPLE IN EUROPE.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- LOOKING BACK ON YOUR LIFETIME 500 YEARS FROM NOW, HOW DO YOU THINK PEOPLE WOULD SUMMARIZE IT? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE LIVES OF COMMON PEOPLE? HOW ARE COMMON PEOPLE'S DAILY LIVES DIFFERENT FROM FAMOUS PEOPLE'S LIVES?
- IF ALL OF OUR MODERN CONVENIENCES QUIT WORKING AND ONLY A FEW ITEMS WERE AVAILABLE FROM A MARKET, HOW WOULD YOU AND YOUR FAMILY SURVIVE? HOW WOULD YOU MAKE FOOD, CLOTHES, SOAP, AND SHELTER? WHAT WOULD BE THE MOST DIFFICULT?

WHAT DID KIDS DO?

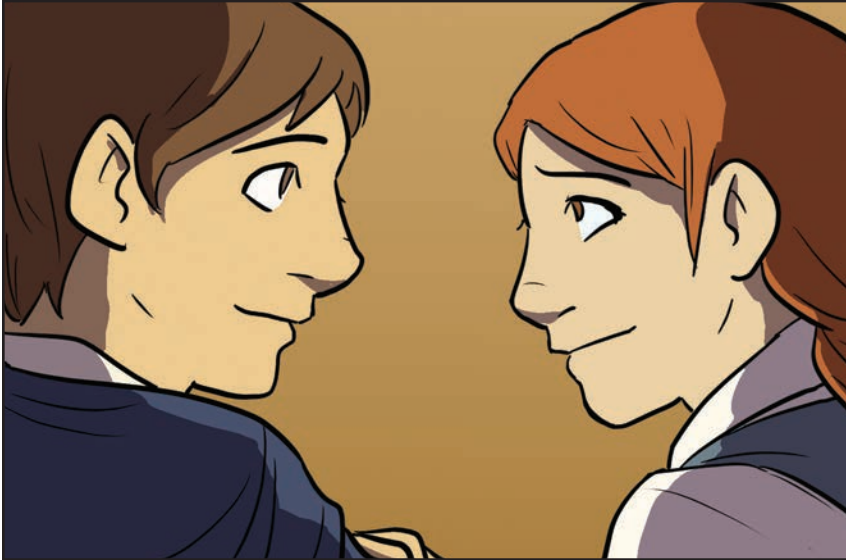
Martin and Katie Luther's kids helping with harvest would have been a completely normal and expected chore. Children in that time, like children today in many parts of the world, participated in the family work as a matter of survival. Teenage kids would be expected to labor as hard as adults and younger kids would help, as soon as they were able, with raising food, caring for livestock, needlework, hunting and fishing, washing clothes, scrubbing floors, emptying the bucket used for a toilet during the night, carrying water, plowing, butchering, egg gathering, and so on. Older siblings helped care for younger siblings. There wasn't much free time and of course, no electronics or graphic novels!

- CHILDREN HAD TO WORK FROM AN EARLY AGE TO HELP THEIR FAMILIES LIVE.
- NO HAMBURGERS OR TACOS—PEOPLE ATE SIMPLE FOODS THEY PREPARED FROM SCRATCH.
- PEOPLE OFTEN DRANK BEER OR WINE BECAUSE OF UNHEALTHY WATER.

WHAT DID THEY EAT?

On the plates at the Luther household, the food would be dependent on what they could raise, gather, hunt or fish, or afford to buy in the market. Everything was from scratch and took considerable time to prepare. Breads and porridge were simple and coarse. There could have been a little dairy, fish, wild birds and

animals, or meat that was raised. They might have had leeks, mushrooms, apples, or berries from the countryside. Foods from the western hemisphere like potatoes, tomatoes, and chocolate had not yet made it to Germany. Wine and beer were not uncommon at tables, in part because the water could contain any number of organisms and diseases. The fermented alcohol would kill bacteria and preserve what would otherwise mold.



CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- DOES THE SCENE ON PAGE 8 LOOK FAMILIAR? BROTHERS AND SISTERS HAVE PROBABLY BEEN FIGHTING SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME. HOW DO YOU GET ALONG WITH YOUR SIBLINGS OR COUSINS? HOW CAN WE PRACTICE OUR FAITH IN GOD AT HOME, EVEN WITH ANNOYING SIBLINGS?
- DOES THE DINNER TABLE ON PAGE 9 LOOK LIKE YOUR DINNER TABLE AT HOME? HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN WHAT YOU EAT TO SOMEONE 500 YEARS IN THE FUTURE? (HOW MIGHT PROCESSED, FLATTENED FRUIT MIXED WITH CHEMICAL PRESERVATIVES AND ROLLED UP IN PLASTIC SOUND?)
- MAGDA AND HANS ARE SHOWN HELPING WITH THE HARVEST AND CLEANING UP AFTER DINNER. HOW DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR FAMILY'S CHORES?
- HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR LIFE DIFFERS FROM THE LIVES OF KIDS 500 YEARS AGO? WHAT'S BETTER? WHAT'S WORSE?

BIBLICAL BASIS

THE PRODIGAL SON: LUKE 15:11-32

Beginning on page 12, Luther retold the quarreling Magda and Hans the parable of the prodigal son from Luke 15:11-32. Jesus told this tale about two siblings to help explain how God's radical grace is given freely and not earned.

This story has many layers that might not be evident to kids at first listen. An inheritance was not normally given until a parent died because the parent might very well need it to live on for many more years into the unknown future. Asking

for it ahead of time was a great insult, as if wishing a parent dead. Property was usually inherited by the eldest son; it didn't make sense to divide property among a multitude of brothers at each generation until no one had enough to live on, so it was normally left intact. (And unfortunately, land and assets were passed from male to male, excluding daughters altogether.) For the younger son to ask for half would naturally make the older brother angry. For the younger son to spend the money recklessly on impure matters and then be forced to work in a job that brought shame to the family—feeding the loathed, ritually unclean pigs—was layer upon layer of insult.

But instead of anger, the father showed grace and compassion. Martin Luther struggled for many years with the sense that he could not do enough right to please God and that he could never earn God's love and forgiveness. And in a way, he was exactly right. But what Martin finally came to understand was that God's love is never earned, but it is given freely. God's love is like the forgiving father in the story who rejoices at his son's return and continues to shower him with love and acceptance. No doubt Martin Luther hoped his children would learn that important element of faith earlier than he did, avoiding an unending cycle of guilt for a perfection that is impossible to attain.

- THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL SON WAS SHOCKING IN JESUS' TIME, AND IT STILL IS TODAY.
- GOD IS NOT FAIR—AND WE ARE FORTUNATE THAT'S SO! GOD'S LOVE BRINGS US FORGIVENESS AND LIFE.



But it's a complicated story. The Bible talks about seeking justice, and this ending doesn't feel very just. What kids relate to—as well as most adults—is wanting to scream, “No fair” at the top of our lungs. Did Jesus mean that God is gullible? Is it okay to set yourself up for abuse? From the perspective of the responsible son (the character into which most of us naturally place ourselves in the story), he did everything right and yet the brother who was wasteful and irresponsible got to go have fun and come back to a place of honor.

But God has never been about fair. If God were fair and we all got what we deserved, it would be a messy deal all around. The scriptures are full of examples of God calling unexpected people into roles in God's unfolding plan, people thought

to be unworthy and even outside of God's reach. Noah was a drinker, Rahab was a prostitute, Mary was a peasant, Matthew was a tax collector, not to mention the sinners, lepers, enemies, and foreigners. God's love cannot be contained in our views of fairness, and grace has never been given as a reward for right behavior. Grace is a gift freely given to all of us, whether we push God away or attend church every Sunday.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- WHICH PERSON IN THE PRODIGAL SON STORY ARE YOU MOST LIKE? TO WHICH PERSON IN THE STORY DO YOU THINK HANS AND MAGDA WOULD RELATE?
- IF YOU WERE THE PARENT, HOW WOULD YOU HAVE TREATED THE YOUNGER SON WHEN HE RETURNED HOME?
- DO YOU THINK THE YOUNGER SON WILL LEARN FROM HIS MISTAKES? WILL IT MATTER TO THE FATHER? WHEN HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM A MISTAKE YOU MADE?
- HOW DO YOU THINK THE OLDER BROTHER FELT, THE ONE WHO STAYED HOME AND DID EVERYTHING? WAS HE WRONG TO FEEL THAT WAY? HOW WOULD THE STORY BE DIFFERENT IF HE FELT HAPPY THAT HIS BROTHER WAS BACK AND WELCOMED BY HIS FATHER?
- WHY BOTHER DOING EVERYTHING RIGHT IF SOMEONE WHO DOES EVERYTHING WRONG IS LOVED BY GOD OR A PARENT JUST AS MUCH?
- IF WE ALL GOT WHAT WE DESERVED FROM GOD, WHAT MIGHT THAT LOOK LIKE?
- SOMETIMES HUMANS HAVE TO LOVE OTHER PEOPLE FROM A DISTANCE BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT SAFE PEOPLE TO HAVE IN OUR LIVES. HOW ARE WE DIFFERENT FROM GOD IN THAT WAY?
- WHAT DOES THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL SON HAVE TO DO WITH EVERYDAY FIGHTING LIKE MAGDA AND HANS WERE ENGAGED IN?
- HOW DOES GOD SURPRISE OUR EXPECTATIONS? WHY WOULD GOD BE SO EAGER TO WELCOME BACK SOMEONE WHO MESSED UP SO MUCH?
- DO YOU THINK THAT GRACE AND LOVE AND FORGIVENESS ARE WASTED ON ANYONE? WHY OR WHY NOT?

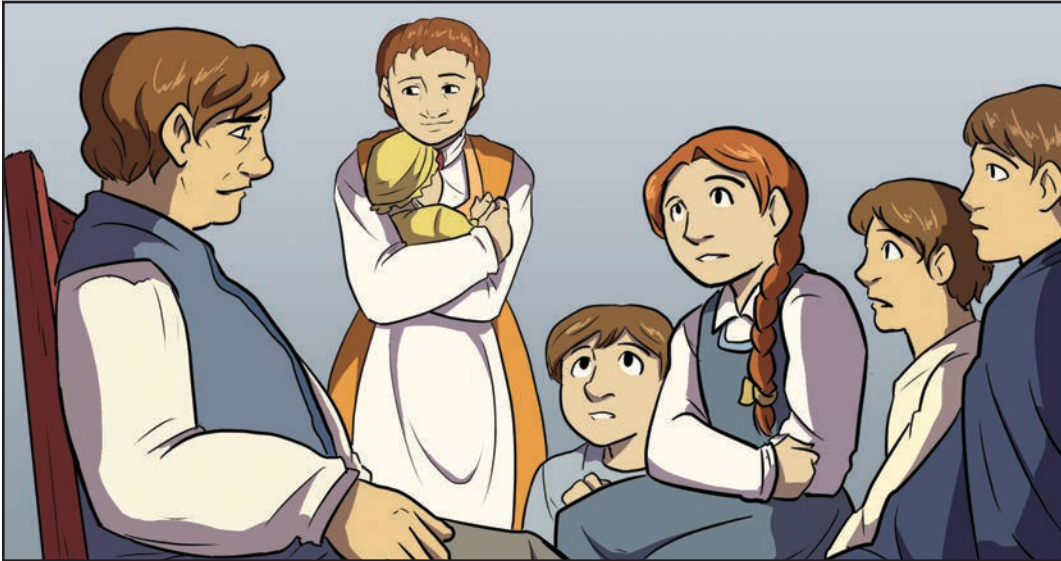
LUTHER LINK

WHAT DO FAMILIES HAVE TO DO WITH FAITH?

It seems safe to say that Martin Luther liked kids, even before he was married and had six of his own. Luther thought having offspring was more important than going to the bathroom! Having children was "more necessary than sleeping and waking, eating and drinking, and emptying the bowels and bladder" (*Luther's Works*, 45:18). He noted that raising children, even changing dirty diapers, could be considered one's holy vocation or calling in the world along with the other ordinary work of family and home. You didn't have to join a convent as a nun or become a priest—you could fulfill your calling by having children and raising them in faith. Luther considered it the gift and opportunity of every parent to raise children to know, worship, and serve God.

Not only did Martin Luther value the work of parenting, but he was seemingly ahead of his time, embracing for fathers what would have been considered the work of mothers. Even before he was married, he wrote:

Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool, though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in Christian faith, my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most keenly ridiculing the other? God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling, not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith. (*Luther's Works*, 45:39-41)



Luther, who suffered from chronic constipation, did seem to focus quite a bit on toileting and diapers. But his larger point was that in the everyday work of parenting, there is opportunity to live out discipleship and teach the faith.

Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal. (*Luther's Works*, 45:46)

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- PARENTS CAN LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH THROUGH PARENTING AND LIKEWISE KIDS CAN LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH THROUGH EVERYDAY KID STUFF. THINK ABOUT ALL THE PARTS OF YOUR LIFE—FAMILY, FRIENDS, SCHOOL, PETS, SPORTS, MUSIC, AND SO ON—HOW CAN YOUR FAITH BE LIVED OUT IN THOSE EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS?
- HOW DO YOU LIVE OUT THE COMMANDMENT TO "HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER"?
- HOW HAS FAITH BEEN PASSED ON TO YOU? WHICH ADULTS HAVE HELPED TEACH YOU ABOUT LIVING OUT YOUR FAITH IN EVERYDAY LIFE?

RELATING TO REAL LIFE

HOW DO I WEAVE MY FAITH INTO MY LIFE?

In the graphic novel, Martin and Katie Luther's family was seen incorporating faith habits into their everyday lives. Luther told stories from the Bible and they talked about faith at home. He wrote the Small Catechism so parents could teach the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Ten Commandments and their meanings at home. Kids today are growing up in a time when faith and church attendance is no longer the cultural normal. Sports, music, birthday parties are scheduled without much thought regarding conflict with worship and sabbath time. Not so long ago, stores were closed, nothing was scheduled on the sabbath except church activities, and no work was done. Even the food had been previously prepared, so it could just be put out for a meal.

The busyness of the modern world has meant having faith incorporated into everyday life has grown increasingly countercultural.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **MARTIN LUTHER SOUGHT TO REFORM THE CHURCH IN PART SO THAT FAITH COULD BE A MATTER OF DAILY LIFE FOR EVERYDAY PEOPLE. WHAT MIGHT HE THINK OF THE FAITH LIVES OF CHRISTIANS TODAY?**
- **SOMETIMES IT CAN BE THE KIDS IN A FAMILY WHO HELP INCORPORATE FAITH INTO THE HOME. YOU CAN LEAD PRAYERS AT MEALS, CRACK OPEN THE BIBLE AT BEDTIME, ENCOURAGE YOUR FAMILY TO MAKE IT TO CHURCH, AND WHAT ELSE?**
- **HOW CAN YOU SHOW THE WORLD THAT YOUR FAITH IS A BIG DEAL IN YOUR LIFE?**
- **HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH PRACTICES AND BIRTHDAY PARTIES THAT ARE SCHEDULED DURING YOUR CHURCH TIME?**

HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

LIKE THE WORLD TODAY, EXCEPT TOTALLY DIFFERENT

Imagine a world much like yours. The sun comes up, there is work to be done, meals to eat, lives to lead, and then the sun goes down and there is rest. Now imagine that world as you take a step back in time about five hundred years. Take away the grocery store, the vehicles that drive you to get food, the electricity that lights the house, and the gas that warms it in winter. You'll have to light a lamp or a candle, but be careful not to burn down the house; straw and wood burn quickly! Eating in the dark might not be such a bad idea; your mom tried to sift all the bugs out of the grain when making bread, but she can't ever get them all.

Is it a hot day? Don't even think about an air conditioner; just leave the door open or sleep outside. It's a good thing you don't have any sticky bug spray or sunblock to apply because unless you were born into a wealthy family, you probably haven't had many baths between your birth and when someone is preparing your body for burial. Hopefully that burial will be a few years away, but the average lifespan from birth is around forty years. But the good news: if you make it out of childhood alive, you can hope to live into your sixties, seventies, or occasionally even longer . . . unless the Black Death returns.

Do you ever complain about school? Good news: if you were born into a peasant family, you don't ever have to go! Of course, you'll also be illiterate like roughly 85% of people, but no big deal since books were very rare and often in Latin. And don't you hate going to the doctor for vaccines and that awful strep test? More good news: no shots, no vaccines, and almost no medicine! You'll probably want to stay away from doctors in general, but if you do need a medicinal bleeding or surgery, your physician will be more likely to check the position of the moon than consult a medical book. But let's hope you don't need surgery; there's that whole tricky business of anesthesia not being invented for another three hundred years or so. Maybe you can just search for a cure on your smartphone? Oh, never mind.

- WE TEND TO FORGET HOW FAR WE HAVE COME FROM LUTHER'S DAY.
- LACK OF CONVENIENCES, ABSENCE OF MODERN MEDICINE, UNSAFE CONDITIONS—LIFE WAS HARD BACK THEN!



When your family wants to go to the market, you might get to go along to one of the bigger towns; there are quite a few towns over 10,000 people now! But if you do go, watch your step and plug your nose. Those chamber pots have to get

thrown somewhere, and it seems like they are thrown everywhere! Remember *that* when you're drawing a cool cup of water from the well; it's *mostly* water anyway.

Ready to come back? Martin Luther was born into a time when life was hard and danger was everywhere. Calamity often hit seemingly without rhyme or reason; not surprisingly, people were superstitious and tried to keep death and disaster away by any means they could. People who were not formally educated, illiterate, and superstitious were easy prey by the powerful. Such people tended toward "magical thinking," believing that bartering with God, giving money to the church, or some other action could influence events like whether loved ones survived an illness.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **WHAT DO YOU THINK OF YOUR TRIP BACK TO IN TIME FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO?**
- **READ ABOUT LUTHER'S EXPERIENCE IN THE STORM ON PAGE 24. DO YOU THINK GOD SAVED MARTIN LUTHER BECAUSE OF THE PROMISE HE MADE OR WAS IT JUST A STORM? WHEN HAVE YOU HAD A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE—WHEN YOU WERE SCARED AND STARTED MAKING PROMISES TO GOD?**
- **WE CAN ALL BE A LITTLE SUPERSTITIOUS, CROSSING OUR FINGERS FOR GOOD LUCK. WHEN MIGHT THERE BE DANGER IN BEING SUPERSTITIOUS? (DO YOU CROSS YOUR FINGERS THAT YOU DON'T GET IN A CAR ACCIDENT OR BUCKLE YOUR SEATBELT? DO YOU PRAY TO GOD TO KEEP YOU HEALTHY, BUT THEN NOT WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE YOU EAT?)**
- **IF SOMEONE TOLD YOU TO STAY IN YOUR HOUSE ON FRIDAY THE 13TH, NOT TO LET A BLACK CAT CROSS IN FRONT OF YOU, AND TO KNOCK ON WOOD TO KEEP SOMETHING BAD FROM HAPPENING, WOULD YOU DO IT? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

BIBLICAL BASIS

ROMANS

In his early adult years, Martin Luther was troubled by feeling he was never good enough before family and before God. What helped him, what changed him, and ultimately, what changed the church as we know it, was scripture. Luther believed the Bible is alive and speaks to us, the living word of God. In its pages, he found comfort in his struggles. Luther was inspired to help others know the Bible in their own language so they too could be comforted and know that they were good enough in the eyes of God.



Paul's Letter to the Romans was the most important piece in the New Testament in Luther's opinion. "This epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament, and is truly the purest gospel.... It is a bright light, almost sufficient to illuminate the entire Holy Scriptures."ⁱ Not surprisingly, when he had been full of self-hatred, it was the words in Romans that changed him most dramatically.

Look up these passages from Romans:

Romans 3:21-28 Here Paul explains that people aren't made right before God by following all the commandments and laws perfectly. No one completely makes the grade, but we are given this gift of love, grace, and forgiveness. Jesus showed us that through his death on the cross. We can stop worrying about living in perfection and live instead in the freedom, knowing we are loved by God because of God, not because of what we do just right.

Romans 5:1-8 These verses remind us that God didn't wait for us to get it right to send Jesus to walk among us. Jesus' willingness to die on the cross gives us a glimpse of how big God's love is. You might jump in front of a car to save your best friend or a family member, but would you risk your life to save someone who was kind of awful? Paul was saying that even while we were kind of awful, Jesus was willing to die for us.

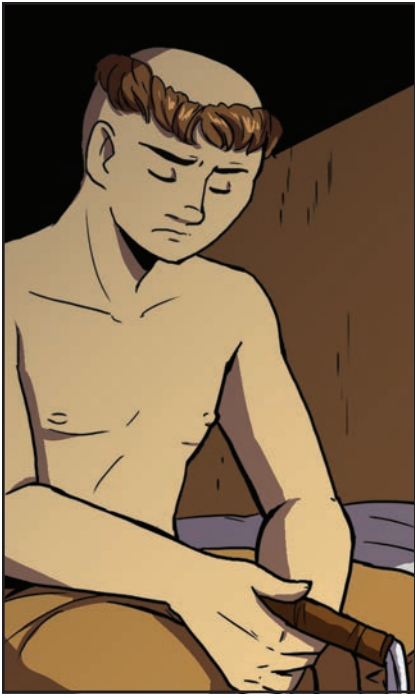
CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **WHEN YOU ARE FEELING DOWN, WHAT HELPS YOU FEEL BETTER?**
- **THOUGH NOT EVERYBODY TALKS ABOUT IT, MOST PEOPLE HAVE WONDERED AT SOME POINT (OR THEIR ENTIRE LIVES) IF THEY WERE SMART ENOUGH OR GOOD ENOUGH, OR DIDN'T MEASURE UP IN SOME WAY. WHILE YOU STILL MIGHT NOT GET PICKED FIRST FOR A DODGEBALL TEAM, LUTHER WANTED PEOPLE TO KNOW THAT GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS MEANT EVERYONE IS GOOD ENOUGH. WHAT SITUATIONS MAKE YOU QUESTION WHETHER GOD CAN LOVE YOU JUST THE WAY YOU ARE?**
- **SCRIPTURE CAN COMFORT US TOO. DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE VERSE THAT SPEAKS TO YOU? TRY TO FIND ONE AND LEARN IT BY HEART; WHEN YOU'RE STRESSED OR ANXIOUS, REPEAT IT TO YOURSELF.**

LUTHER LINK

IMPOSSIBLE PERFECTION

What is considered acceptable discipline for children has changed even in the last generation; looking back five hundred years really challenges our sensibilities. We know from Martin Luther's writings on his upbringing that the discipline imposed upon him was harsh—maybe even more so than the average child experienced. The expectations and demands of his father Hans are legendary, but his mother Margaret also appeared to be exacting and strict. For stealing a nut as a young child, Luther's mother physically punished him so hard that she drew blood.ⁱⁱ The expectations of his parents were that he would continue on their path of bettering the family's economic status and this would be done by receiving an education and following the rules—including theirs.



His father's plan was that Martin Luther would study to become a lawyer. Not asking his son what he wanted to do with his life would not have been unusual. Most parents didn't ask their children if they wanted to be poor peasants or apprentice as a woodworker—people grabbed the opportunities of their time with both hands with the hope that life would be more than a struggle for survival.

And so after Martin was caught in the storm and made a promise to God to become a monk, whatever choice he made after that would either disappoint his parents or God. His guilt and anxiety are well-documented, as well as his attempts to atone for his sense of sin. In other words, Luther punished himself. He compulsively made confession to God, trying to list every single wrong he had done. As he had feared

disappointing and angering his parents, he feared disappointing and angering God.

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!" Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted. (*Luther's Works*, 34:336-337)

For a long time, I went astray and didn't know what I was about. To be sure, I knew something, but I didn't know what it was until I came to the text in Romans 1 [:17], "He who through faith is righteous shall live." That text helped me. There I saw what righteousness Paul was talking about. Earlier in the text I read "righteousness." I related the abstract ["righteousness"] with the concrete ["the righteous One"] and became sure of my cause. I learned to distinguish between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of the gospel. I lacked nothing before this except that I made no distinction between the law and the gospel. I regarded both as the same thing and held that there was no difference between Christ and Moses except the times in which they lived and their degrees of perfection. But when I discovered the proper distinction—namely, that the law is one thing and the gospel is another—I made myself free. (*Luther's Works*, 54:442)

- MARTIN LUTHER GREW UP KNOWING HIS PARENTS EXPECTED A LOT OF HIM.
- EVEN HARDER WAS FEELING THAT HE COULD NEVER LIVE UP TO GOD'S DEMANDS ON HIM.
- FINALLY, LUTHER FOUND FREEDOM IN THE WORDS OF PAUL IN ROMANS.

In other words, Martin Luther struggled to feel that he was righteous because he knew he could not live perfectly when judged by God's law. But after reading Romans, he came to accept that he was righteous not because he was able to keep God's law, but he was made righteous by God's love and grace. It can be very difficult to forgive others, but maybe the hardest challenge of all is forgiving ourselves.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO FOR A JOB WHEN YOU GROW UP? WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR FAMILY HOPES YOU WILL DO? IF THEY AREN'T THE SAME, WHICH MIGHT YOU PICK AND WHY?**
- **WHICH OF THESE OPTIONS WOULD YOU RATHER CHOOSE AND WHY: A JOB THAT MAKES YOU REALLY WEALTHY AND MISERABLE OR A JOB THAT MAKES YOU REALLY HAPPY BUT POOR?**
- **SOMETIMES IN THEIR HOPE TO GUIDE KIDS INTO BECOMING THE BEST ADULTS THEY CAN BE, PARENTS PUSH TOO MUCH OR MAKE KIDS FEEL LIKE THEY ARE NEVER QUITE GOOD ENOUGH. HAVE YOU EVER FELT THIS WAY? HOW CAN YOU HELP A WORRIED PARENT TRUST YOUR CHOICES?**
- **EVEN IF THE ADULTS AROUND YOU NEVER TOTALLY GET IT RIGHT, GOD HAS. SENDING JESUS TO SHOW US HOW MUCH WE ARE LOVED WAS THE FINAL WORD. HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE LOVED UNCONDITIONALLY, NO MATTER WHAT?**
- **THERE ISN'T A PERSON ALIVE WHO HASN'T DONE SOMETHING STUPID OR EMBARRASSING. THINK OF SOMETHING YOU DID THAT POPS INTO YOUR MIND AND MAKES YOU FEEL AWFUL. HOW CAN YOU FORGIVE YOURSELF AND LET IT GO?**

RELATING TO REAL LIFE

ARE THERE POOPER SCOOPERS IN THE RESURRECTION?

Martin Luther's dog was named Tölpel, which can be translated into fun words like "lunkhead," "noodlehead," "dolt," or "dummy." Luther loved his noodlehead! Tölpel showed up a couple places in Luther's writings and Luther often used dog imagery to express his point of view.

In his Easter 1544 sermon, Luther quoted 2 Peter 3:13 and then described what he thought the time after the resurrection would be like, which apparently included lots of Golden Retriever puppies:

God will create a new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell. It will be no arid waste, but a beautiful new earth, where all the just will dwell together...There will be little dogs, with golden hair, shining like precious stones.ⁱⁱⁱ

If heaven was a perfect place, then Luther could not imagine it without dogs. A quote often attributed to him (though the dog can't verify this) that seems in line with Luther's thoughts on his four-legged friends states, "Be thou comforted, little dog. Thou too in Resurrection shall have a little golden tail."

And it wasn't just that dogs would be in heaven. Luther lifted them up as an example of faithfulness.



The dog is the most faithful of animals and would be much esteemed were it not so common. Our Lord God has made His greatest gifts the commonest.

When Luther's puppy [n. 116, Luther's dog Tölpel is mentioned again and again in the Table Talk.] happened to be at the table, looked for a morsel from his master, and watched with open mouth and motionless eyes, he [Martin Luther] said, "Oh, if I could only pray the way this dog watches the meat! All his thoughts are concentrated on the piece of meat. Otherwise he has no thought, wish, or hope. (*Luther's Works*, 54:37-38)

In Luther's era, many people had a hard time feeding their children so there might not have been many table scraps for a dog. There wasn't any flea preventative or rabies vaccination either. But Luther loved his faithful companions and could see some qualities worth emulating.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **WHAT DO YOU THINK: DO ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN?**
- **IN MATTERS OF FAITH, HOW CAN DOGS BE AN EXAMPLE TO US?**
- **MARTIN LUTHER DIDN'T REALLY MENTION CATS. COINCIDENCE?**
- **A SIMPLE FAITH CAN BE A GIFT. THINK ABOUT YOUR DOG OR ANOTHER DOG YOU KNOW. WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE THE DOG HAPPY? HOW MIGHT LUTHER'S "NOODLEHEAD" DOG HAVE SYMBOLIZED LUTHER'S BIG THEOLOGICAL AWAKENING OF RECEIVING LOVE AND GRACE WITH HAPPINESS INSTEAD OF GUILT?**

TOUGH TOPICS FOR OLDER KIDS

Luther's struggles with his feelings were overwhelming to him. The futile pressure to be a perfect recipient of God's love was a no-win situation. The feelings must have felt too intense for him to bear and he resorted even to self-injury to help regulate his emotions. The image on page 28 alludes to self-flagellation, whipping oneself, usually over the back. That Martin Luther considered this practice a part of his religious discipline is troubling.

Preteen and teenage youth are likely aware of someone who is a "cutter," a person who engages in non-suicidal self-injury.^{iv} It is a surprisingly common phenomenon, but it is not new. Like Martin Luther five hundred years ago, youth who engage in cutting typically do so as a coping strategy for feelings that overwhelm. If kids or adults become aware of someone who is engaging in cutting as a tool for managing emotional stress, it is important to not keep it a secret, but to help the person get professional help. Though it is not suicidal behavior in itself, people who engage in self-harming behaviors have a higher rate of suicide. Learning healthy coping skills and sometimes altering situations that are contributing to emotional stress are important steps.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- WHEN HAVE YOU FELT TRULY OVERWHELMED BY YOUR THOUGHTS OR EMOTIONS?
- HOW DOES IT FEEL WHEN YOU CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING THAT BOTHERS YOU?
- WHAT HEALTHY STRATEGIES DO YOU KNOW THAT HELP YOU COPE?
- HOW CAN FAITH HELP US TO AVOID FEELING OVERWHELMED BY EMOTIONS FROM INSECURITY, GUILT, AND SHAME?
- WHAT TRUMPS KEEPING A PROMISE OF CONFIDENTIALITY TO A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER?
- IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS ENGAGING IN UNHEALTHY SELF-HARMING PRACTICES TO MANAGE STRESS, WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO HELP THE PERSON SEEK AND RECEIVE PROFESSIONAL HELP?

i *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings: Edited by Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.

ii Oberman, Heiko Augustinus. *Luther: Man between God and the Devil.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

iii Luther, Martin. Translated by William Hazlitt, Esq. *The Table-Talk of Martin Luther.* Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, n.d.

iv Yates, Tuppett M., Allison J. Tracy, and Suniya S. Luthar. "Nonsuicidal Self-Injury among 'Privileged' Youths: Longitudinal and Cross-Sectional Approaches to Developmental Process." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 76.1 (2008): 52-62.

HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

In the era of Martin Luther, the geographical world was starting to look more like we now know it, as small principalities with their often fluid borders were formed into nation-states (countries). During the long era of feudalism, land and taxes were managed by queens and kings and the nobility underneath them. The church was also an influential element, which often meant a tug-of-war for power between royalty and the church. But most people trudged through life worried about day-to-day survival. A peasant family wouldn't give much thought to the events of the world around except as they were personally affected by them. A peasant might live and die having not traveled more than a handful of miles in any direction past the village or even without knowing in which country he or she lived.

People weren't necessarily concerned with calendar dates as much as the seasons. Your parents might not be able to say with certainty in which year you were born! But one set of figures that was regulated and remembered was taxes. When long wars were fought, it was the common people who paid for them through higher taxation. In the time transitioning from the medieval to the modern era, feudal landlords still collected taxes on peasants, farmers, craftsmen, and laborers. Some written records of these tax rolls have survived even to today.

Martin Luther's family history reflects the economic expansion of the 16th century. Though his father Hans Luther came from peasant stock, it appears he married well in the match with Luther's mother Margaret, who came from a more well-to-do family.ⁱ Over time, Hans and Margaret Luther were able to become reasonably prosperous, though not without significant setbacks on the way. His father did well in the copper mining industry and the fact that Martin Luther's family could afford to educate him was a sign of their relative wealth. Their hope was no doubt like the hopes of parents across the ages: that their child would have a better life and more opportunities than they had. When Luther left law school and walked away from the potential of a prosperous career to enter the monastery as a monk, they were disappointed.

- THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AS WE KNOW THEM WERE NOT ALL ESTABLISHED IN LUTHER'S TIME, BUT THE PROCESS WAS UNDERWAY.
- THEN AS NOW, PARENTS HOPED THEIR CHILDREN WOULD HAVE BETTER LIVES.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- WHAT MIGHT SOME OF YOUR PARENTS' HOPES FOR YOUR LIFE BE? ARE THEY THE SAME OR DIFFERENT THAN YOUR HOPES? WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF THEY ARE VASTLY DIFFERENT?
- IF YOU WERE ABLE TO PICK ANY CAREER YOU WANTED AND YOU CHOSE A JOB THAT WAS GUARANTEED TO NOT TO EARN YOU MUCH MONEY, WHAT MIGHT PEOPLE SAY? WOULD IT MATTER IF IT MEANT WORKING FOR A CHURCH?
- IMAGINE NOT KNOWING HOW BIG THE WORLD IS, JUST HEARING ABOUT FARAWAY PLACES OCCASIONALLY FROM TRAVELERS PASSING THROUGH. DO YOU WANT TO SEE THE WORLD OR ARE YOU MORE CONTENT STAYING CLOSE TO HOME?

- IF YOU HEAR ADULTS TALKING ABOUT PAYING TAXES, DO THEY SOUND PLEASED OR ANNOYED? DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR TAXES PAY FOR? (ROADS, SCHOOLS, THE MILITARY, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, GOVERNMENT, AND SO ON.)

BIBLICAL BASIS

ROMANS 1:16-17; 2:25-29

When Luther was in the monastery, his wise abbot (who became a friend) Johann von Staupitz knew that Luther was deeply troubled. Luther seemed to relate to God as being another strict parent with such high expectations that Luther knew he could never measure up. As he had disappointed his parents by not following their hopes for his future path, likewise Luther felt he was disappointing God by not being perfect enough to earn God's perfect love.



Following Staupitz's directions to immerse himself in scripture, over time Luther came to understand that God's love is given and not earned. Paul's Letter to the Romans was where Luther's heart was turned. In Romans 1:16-17, Luther realized that the "good news" is that salvation is free for the taking. It is God's righteousness, not ours, that restores us.

Trusting in God to take care of what we cannot was a significant turn in Luther's theology and more importantly, a significant turn in his life—how he viewed God, himself, and the world.

Paul's letter was written to a community of believers of two distinct backgrounds: those who had come to believe in Christ by way of the Jewish faith and those who were new to a monotheistic understanding of God. The Jews, like Paul and Jesus, had showed their faith by living according to the law. They followed rules that ordered their lives and worship, including outward signs like circumcision. The Jewish Christians were often in conflict with the Gentile Christians as they sorted out whether or not it would be required that Gentile Christians would be bound to the laws of faith as Jewish Christians had been. Eventually, Paul evolved to believe that it was not necessary to earn righteousness by human actions such as circumcision because righteousness had been earned by Christ.

It wasn't always an easy sell! Like Hans and Magda, there were lots of complaints of "No fair!" It probably seemed to diminish the care that the Jewish Christians had taken to follow God's laws to show their faith and devotion to God. But convincing a Gentile teenage boy or his dad to go through circumcision was a pretty big stumbling block to welcoming people into the faith. Read what Paul has to say on the issue of circumcision in Romans 2:25-29.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOU VASTLY CHANGED YOUR OPINION ABOUT SOMETHING. HOW DID IT FEEL? HOW DID IT CHANGE YOU?**
- **ON PAGE 30, LUTHER TOLD HIS CHILDREN THAT GOD GAVE HIM A "GREAT GIFT." IN DIGGING INTO THE SCRIPTURES, WHAT HE READ CHANGED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF GOD. WHAT HAVE YOU READ IN THE BIBLE THAT SURPRISED YOU OR CHANGED YOUR UNDERSTANDING?**
- **FOLLOWING THE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF ANOTHER PEOPLE WAS A STUMBLING BLOCK TO OUTSIDERS JOINING THE CHURCH. WHAT BARRIERS TO OUTSIDERS JOINING CHURCHES DO YOU IMAGINE EXIST TODAY?**
- **THOUGH THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE WERE WRITTEN DOWN A LONG TIME AGO AND, LIKE PAUL'S LETTER, WERE ADDRESSED TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE, THEY CAN STILL SPEAK TO US TODAY. WHY ELSE MIGHT LUTHER HAVE DESCRIBED THEM AS "LIVING"?**

LUTHER LINK

NOT INDULGING INDULGENCES

In Luther's time, death was everywhere. Anxiety was high for lives filled with danger with little help through medicine. A cut or a simple virus could end life quickly, not to mention a plague that could wipe out a third of the population. Martin Luther's own family is an example: historians aren't exactly sure how many siblings Luther had, but there were at least eight. Of those, five reached adulthood.ⁱⁱ

As in any era, thoughts of the much-loved dead were never far away. A parent couldn't always save the life of a child hit with a fast-acting, deadly illness, but imagine if there was a guarantee the parent could provide that the child was in heaven with God? And what if a beloved child was not in heaven? What if the parent felt the child was in hell or waiting to go to heaven in some sort of purgatory in between?

Scripture had saved Martin Luther from a life of guilt and anxiety; he wanted it to be the same help to others.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture [that] showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God. (*Luther's Works*, 34:336-337)

Not long after Luther experienced his revelation that our salvation was not dependent on what humans do, a Dominican friar named Johann Tetzel went from town to town, preying on these fears while collecting money for the forgiveness of sins of the living and the dead. With the pope's approval, his sales pitch included telling people that loved ones in purgatory could be lifted to heaven for a coin in the church coffers. For the right price, a grieved child could be embraced by God. An excerpt from one of Johann Tetzel's sermons:

Listen to the voices of your dear dead relatives and friends beseeching you and saying, "Pity us, pity us. We are in dire torment from which you can redeem us for a pittance." Do you not wish to? Open your ears. Hear the father saying to his son, the mother to her daughter, "We bore you, nourished you, brought you up, left you our fortunes, and you are so cruel and hard that now you are not willing for so little to set us free. Will you let us lie here in the flames? Will you delay the promised glory?" Remember that you are able to release them, for as soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.ⁱⁱⁱ

- DEATH WAS EVER-PRESENT IN LUTHER'S TIME.
- THE COMMON BELIEF WAS THAT EVEN AFTER DEATH, A PERSON WOULD USUALLY HAVE TO SPEND MANY YEARS IN PURGATORY BEFORE BEING ADMITTED INTO HEAVEN.
- INDULGENCES WERE ABUSED TO PROMISE A REDUCTION OF TIME IN PURGATORY IN EXCHANGE FOR MONEY.
- LUTHER LEARNED—AND THEN PROCLAIMED— THAT SALVATION IS A FREE GIFT OF GOD, NOT SOMETHING WE CAN EARN OR PURCHASE.



The loss of parents, children, and siblings was common and the church tapped into superstitions and lack of biblical knowledge to raise money. It was a terrible con to raise money that took advantage of vulnerable people. Luther was furious.

While we fancy that by these things our sins are purged away and salvation is attained, and thus utterly do away with Christian liberty. This comes from ignorance of Christian faith and liberty.

This ignorance and this crushing of liberty are diligently promoted by the teaching of very many blind pastors, who stir up and urge the people to a zeal for these things, praising them and puffing them up with their indulgences, but never teaching faith. Now I would advise you, if you have any wish to pray, to fast, or to make foundations in churches, as they call it, to take care not to do so with the object of gaining any advantage, either temporal or eternal. You will thus wrong your faith, which alone bestows all things on you, and the increase of which, either by working or by suffering, is alone to be cared for. What you give, give freely and without price, that others may prosper and have increase from you and your goodness.^{iv}

Luther knew that the church cannot sell salvation; it was a manipulation of scripture that common people wouldn't have recognized firsthand. It was wrong to take money from peasants who could hardly afford it to build monumental cathedrals as a legacy for a wealthy pope.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **IF SOMEONE TRIED TO GET YOU TO PAY FOR GOD'S FORGIVENESS, HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND? HOW WOULD YOU BACK UP ANY ARGUMENT AGAINST IT?**
- **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN INDULGENCE (PAYING FOR FORGIVENESS) AND COLLECTING THE OFFERING AT CHURCH?**
- **DOES FORGIVENESS BEING FREE MAKE IT FEEL "CHEAP"? WHY OR WHY NOT? IF IT WERE COSTLY, DO YOU THINK IT MIGHT CHANGE HOW PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT FORGIVENESS OR HOW THEY LIVE THEIR LIVES?**
- **IF YOU GRABBED SOMETHING COOL FROM THE SIDE OF THE ROAD THAT HAD A "FREE" SIGN ON IT, WOULD THAT ITEM SEEM MORE OR LESS VALUABLE THAN IF YOU HAD PAID A LOT OF MONEY FOR IT?**
- **IN SOME TV SITCOMS, WHEN A HUSBAND MAKES A WIFE MAD, HE MIGHT BRING HER FLOWERS WHEN ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS. IF GOD WERE LIKE A SITCOM FAMILY, HOW WOULD OUR FAITH BE DIFFERENT?**

RELATING TO REAL LIFE

YOU FORGOT TO OPEN YOUR PRESENT

When the Bible was available only to a very few people and was written in Latin to boot, trouble in the church brewed because most people couldn't say, "Hey, that's not right! The Bible says" It was easy to manipulate the faith of folks who had no firsthand experience with scripture, what Luther believed to be the living word of God.



To make the Bible more accessible, Luther set out to translate it into German as noted on page 38. This was a huge turning point in Christianity! No longer did people require an intermediary—someone to be a go-between them and God. Scripture could be rightly incorporated into everyday life.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- WE HAVE BIBLES AVAILABLE IN MULTIPLE WAYS NOW IN A LANGUAGE WE CAN READ! PAPER VERSIONS ARE EVERYWHERE BUT YOU CAN ALSO GET THE ENTIRE BIBLE ON AN APP FOR YOUR PHONE. THE BIBLE IS VASTLY MORE ACCESSIBLE, BUT DO YOU THINK IT IS READ?
- READING THE BIBLE CHANGED LUTHER'S LIFE. HOW COULD IT CHALLENGE OR CHANGE YOURS?
- MAYBE SOMEDAY TECHNOLOGY WILL ALLOW US TO UPLOAD THE BIBLE INTO OUR BRAINS. HOW WOULD IT CHANGE YOU IF YOU SAW THE WHOLE WORLD THROUGH THE LENS OF THE BIBLE?

SAME OLD STORY

On page 37, Magda was upset when Hans was praised by his mother. What is it about humans? There seems to be an innate feeling that there is only enough admiration, self-esteem, and love to cover a few people. From an early age, kids are tempted to bring others down to make themselves feel better. And guess what, kids? Adults often do it too, though sometimes they are subtler about it.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- AS LONG AS IT HAS BEEN HAPPENING (THINK CAIN AND ABEL, ESAU AND JACOB, AND THE LIST GOES ON AND ON), HAS BRINGING ANOTHER PERSON DOWN EVER MADE THE FIRST PERSON FEEL BETTER ABOUT HIMSELF OR HERSELF?

WHY DO YOU THINK WE STILL KEEP TRYING TO BUILD OURSELVES UP BY TEARING ANOTHER DOWN?

- **IS THERE ANY WAY TO MAKE YOURSELF FEEL HAPPY ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE DOING WELL? DO YOU THINK PRACTICING IT, EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO FAKE IT FOR A WHILE, COULD HELP?**
- **CHRISTIANS HAVE SPENT A LOT OF TIME AND ENERGY OVER THE CENTURIES TRYING TO EXCLUDE PEOPLE FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER. WHY DO YOU THINK HUMANS DO THE SAME THING WITH GOD'S LOVE, OFTEN ACTING LIKE THERE'S NOT ENOUGH TO GO AROUND FOR EVERYONE?**
- **THINK BACK TO THE REASON PAUL WROTE A LETTER TO THE ROMANS—TO HELP THE CHURCH THERE UNDERSTAND THAT THE GENTILE CHRISTIANS DID NOT HAVE TO FOLLOW THE RULES THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS HAD BECAUSE RIGHTEOUSNESS WAS FROM CHRIST AND NOT THROUGH HUMAN ACTION. CAN YOU THINK OF ANY GROUPS WHO ARE SET UP IN A SIMILAR CONFLICT TODAY OVER WHO IS "DOING" RELIGION "CORRECTLY"? WHAT ISSUES DIVIDE PEOPLE TODAY?**

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Many people today claim that all the church does is ask for money. This is often cited as a reason that people stay away from worship. It's true that the church does talk regularly about stewardship, but there is a biblical basis for that: in the gospels, Jesus talked about money more than anything else! It makes sense that Christians would think about how their use of money is an extension of their discipleship. Plus, Jesus may live in heaven, but congregations live in the world. They have to pay staff, lighting bills, repairs on buildings, buy paper towels, and so on. Offerings to churches also typically support ministries that care for people who are hungry, refugees, those experiencing natural disasters, and so on. Funds help start new churches in places near and far. There are many valid and important reasons for churches to teach about stewardship and encourage members to give of time and money as a faith practice.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **WHY DO YOU THINK THERE IS A HISTORY OF JESUS TALKING ABOUT MONEY SO MUCH?**
- **WHAT ARE GOOD USES OF FUNDS FOR CHURCHES AND WHAT WOULD YOU QUESTION A CHURCH SPENDING MONEY ON?**
- **IF YOUR CONGREGATION WAS BUILDING A NEW CHURCH BUILDING, WOULD YOU RATHER BUILD A SIMPLE ONE FOR LESS MONEY OR A REALLY BEAUTIFUL ONE THAT WAS QUITE EXPENSIVE? WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EACH APPROACH?**
- **WHY DO (OR DON'T) YOU THINK KIDS SHOULD GIVE A PORTION OF THEIR ALLOWANCE OR MONEY RAISED FROM MOWING OR BABYSITTING TO CHURCH OR CHARITY?**

i Siggins, Ian D. K. "Luther's Mother Margarethe." *Harvard Theological Review* 71.1-2 (1978): 125-50.

ii Oberman, Heiko Augustinus. *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

iii Janz, Denis. *A People's History of Christianity, Vol 2: From the Reformation to the 21st Century*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014.

iv Luther, Martin. *Concerning Christian Liberty*. Vol. XXXVI, Part 6. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14; Bartleby.com, 2001.

HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

MOVABLE TYPE MOVES HISTORY

Some inventions, when put to use by common people, have caused a perceptible shift in the ways of the world. Inventions that changed the world have come in fields such as transportation (steam engines, automobiles, and airplanes), communication (paper, the telephone, the internet), medicine (anesthesia, antibiotics, vaccines), media (radio, TV), as well as the light bulb, refrigeration, and the wheel.

Among the list of inventions with a transformational effect is the printing press. For those of us accustomed to hitting “print” with the result of paper effortlessly appearing out of a small machine with whatever we want on it, the printing press may not sound like a very big deal. But prior to its invention, books were created by hand. Books were copied by hand, letter by letter, very slowly. Not surprisingly, books were rare and expensive.

Earlier inventions resulted in wood block printing—carving a page into a block of wood, inking it, and pressing the wood against a page of paper. It was similar to an ink stamp, except it had to be tediously carved out instead of being purchased at the craft store. Imagine a “typo” when carving a wood block!

In the 1440s, Johannes Gutenberg was the first European to create a printing press using movable type. He cast reusable metal letters uniform in size, then lined them up on a frame in order. When combined with ink and paper, endless copies could be made.

Martin Luther’s strong opinions against the sale of indulgences and his hope that all people would know that they were saved by grace through faith, not by good works, coincided with the widespread use of Gutenberg’s printing press. As the Catholic church tried to silence Luther, his writings were being widely disseminated by use of the printing press. Information could no longer easily be held back.

Ironically, to help himself out financially, Gutenberg’s early work was printing indulgences, paper certificates that were given to believers who paid money for the forgiveness of sins, to spring a loved one from purgatory into heaven or to lessen their own time there. This was, of course, what sparked Martin Luther’s anger and triggered the Reformation.

Gutenberg’s most famous printing is known as the Gutenberg Bible. It was the first mass-produced (relatively, anyway) collection of scripture and provided access for more people to read the Bible on their own. Moreover, the availability of books meant there was a reason for people to learn how to read and over time, education became more widely pursued. It marked the end of the Middle Ages as the world transitioned to the modern era of history.

- GUTENBERG’S PRINTING PRESS WAS AMONG THE INVENTIONS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD.
- IMPROVEMENTS IN PRINTING ALLOWED MORE PEOPLE TO READ THE BIBLE.
- THE PRESS WITH MOVABLE TYPE ALSO LED TO LUTHER’S TEACHINGS BEING SPREAD THROUGHOUT EUROPE.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE BIG INVENTION?
- WHAT KIND OF THING WOULD YOU LIKE TO INVENT?
- WHAT INVENTIONS COULD YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT? WHEN YOU GO CAMPING AND ARE "ROUGHING IT," WHICH OF THE LIST OF INVENTIONS IN THE FIRST PARAGRAPH (OF LEADER GUIDE PAGE 22) DO YOU STILL USE?
- TAKE AWAY ONE MAJOR INVENTION, LIKE AIR TRAVEL OR HARNESSING ELECTRICITY; HOW MIGHT THE WORLD BE DIFFERENT WITHOUT IT?
- THE PRINTING PRESS HAD CONSEQUENCES FAR BEYOND MAKING BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS MORE WIDELY AVAILABLE. MARTIN LUTHER COULD HAVE BEEN A SMALL FOOTNOTE IN HISTORY ABOUT A GRUMPY MONK WHO COMPLAINED A LOT INSTEAD OF SOMEONE WHO TRIGGERED THE REFORMATION. WHAT OTHER EFFECTS WOULD YOU GUESS THE PRINTING PRESS HAD ON THE WORLD? CONSIDER NEWSPAPERS, SCIENCE AND MEDICINE, AND SO ON.

BIBLICAL BASIS

YOU CAN'T LOOK UP WHAT ISN'T THERE

When Martin Luther stood before Cardinal Cajetan to defend himself against the accusation of heresy—holding opinions deviating from the beliefs of the church—Luther challenged the cardinal to show him in the Bible where the church's practice on selling indulgences was justified. Of course, the cardinal could do no such thing. Regardless, Martin Luther was excommunicated—ejected from the church—by Pope Leo X in January 1521.



Later in the same year, at the assembly of the Holy Roman Empire, known as the Diet of Worms, Luther was asked to renounce his writings. After some time considering his position, his reply to the assembly was that unless someone could show him in the Bible where he was wrong in stating that we are made righteous by anything other than God's righteousness, he must stand behind his words, bound and assured by the truth he read in the living word of God. He would not and could not recant.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **MANY PEOPLE SAY THEY DON'T HAVE TO GO TO CHURCH BECAUSE THEY ARE "GOOD PEOPLE." HOW DOES THAT RELATE TO LUTHER'S DRIVE FOR PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE MADE RIGHTEOUS (GOOD) ONLY BY GOD? IF YOU CAN DO JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING RIGHT AND STILL BE A SINNER, CAN ANYBODY REALLY BE GOOD ENOUGH THAT THEY CAN SKIP OVER GOD? WHAT MIGHT THAT HAVE TO DO WITH GOING TO WORSHIP AND LEARNING ABOUT GOD?**
- **HOW WOULD YOU SUM UP WHAT YOU BELIEVE ABOUT GOD?**
- **HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND IF YOU WERE BEING ACCUSED OF HERESY FOR YOUR FAITH BELIEFS? WHAT IF YOU HAD TO DO SO UNDER THE THREAT OF BEING KILLED FOR YOUR BELIEFS?**

JOHN 18:19-24

In his moments of trial, the only thing Luther had to defend himself was the Bible. In his testimony, he referenced Jesus' passion, when he [Jesus] was on trial before the high priest Annas. At the Diet of Worms, Luther said,

Yet, as I am a mere man, and not God, I will defend myself after the example of Jesus Christ, who said: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness against me." How much more should I, who am but dust and ashes, and so prone to error, desire that everyone should bring forward what he can against my doctrine.

Read about Jesus before the high priest in John 18:19-24.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **WHEN JESUS WAS IN FRONT OF THE HIGH PRIEST BEING QUESTIONED ABOUT HIS TEACHING, HE DIDN'T ENGAGE IN THE DISCUSSION OR ARGUE. DO YOU THINK ANYONE'S MIND EVER GETS CHANGED BY ARGUING? WHAT'S YOUR BEST APPROACH TO DEALING WITH CONFLICT AND ARGUMENTS?**
- **JESUS OFTEN QUOTED THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES (WHAT WE KNOW AS THE OLD TESTAMENT). LUTHER QUOTED A LOT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND PSALMS. YOU GET THE FEELING KNOWING THE BIBLE MIGHT COME IN HANDY. WHAT'S A STORY OR TEACHING IN THE BIBLE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEARN WELL ENOUGH TO RECALL AT A MOMENT OF CRISIS?**
- **JESUS WAS KILLED. MARTIN LUTHER WAS LUCKY THAT HE WASN'T KILLED. HOW FAR WOULD YOU GO TO DEFEND YOUR FAITH?**

LUTHER LINK

95 THESES

Before Martin Luther rocked the world of Christianity, there was primarily one church on the scene in western Europe: the Roman Catholic Church. In the east, the Eastern Orthodox Church was essentially the only game in town. While there were other forms of Christianity, in Martin Luther's Germany, the Roman Catholic Church was powerful and pervasive—as present as the air people breathed.

Martin Luther loved the church. That is not to say that the church has ever been perfect; it is an institution run by imperfect humans. But Luther loved it enough to want to clean it up and make it true to its mission again. When he believed that the leaders had been corrupted by their want of glory through bigger buildings and desire for power, he spoke out against it. His intent was not to divide the church and not to have a band of Christ's believers naming themselves after him. He saw where the church had steered wrong and set out to right its course again.



To that end, Martin Luther wrote 95 theses (or arguments or statements) and nailed them to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, the town where he was a priest and professor. In the preface to his 95 Theses, he stated that he intended to debate and defend his statements and that if anyone couldn't be present, they should send any arguments by letter. Clearly Luther meant to stir conversation and get others on board to correct practices his beloved church had lowered itself in adopting.

These are a few of Luther's 95 Theses:ⁱⁱ

6. *The pope cannot remit any guilt except by declaring and confirming its remission by God; or, of course, by remitting guilt in cases reserved to himself. In showing contempt regarding such cases, the guilt would certainly remain.*
21. *And so, those indulgence preachers err who say that through the pope's indulgences a person is released and saved from every penalty.*
27. *They "preach human opinions" who say that, as soon as a coin thrown into the money chest clinks, a soul flies out [of purgatory].*
28. *It is certain that when a coin clinks in the money chest profits and avarice may well be increased, but the intercession of the church rests on God's choice alone.*
36. *Any truly remorseful Christian has a right to full remission of guilt and penalty, even without indulgence letters.*
37. *Any true Christian, living or dead, possesses a God-given share in all the benefits of Christ and the church, even without indulgence letters.*
43. *Christians are to be taught that the one who gives to a poor person or lends to the needy does a better deed than if a person acquires indulgences.*
48. *Christians are to be taught that the pope, while granting indulgences, needs and thus desires their devout prayer for him more than their money.*
51. *Christians are to be taught that the pope ought to give and would want to give of his own wealth, even selling the Basilica of St. Peter if necessary—to those from whom certain declaimers of indulgences are wheedling money.*
62. *The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.*
66. *The treasures of indulgences are nets with which they now fish for the wealth of men.*

Though Luther may have initially meant only to stir debate, his 95 Theses traveled far beyond the Castle Church doors. With the help of the printing press, a sermon of Luther's about his beliefs was copied and spread far and wide.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **DOES ANYTHING YOU READ IN THE SAMPLING OF LUTHER'S 95 THESES SOUND CRAZY OR RADICAL TO YOU? WHAT PHRASES DO YOU THINK THE CHURCH LEADERS DIDN'T LIKE AND WHY?**

- IF YOU HAD A RECEIPT IN HAND FROM BUYING FORGIVENESS WITH YOUR ALLOWANCE OR BABYSITTING MONEY, HOW MIGHT IT MAKE YOU FEEL OFFICIALLY FORGIVEN?
- SOMETIMES LUTHER GOT A LITTLE SASSY AND LIKED TO MAKE A DIG AT THE POPE. WHERE DO YOU CATCH SOME OF THOSE DIGS?
- NINETY-FIVE POINTS WERE A LOT! IN YOUR OWN WORDS, HOW WOULD YOU SUM UP THIS HANDFUL OF MARTIN LUTHER'S THESES?

LUTHER IN HOT WATER

Challenging a significant source of income for the powerful leaders of the church was a dangerous act. Luther was accused of heresy. He had both the church and the emperor against him. But against all that power, Luther stood strong. He maintained that his authority to defy both the church and the emperor came from the God that is revealed to us through the Holy Scriptures.

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason—for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves—I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Thus I cannot and will not recant, because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. God help me. Amen.ⁱⁱⁱ

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- WHEN HAVE YOU MADE A STAND AGAINST SOMETHING YOU KNEW WAS NOT RIGHT?
- HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR OTHERS TO JOIN YOU WHEN YOU ARE SPEAKING OUT AGAINST SOMETHING?
- HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE THE WHOLE WORLD WAS AGAINST YOU? MARTIN LUTHER NO DOUBT DID WHEN BOTH THE RULERS OF THE CHURCH AND THE EMPIRE CONSIDERED HIM A HERETIC AND AN OUTLAW. HOW DO YOU THINK HE FACED THEM?
- IN ANY ERA, IT IS OFTEN THE YOUNG PEOPLE PUSHING FOR CHANGE. WHAT DO YOU HOPE CHANGES IN THE CHURCH TODAY? WHAT DO YOU HOPE CHANGES IN THE WORLD TODAY? HOW ARE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD CONNECTED?
- IF THE PRINTING PRESS HAD NOT BEEN INVENTED, HOW FAR DO YOU THINK LUTHER'S REFORMS WOULD HAVE GOTTEN?

RELATING TO REAL LIFE

I READ IT ONLINE, SO IT MUST BE TRUE

When Martin Luther was speaking and writing against some of the things the church was doing, rumors started flying. Many myths surrounded him as word traveled by mouth. But the invention of the printing press really changed how information traveled. If a person had a copy of Luther's 95 Theses in hand (and could read), there could be no doubt about what he was protesting.

Today, words travel at the speed of light. A text can be sent across the globe. A screenshot of that text can be posted online and endlessly distributed. Images and words can be manipulated too. The cumulative effect of ideas traveling so quickly now sometimes has a dizzying effect as we struggle to decipher what is fact and what is fiction.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- REMEMBER PLAYING THE GAME "TELEPHONE"? A SENTENCE PASSED FROM PERSON TO PERSON WAS USUALLY REMARKABLY DIFFERENT BY THE TIME IT REACHED THE END OF THE LINE. HOW MUCH OF WHAT YOU HEAR DO YOU TRUST?
- THE USE OF THE PRINTING PRESS CHANGED HOW INFORMATION WAS SPREAD, NOT TO MENTION WHO WAS ABLE TO RECEIVE IT. HOW HAS TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY CHANGED IT AGAIN? WHAT'S HELPFUL AND WHAT'S CHALLENGING ABOUT TECHNOLOGY AND FIGURING OUT THE TRUTH?
- HOW MUCH OF WHAT YOU READ ONLINE DO YOU BELIEVE?
- IF MARTIN LUTHER HAD BEEN BORN FIVE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, HOW MIGHT HE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO REFORM THE CHURCH IN THE CURRENT INFORMATION AGE? HOW DIFFERENT DO YOU THINK THE END RESULT WOULD BE?

i Bryan, William Jennings, and Francis W. Halsey, eds. *The World's Famous Orations*. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906.

ii From Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther's 95 Theses*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.

iii Oberman, Heiko Augustinus. *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

THE CHURCH IN NEED OF REFORMING

In 16th century Germany and Europe in general, the church was all-powerful. The church and the state were entangled and intertwined; over the centuries, the church and state were often in a tug-of-war over land, laws, territorial authority, armies, education, and the loyalty of the people. In Luther's time, the pope could have been considered even more powerful than the emperor!

But power can often be corrupting and the church was never immune to the power struggles of the world. So it was in the church in Luther's time. Money could be used to buy positions within the church. Peasants could be conscripted and forced to provide free labor on church lands. Money was raised by the selling of indulgence certificates and used to build beautiful church structures and even to finance wars—even though paying for the forgiveness of sins was not biblically sound.

Historically, the church has often had more integrity when it was the underdog. This was certainly true during Martin Luther's time though no doubt there were many faithful priests and leaders. But what could the average believer do to fight the corruption?

For common people, the parish priest was considered the go-between between them and God. The priest would give them information from scripture—at least people had to assume it was from scripture. Regular folks would have no way of knowing if what the parish priest said to them about God was true or not because if they had seen a Bible, they probably couldn't read it anyway. In worship, many people would have no idea what was being said to them about God in sermons or scripture either. Mass—the worship service—was in Latin, not the vernacular German. Those who were educated would learn Latin in school, but for peasants and commoners who were overwhelmingly illiterate, they might recognize only a few words here and there. In addition, parts of the services were spoken silently by the priest! It was as if access to God could be controlled by a powerful few.

Butting heads with both church leaders and the powers of the empire was risky business. On pages 62–63, Martin Luther explained to his children that he had been declared an "outlaw." With that declaration by Emperor Charles V, no doubt at the prompting of Pope Leo X, Luther could have been killed by anyone without punishment. It was only through the protection of powerful friends and possibly a fear of turning him into a martyr that Luther survived the long reach of the powerful church with his life intact.

- IN LUTHER'S TIME, THE CHURCH WAS WEALTHY AND POWERFUL—AND, TOO OFTEN, CORRUPT.
- MANY CHRISTIANS, BEING ILLITERATE, WERE TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON THEIR PRIEST FOR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS.
- LUTHER CRITICIZED THESE CONDITIONS AND IN SO DOING PUT HIS LIFE IN DANGER.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

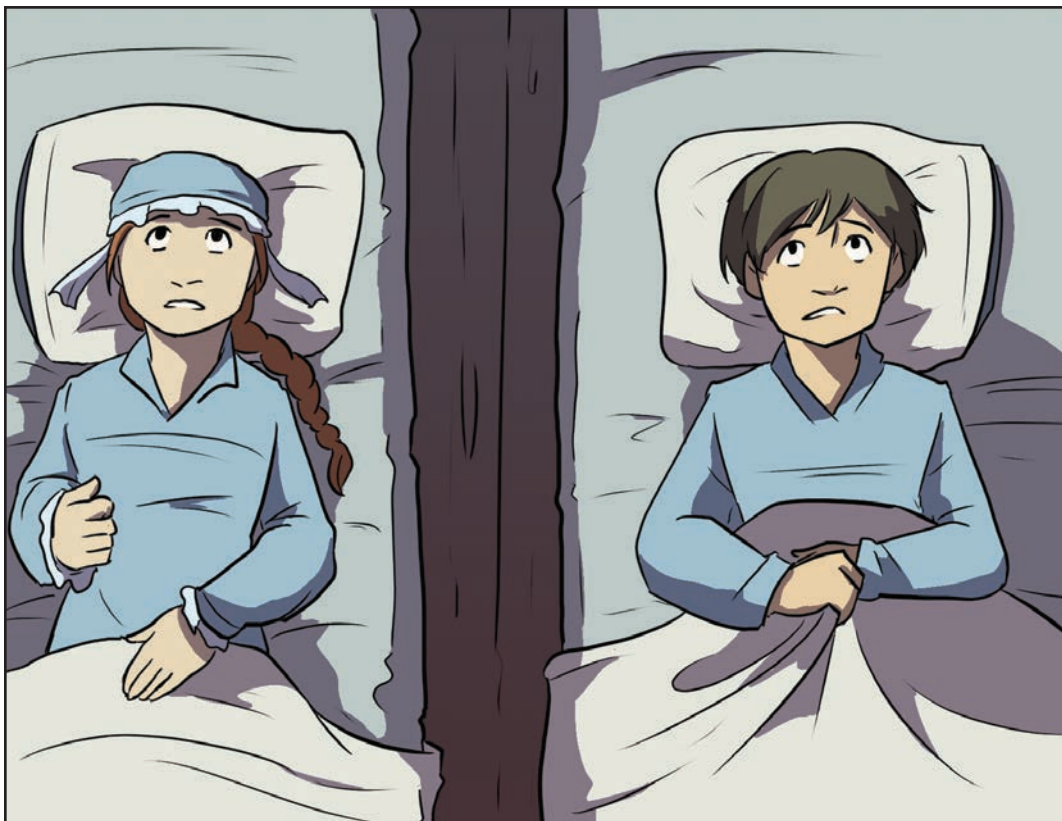
- IMAGINE GOING TO WORSHIP IN WHICH YOU DIDN'T KNOW THE LANGUAGE! WHAT WOULD THAT BE LIKE?
- WOULD YOU WANT YOUR CHURCH TO BE AS POWERFUL AS THE GOVERNMENT? WHY OR WHY NOT?
- WHY DO YOU THINK IT'S HARD FOR THE CHURCH TO REMAIN FAITHFUL AND BE POWERFUL AT THE SAME TIME?
- IF YOUR CHURCH HAD A PRICE ON YOUR HEAD, WHAT WOULD YOU DO? HOW WOULD YOU FIGHT IT?

BIBLICAL BASIS

CALL ON THE LORD

On page 60, Magda and Hans grapple with some questions of the ages. Does God hear our prayers and does it matter if God does? Why doesn't God stop bad things from happening? Here's Luther on Hans and Magda's first questions:

You must learn to call on the Lord. Don't sit all alone or lie on the couch, shaking your head and letting your thoughts torture you. Don't worry about how to get out of your situation or brood about your terrible life, how miserable you feel, and what a bad person you are. Instead, say, "Get a grip on yourself, you lazy bum! Fall on your knees, and raise your hands and eyes toward heaven. Read a psalm. Say the Lord's Prayer, and tearfully tell God what you need."ⁱ



And,

If you don't want to pray before you feel that you are worthy or qualified, then you will never pray again. Prayer must not be based on or depend on your personal worthiness or the quality of the prayer itself; rather, it must be based on the unchanging truth of God's promise.ⁱⁱ

Luther would obviously say yes to those first two questions from the kids. And he had a lot of scripture to back him up. Look up these psalms that Luther especially fell back upon:

Psalm 118:1-8

Psalm 142

Psalm 46

Psalm 23

Psalm 139

Psalm 82

The last question, why does God let bad things happen, is a tough one. The universe is full of good and evil, of that much we can be sure. Tornadoes and car crashes and cancer strike down nice people and innocent kids while the worst people we know can remain healthy, happy, and wealthy. It doesn't necessarily mean that God is testing us when bad things happen, but we do know that when terrible things happen, God remains with us. God's love stays the same through the ups and downs of our lives.

Luther wrote a letter to a doctor whose son had died after falling off the top of a house.

Although it be nowhere forbidden in Holy Scripture to mourn and grieve for the death of a godly child or friend—nay, we have many examples of the godly, who have bewailed the death of their children and friends—yet there ought to be a measure in sorrowing and mourning. Therefore, loving doctor, while you do well to mourn and lament the death of your son, let not your grief exceed the measure of a Christian, in refusing to be comforted. . . . I would wish you to follow the example of that just and godly man, Job, who, when he had lost all his children, all his wealth and substance, said: "Have we received good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."ⁱⁱⁱ

Read Job 9:1-10 (acknowledging that no one is just before God) and Job 21:1-17 (where Job complains that the wicked prosper). Then read Job chapters 39–40 where God warns Job not to get too big for his britches, but to accept the way God has created the world.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE FREE WILL TO MAKE YOUR OWN CHOICES, GOOD OR BAD, OR KNOW THAT YOUR LIFE WAS ON A PATH THAT WAS PREDESTINED?**
- **WE DON'T ALWAYS GET TO AVOID DEATH AND SUFFERING. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU THAT JESUS DIDN'T?**

- **HOW DO YOU PRAY?**
- **IMAGINE A FRIEND IS IN A HOSPITAL BED AFTER A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT. SHE ASKS YOU TO SAY A PRAYER. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

LUTHER LINK

COMMON FAITH

Because priests were the intermediaries between people and God, it was relatively countercultural to consider that God hears the prayers of all people, as Hans and Magda discussed on page 60. To stop the ability of corrupt leaders to manipulate the faithful, one of Luther's driving forces was to educate the people in the basics of Christianity. That included prayers, the Bible, Christian education, worship, and music too.

In his stay at Wartburg castle, Luther began translating the New Testament of the Bible from its original Greek into German. He did it remarkably quickly too! Later, with help, he translated the Hebrew Old Testament into German as well. It's hard to comprehend how scandalous this initially would have been considered in Luther's time. Bringing the word of God down to a common language—not even the language of the educated—no doubt seemed disrespectful to God's word.

Luther also wrote the Large and Small Catechisms, the latter for the purpose of parents teaching the faith to children at home. It included the words of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, baptism, confession, communion, and a question ("What is this?" or "What does this mean?") with an answer.

Look through a copy of the Small Catechism; some excerpts follow:

I. The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust God above all things.

II. The Creed

The First Article: On Creation

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

What is this? or What does this mean?

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists.

God has given me and still preserves my body and soul:

eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses;

reason and all mental faculties.

In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing,

food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children,

fields, livestock, and all property—

along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life.

God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil.

And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy,

without any merit or worthiness of mine at all!

For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him.
This is most certainly true.

III. The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven.

What is this? or What does this mean?

With these words God wants to attract us,
so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children,
in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence,
just as loving children ask their loving father.^{iv}

In a similar way, Luther changed worship dramatically. He formatted the Latin mass into a slightly different order and put the liturgy in German. He and his colleagues wrote songs that regular people could actually sing. He encouraged biblical preaching in the language of the people.

Translating the Bible, putting worship in understandable language and song, and providing materials to teach the faith at home changed the way faith was taught and lived forever.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **KIDS 500 YEARS AGO DIDN'T HAVE MUCH OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT GOD. HOW MIGHT KNOWING THAT FACT CHANGE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT GOING TO CHURCH OR CONFIRMATION?**
- **WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED AT HOME ABOUT FAITH?**
- **HOW MIGHT HAVING EVERYDAY ACCESS TO THE BIBLE AND OTHER TOOLS OF FAITH CHANGE US?**

SAY WHAT?

Beginning on page 63, Luther explained his fake kidnapping and how he was hidden at Wartburg castle by his ruler and friend, Frederick the Wise, while things cooled off. And things did indeed need to cool off! For it wasn't just that Martin Luther was making enemies on the basis of his theological stances. Luther, in no uncertain terms, had a serious case of potty-mouth. He did not hold back on his enemies, calling the pope the devil, the anti-Christ, a pig, and worse. Much, much worse. A sampling of his defiant words follow, but the ones that aren't kid-friendly will have to be saved for another day.

You seem to me to be a real masterpiece of the devil's art.
(*Luther's Works*, 46:217)

Were you against the heathen Priapus, he would probably pass wind in the face of such well-aimed terror. (*Luther's Works*, 40:205)

Your astute minds have been completely turned into stinking mushrooms.
(*Luther's Works*, 31:184)

You are dumber than Seriphian frogs and fishes. (*Luther's Works*, 33:77)

You are blasphemous, abominable rascals and damned scum of Satan.
(*Luther's Works*, 41:279)

There you are, like butter in sunshine. (*Luther's Works*, 40:252)

You are the devil's donkey. (*Luther's Works*, 41:190)

You are like mouse-dropping in the pepper. (*Luther's Works*, 41:56)

You are like the ostrich, the foolish bird which thinks it is wholly concealed when it gets its neck under a branch. Or like small children, who hold their hands in front of their eyes and seeing nobody imagine that no one sees them either. In general, you are so stupid that it makes one feel like vomiting. (*Luther's Works*, 40:186)



Clearly, Luther was not perfect and not even necessarily polite. And that's okay; he never claimed to be. No wonder he wanted to make sure we are made righteous by God, not ourselves! When he was accused, though Luther would not recant his theological stance, for his sometimes crude behavior and name-calling, he did apologize. Sort of. (See below.)

The third kind consists of those books which I have written against private individuals, so-called; against those, that is, who have exerted themselves in defense of the Roman tyranny and to the overthrow of that piety which I have taught. I confess that I have been more harsh against them than befits my religious vows and my profession. For I do not make myself out to be any kind of saint, nor am I now contending about my conduct but about Christian doctrine. But it is not in my power to recant them, because that recantation would give that tyranny and blasphemy an occasion to lord it over those whom I defend and to rage against God's people more violently than ever.^v

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- WHAT DO YOU THINK OF LUTHER'S INSULTS?
- HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE LUTHER'S PERSONALITY?
- "YOU CATCH MORE FLIES WITH HONEY THAN WITH VINEGAR" WAS MAYBE NOT A SAYING LUTHER HAD HEARD. IF HE WOULD HAVE TAKEN A QUIETER APPROACH AND TRIED TO CORRECT THE ACTIONS AND BELIEFS OF THE CHURCH MORE GENTLY, WHAT MIGHT BE DIFFERENT?
- DO YOU LIKE LUTHER MORE OR LESS AFTER READING HIS COLORFUL INSULTS?

RELATING TO REAL LIFE

KEEP ON REFORMING—AND UNITING

By the time of his death, Luther's beliefs about God and faith had significantly altered the world.

Martin Luther was not the first person to set out to reform the church and he will not be the last. Because the church is made up of imperfect humans, it has never been and it will never be perfect. We do our best to reflect that we are the body of Christ on earth, but sometimes we fall short. Very, very short.

In recent years, schism has once again reared its head within the Lutheran church and other denominations that were born out of the Reformation. After decades of working hard to merge denominational factions, suddenly splinter groups began breaking away in theological disagreements and power struggles.

The church will survive and carry on for another day. There is more work ahead to figure out what it means to be the followers of Christ in the next five hundred years. The church will continue to be challenged by disunity, power struggles, and perhaps worse—indifference. It will learn how to be a voice for healing the environment and the continued quest for equality and peace in the world. On its best days, the church will continue to reform itself. It is a never-ending job. The world is always changing and Christians are challenged to the trick of constantly adapting to the change while remaining faithful to the core beliefs shown through Christ our Lord.

- MARTIN LUTHER WAS NEITHER THE FIRST NOR THE LAST REFORMER IN THE CHURCH.
- REFORMING THE CHURCH IS A NEVER-ENDING TASK TO WHICH ALL CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IN ENOUGH TO PROTEST?
- DO YOU SEE AREAS WHERE BELIEVERS HAVE STRAYED FROM THE TRUTH? WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHANGE ABOUT THE CHURCH RIGHT NOW? LIKE LUTHER, COULD YOUR CRITICISMS STAND ON SCRIPTURE ALONE?
- WHEN YOU ARE FRUSTRATED WITH SOMETHING, ARE YOU MORE LIKELY TO QUIT AND WALK AWAY OR TRY TO MAKE IT BETTER?
- IF YOU COULD UNIFY THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AGAIN, WOULD YOU DO IT OR DO YOU THINK THERE IS SOMETHING GOOD ABOUT PRACTICING FAITH IN SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT WAYS?

- LUTHER SAID, "A CHRISTIAN IS A PERFECTLY FREE LORD OF ALL, SUBJECT TO NONE; A CHRISTIAN IS A PERFECTLY DUTIFUL SERVANT OF ALL, SUBJECT TO ALL." HOW HAVE YOU BEEN FREED TO SERVE THE WORLD?
- HOW DO YOU THINK CHRISTIANS WILL LOOK BACK ON US 500 YEARS FROM NOW?

i Luther, Martin. *Faith Alone: A Daily Devotional*. Ed. James C. Galvin. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

ii Ibid.

iii Luther, Martin. *Luther's Table Talk*. Trans. William Hazlitt. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967.

iv *Luther's Small Catechism*. Trans. Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2016.

v Bettenson, Henry, ed. *Documents of the Christian Church*. Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

KATHARINA VON BORA LUTHER AND WOMEN IN HER TIME

Katharina von Bora was born in 1499 to a family that was part of the nobility but impoverished. Her father likely would not have been able to cover enough of a dowry—funds, land, or livestock given to a husband at the time of marriage—to ensure a suitably arranged match. When families were not able to afford the children they had, it was common to deliver one or more daughters to a convent. There they would be raised by members of the religious community with the assumption that the girls would become nuns themselves.

Such was Katharina's fate; she went to live at a convent at age five after her mother died and her father remarried. By age fifteen, she had taken her monastic vows to become a nun. While we don't know much about her cloistered early childhood years, generally (depending on the nuns who watched over the children), the discipline was strict, the food modest, and the temperature uncomfortably cold inside stone convents. Was Katharina able to run and play or was she forced to scrub floors and work in the laundry? Either option is possible but we don't know for sure.

But there were perks. Besides guaranteed meals in a convent, there was also the promise of education. Girls in the sixteenth century were not sent to school and only the wealthy children would have tutors or governesses who taught them in the home. Katharina was educated and literate; it would be an important component of her life, and it shaped the role she filled within her marriage to Martin Luther.

By law and custom in the sixteenth century, women did not typically have trades, property, or even many rights. But as in any age, women found ways to work around that. For example, a woman whose husband was a trained leathersmith (one having gone through an apprenticeship to learn to make, repair, and sell leather goods) might be working on leather behind the scenes or keeping the books, as well as maintaining the household and rearing the children.

Make no mistake: women worked and women worked hard—but not necessarily for pay. If they did have employment in addition to the constant work of home, they may have been paid for cleaning, cooking, or some other domestic servant role. They might have made goods such as soap, candles, honey, or spun cloth to sell in the marketplace. They did have a hold on the work of midwifery, helping other women with childbirth! And though it's difficult to calculate, the influence of women on men who were officially governing home and country has always been present. Historically, it was often the wives of the European nobility who opened the door to Lutheran doctrine, helping spread the reforms and keeping the reformers safe from persecution.

- IN THE MIDDLE AGES, GIRLS LIKE KATHARINA VON BORA WHOM THE FAMILY COULDN'T SUPPORT WERE SOMETIMES SENT TO LIVE IN CONVENTS AND EVENTUALLY BECAME NUNS.
- SUCH YOUNG WOMEN OFTEN RECEIVED A BETTER EDUCATION THAN THEY WOULD HAVE OTHERWISE HAD.
- ONCE MARRIED TO MARTIN LUTHER, KATHARINA SHOWED HERSELF TO BE A VERY CAPABLE WIFE, MOTHER, AND MANAGER OF THE HOUSEHOLD.

Katharina von Bora appears to have been a force to be reckoned with. We know her husband was bold and outspoken; much to his surprise (as he had preferred not to marry), they were a perfect match. Like Luther, she took her life into her own hands. She made plans to illegally escape the convent. This was a risky endeavor that would have brought shame upon her family; she could not have returned to them for support and so she and the others like her were reliant upon a marriage for security. Katharina and Martin did not marry quickly. She appears to be the last of the group to be matched with a reformer by those who helped facilitate her escape. Luther didn't seem to be interested in having a wife even after he renounced his vows. But in marriage and family life, Luther found a great partnership and a place to practice faith and pass it on to their offspring. Katharina was an example for woman of a strong figure in her family who played vital roles in the family's economy and in the education of their children. She was a strong advocate, along with her husband and the other reformers, of the critical importance of education and the freeing power of literacy for all children (including girls)—a drastic change from access just for those who could afford it. She managed the family's land and garden, kept boarders for extra income, ran a brewery, and raised their children, as well as six of Luther's orphaned nieces and nephews. Moreover, she adhered to the principles of the reformation and was a theologian in her own right.

Though she and Martin seemed to be equal and supportive partners in marriage, in the end, they were somewhat ahead of their time. Luther's will designated that all property and funds go to her upon his death [in 1546], but inheritance by a widow was not legal and a judge revoked it! Even her children were assigned male guardians; luckily, she was able to choose a family friend and fellow reformer. Before her untimely death from a head injury from falling from a wagon, Katharina survived from a charitable pension given to her from those who believed in her husband's work, including the king of Denmark.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- **WHAT DO YOU THINK IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE TO BE SENT OFF TO A CONVENT AT AGE FIVE?**
- **HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT HAVING YOUR FATE PRESUMABLY DECIDED FOR YOU AT SUCH AN EARLY AGE (NO MARRIAGE, NO FAMILY, ETC.)?**
- **IF YOU DROPPED INTO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY VIA A TIME TRAVEL MACHINE, HOW WELL DO YOU THINK YOU COULD FIT IT? WHAT MIGHT BE THE HARDEST THING TO ACCEPT ABOUT LIFE IN THAT TIME?**

BIBLICAL BASIS

KEEP THE FAITH, BUT NOT TO YOURSELF

When the apostle Paul wrote to a supportive letter to young Timothy, he spoke of Timothy's faith and how it was passed on from his grandmother and mother. Read the opening of his letter in 2 Timothy 1:3-14.

To be sure, people sometimes come to faith and belief in God as teens or adults by being invited to church, or camp, or a Bible study. But it's sure a lot easier

to understand God and faith when you grow up hearing the words of the Bible, practicing prayer and other faith habits, going to worship, and generally learning how to weave faith in God into everyday life.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- WHO ARE YOUR "EUNICE AND LOIS"? WHO HAS PASSED ON THE FAITH TO YOU?
- WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN TAUGHT ABOUT HOW TO LIVE YOUR FAITH IN EVERYDAY LIFE? WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH THINGS LIKE HOW YOU TREAT UNPOPULAR KIDS AT SCHOOL, HOW YOU DEAL WITH SOMEONE WHO WRONGED YOU, OR HOW YOU SPEND YOUR MONEY?
- WHO MIGHT YOU PASS THE FAITH ON TO IN YOUR LIFETIME?

LUTHER LINK

FAMILY IS DAILY BREAD . . . BUT DON'T EAT THE KIDS

Martin Luther probably hadn't considered marrying and having children since before he was a young man standing in the storm promising to enter the monastery if he survived. Even after he was released from his vows and left the priesthood, since the threat of death hung over him, he didn't see much reason to marry and leave someone a widow. But in his early forties, he married the 26-year-old Katharina (whom he called Katie) and they subsequently had six children.



A priest marrying a nun was scandalous, but no more so than most of what Luther had been doing in the events that led up to the Reformation. Though Luther clearly expressed in writings that he married Katharina out of a sense of duty and not out of love, their home became known as a happy one. Luther's later writings reflect his deep love and respect for his wife: "There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage."ⁱ

Luther also found great joy in the gift of his children, whom he lovingly referred to as his six “little heathen.”ⁱⁱ Though strict, he parented his children differently than his harsh parents had and considered God as a model for how children should be treated with forgiveness and gentleness.

But the greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls. (*Luther’s Works*, 45:46)

What would it profit us to possess and perform everything else and be like pure saints, if we meanwhile neglected our chief purpose in life, namely, the care of the young? (*Luther’s Works*, 45:351)

In his explanation of the Lord’s Prayer in the Small Catechism, Luther included spouse and children in the definition of “our daily bread”:

Give us today our daily bread.

What is this? or What does this mean?

In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

What then does “daily bread” mean?

Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

As part of a family, Luther found a place to live out the ideals of the reforms he had sought. One of the side effects of the Reformation was that it changed how people saw family and faith. Before this, becoming a priest or a nun was seen as the truest and holiest means to faith in life. But Luther taught that holy service to God could be done right in the middle of your everyday life and work, as Katharina stated on page 70.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- HOW DO YOU SERVE GOD IN THE MIDDLE OF BORING, EVERYDAY LIFE?
- WHY DO OR DON'T YOU THINK THE PEOPLE PARENTING YOU CONSIDER THAT JOB TO BE HOLY WORK?
- FAMILIES CAN BE CREATED IN MANY WAYS. MARTIN LUTHER'S INCLUDED SIX KIDS PLUS SIX MORE NIECES AND NEPHEWS THAT WERE ORPHANED. HOW WAS YOUR FAMILY FORMED?
- LIVING IN A FAMILY MEANS YOU SEE THE BEST AND WORST OF PEOPLE, WHICH MEANS LOTS OF OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE FAITH. HOW DO YOU PRACTICE FAITH IN YOUR FAMILY?

RELATING TO REAL LIFE

THE ONLY THING CERTAIN IS UNCERTAINTY

Previously, on page 48, Magda had worried that her brother was lost in the dangerous cold as a result of her thoughts. In her magical thinking, just wishing for something could make it true. Even today and even for adults, sometimes in our quest to explain the universe, we find ourselves trying to figure it out in unrealistic ways.

And now, on page 78 and following, Magda was dying.

People in Martin Luther's time as well as ours are often challenged by the uncertainty of life. It's really scary to realize that someone you love can be randomly struck down by an illness as Magda was. Some people will shrug it off with a cliché like "Everything happens for a reason," or "God needed another angel," but for people who have lost a family member as when Magda died, that reason, whatever it might be, just wouldn't be good enough.



In depths of despair, it is natural to want to know whether God is controlling the universe with a fair and loving hand. Can God be all-powerful *and* good? When bad things happen, are we being punished? This much we do know: God loves us. And even Jesus didn't get to avoid death and tough times. We also can be assured that God can handle our struggles and uncertainty; doubt and questions are a natural part of faith. It wouldn't be called faith if it were all about certainty.

As the Bible says, the rain falls both on the good and the bad. That much we know, but we don't get to have all the answers in this world. That uncertainty can be really hard to bear sometimes and can make us question our faith in God. Luther struggled with that too and one of his favorite verses was "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24b).

CONNECTING WITH KIDS

- HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH TRAGIC THINGS IN THE WORLD THAT DON'T SEEM TO MAKE SENSE? HOW ABOUT TRAGIC EVENTS CLOSER TO HOME?
- WHAT DO YOU THINK: CAN GOD BE ALL-POWERFUL AND GOOD?
- DO YOU THINK GOD MAKES SOME BAD THINGS HAPPEN—OR SIMPLY LETS THEM HAPPEN?
- IF YOU COULD ASK GOD ONE QUESTION, WHAT WOULD IT BE?
- DO YOU THINK MARTIN AND KATHARINA'S FAITH IN GOD WAS SHAKEN BY THEIR DAUGHTER'S DEATH? HOW WOULD THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE CHANGE OR CHALLENGE YOUR FAITH?

i Luther, Martin. *Luther's Table Talk*. Trans. William Hazlitt. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967.

ii Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950.