

## **Forum: The Reformation—**

*What happened and why does it matter?*

What is October 31, 2017 the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary mean?  
What happened and why does it matter to us today?

October 31, 1517 begin with an unknown anonymous monk nailing a piece of paper on a church door in a backwater German town. The church you may not be familiar with: All Saints Church. The town you have probably heard of: Wittenberg. The monk you know: Martin Luther.

This was nothing unique. People nailed stuff on the church door all the time. It was like the town bulletin board. The title of the paper was not catchy: ‘Disputation of Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences.’

And most people could not even read it for two reasons. Most of the town folk in Wittenberg was illiterate and the other reason is that this ‘Disputation’ was written in Latin, not German. So, on the off chance that someone could read, chances are they could not read Latin.

These ideas that Luther was propounding were not new and he was not the first to point out the errors of the church and especially indulgences.

Luther was just asking for a debate with the scholars of the university. That debate did not happen, per se.

What are indulgences?

AND

How (why) did the world sit up and take notice to this document?

I'll take the second one first: the printing press. The printing press was invented around 1450 by Gutenberg. This was the most important event in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium. Before this time, any document had to be hand written. The only way that copies could be made were by hand.

Then Gutenberg invented the moveable type printing press. Before this, only the elite and educated had any books. There was no such thing as a newspaper. Most of the middle class did not and could not read.

Without the moveable type printing press—the Reformation could not have happened.

Luther sent copies to his friends in other parts of Germany so that they could know what he was up to and these friends translated them into German. They then took the extra step of printing in pamphlet or broadsheet (like a newspaper) form.

Friedrich Myconius later wrote that “hardly 14 days had passed when these propositions were known throughout Germany and within four weeks almost all of Christendom was familiar with them.”

It was the first time something besides a virus went viral.

The paper was named the “95 Theses”. The main thrust of what he was going after was indulgences.

What are indulgences?

When a parishioner went to a priest for confession, the priest would command certain acts of penance. The sins that were not dealt with appropriately in this life would have to be purified in purgatory.

There was a work around for the normal sinner: the merit of saints. There were certain people called saints that lived such an exemplary life that they had merit to spare. They had merit enough to get to heaven and on top of that normal people could access that merit via indulgences.

Might mean:

Buying a merit

Seeing a relic

Make a pilgrimage

Strictly speaking Luther was not decrying indulgences but the abuse of indulgences.

Theses 26—31 are when he goes after the indulgences.

26. Thus those indulgence preachers are in error who say that a man is absolved from every penalty and saved by papal indulgences.

27. As a matter of fact, the pope remits to souls in purgatory no penalty which, according to canon law, they should have paid in this life.
28. If remission of all penalties whatsoever could be granted to anyone at all, certainly it would be granted only to the most perfect, that is, to very few.
29. For this reason most people are necessarily deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of release from penalty.
30. That power which the pope has in general over purgatory corresponds to the power which any bishop or curate has in a particular way in his own diocese and parish.
31. The pope does very well when he grants remission to souls in purgatory, not by the power of the keys, which he does not have, but by way of intercession for them.

The whole world was to serve the Mother (Church in Rome) and the father (The Pope).

The Pope was God's unique representative on earth and was called Christ's vicar. Grace flowed uniquely through him. The Pope had the authority to speak 'ex Cathedra'—from the chair—with the same authority as the scriptures. The Catholics of that time saw church tradition and holy scriptures to have the same authority. Additionally the Catholic Church celebrated the Mass and the center piece of that Mass was the giving of the Eucharist, which means good grace.

Grace comes to the partaker of the Eucharist—to make up for daily sins that the parishioner commits.

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: ‘The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different. In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered

himself once in a blood manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody sacrifice.” Council of Trent, 22<sup>nd</sup> session (9/17/1562)

Technically Catholics do not believe that Christ is being re-sacrificed each time the Eucharist is administered—they say that his one sacrifice is being re-presented (or made present).

How does this work?

Because Christ is everywhere equally present, the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus is not limited to the events on the cross as told in the gospels. This is to encourage worship of Christ.

Each day Christ was reoffered (represented) to God as an atoning sacrifice for fresh sins that everyone commits.

This was centered on the administration of the Eucharist. Aristotle said that everything on earth has a substance (inner reality) and an ordinary appearance.

Substance of table—wood.

Appearance—paint on the wood.

In the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine is transformed into the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ. The appearance stayed the same, but the substance changed.

And it happened when the priest said, “This is my body.” The priest would raise the bread and the wine. Most common folk were only able to eat the bread once a year or so, but never allowed to drink the wine. Because they might spill.

But grace was transferred just by looking at the elements in mass. That is why there were so many masses.

But in 1517 Luther said nothing about this.

Purgatory was a natural outgrowth of this teaching. Because no one could ever get enough grace in their lifetime they were sure to spend some time in Purgatory. The exception is that if Christians died with an unconfessed mortal sin then they would go straight to hell. Most would go to purgatory and undergo a slow progression of purification to become worthy to enter into heaven.

To get people out of Purgatory quicker (themselves and their loved ones) the church did a great many things—

- Masses for the dead.
- Venerating saints for the dead.
- And Indulgences.

There were also many sinful excesses by a whole line of popes. They had illegitimate kids and even small towns had brothels as a necessary evil for those who could not keep the vow of chastity.

There were those that came before calling for the same sorts of change that Martin Luther would in the 1520's.

- 200 Years before was John Wycliffe. He identified the Bible as the authority of the church, not the pope (there were two at the time he published that). He translated the Latin vulgate into English and condemned a heretic. He was already dead, but they dug up his remains and burned them anyway.
- Jon Hus: came about 100 years later talking about many of the things that Luther and the Reformers talked about. He actually prophesied as he burned that a Swan would arise and stand against indulgences. Luther fancied himself that swan.
- Erasmus of Rotterdam: He was a humanist, a Renaissance Humanist. He was the prince of these Humanists who envisioned a culture of people who were literate, educated and virtuous. This was to be reinforced by teaching grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, philosophy and humanities.

Normal stuff for us today, but radical talk for the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Erasmus went back to the original sources (skipping over the Vulgate) and published a Greek edition of the NT, and his own Latin translation of the NT.

He thought it would help the church and cause some healthy dialogue. It sounds good and harmless but an example of the trouble was in the way he rendered Matthew 4:17—

[17] From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 4:17

The Latin Vulgate—the official Bible of the catholic church rendered the verse—“From that point on Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

Erasmus looked back at the Greek and realized that Jerome goofed—“From that point on Jesus began to preach, saying, “Be penitent (change your mind), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The implications are obvious. The Medieval church had taught that Jesus was instituting the sacrament of penance—but the need to turn from sin.

Very different.

It didn't take long, and people began to ask questions. Among them, If Rome had been wrong on that, where else could they be mistaken?

This is the string of events that connected with Martin Luther. Luther didn't come from nowhere ready to destroy the status quo.

He came from normal home where his father was a miner and wanted him to become a lawyer so that Martin could



negotiate favorable mining contracts for him. But that all changed when Luther walked into a vigorous thunderstorm (seen as the work of Satan) and he cried out—“St. Anne, save me I will become a monk.” He was saved and became a monk.

He excelled in confessing sin and prostrating himself before God. In 1510 he was allowed to go to Rome for a pilgrimage. He raced around gaining as much merit as he could. People paid for masses and priests spoke so fast no one could understand.

It put seeds of doubt in his mind.

Upon returning he became a professor at the new University of Wittenberg. There Fredrick ‘the Wise’ had over 19,000 relics in nine different aisles.

*“There you could see a wisp of straw from Christ’s crib, a strand of his beard, a nail from the cross, a piece of bread from the Last Supper, a twig from Moses’ burning bush, a few of Mary’s hairs and some bits of her clothing, as well as innumerable teeth and bones from celebrated saints. Veneration of each piece was worth an indulgence of 100 days (with a bonus one for each aisle), meaning the pious visitor could tot up more than 1,900,000 days off purgatory.”* Michael Reeves, *The Unquenchable Flame*.

What got Luther going was the practice of Indulgences.

What are Indulgences?

When a parishioner went to a priest for confession, the priest would command certain acts of penance. The sins that were not dealt with appropriately in this life would have to be purified in purgatory.

There was a work around for the normal sinner. The merit of saints. There were certain people called saints that lived such an exemplary life that they had merit to spare. They had merit enough to get to heaven and on top of that normal people could access that merit via indulgences.

That merit metaphorically stored in the church's storehouse to be dispensed as the Pope saw fit. The Pope could give indulgences so that people might have less time in purgatory or skip purgatory and go directly to heaven.

Over time the practice of selling indulgences became common in the Medieval church. A bit of money would get people out of purgatory faster OR get a relative out faster.

As life often goes, it wasn't indulgences in the abstract that Luther fired up, but it was a specific man. Johann Tetzel. He was travelling around Germany preaching spine tingling, super-manipulative sermons.

'When the coin the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.'

'Place your penny on the drum, the pearly gates open and in strolls mum.'

His travelling team was selling indulgences to raise money and Tetzel said things like this,

“Don’t you hear the voices of your dead parents and others who say, ‘Have mercy on me, because we are in severe punishment and pain. From this you could redeem us with a small alms.’” Johan Tetzel

And this was a special kind of indulgence, the people did not even have to confess sins, just pay money. The money was necessary to rebuild St. Peter’s Basilica.

You can see very clearly the problem that Luther had with this arrangement. No one really had to repent of their sins, just drop some coins in the coffer and they were all good.

And since all Saints Day was November 1<sup>st</sup> on October 31<sup>st</sup> the little monk nailed his broadsheet on the church door at Wittenberg. Everyone coming to church the next day would see the document.

But nearly no one would be able to read it. It was in Latin, and the people spoke German, but most were just illiterate.

And it was the opposite of dramatic. He might have cleared a place on the door by pulling down an old notice of land for sale or looking for a lost horse or whatever and put his 95 Thesis up there.

Understand that this document had nearly nothing of what would mark the Reformation. There was no talk of the authority of scripture, the priesthood of all believers, justification by faith alone, or any other core future reformed teaching.

He didn't come up with any of that yet. He just wanted to debate indulgences. He doesn't even claim that indulgences were wrong, he just wanted to debate what he perceived to be the misuse of indulgences.

He had no intention of harming the church.  
He had no intention of leaving the church.  
He had no intention of dishonoring the Pope—in fact he assumed the Pope had no idea of what Tetzal was doing.

He even defends Purgatory in them.

Luther was being a good Catholic and trying to defend the Pope. This was a Catholic who had trouble with the Catholic Church. He just wanted to start a conversation about the misuse of indulgences.

He had no idea but that act and the Medieval Roman response to it started a chain reaction that Luther did not anticipate at all.

The Pope sent Johann Eck after him and in 1519 in Leipzig and put the question to Luther—who has final authority? The Bible or the Pope?

The underlying belief there is that the Bible draws its power from the Pope. What is this little Monk going to say?

Luther said that he could understand the Bible without the aid of the Pope or even against the Pope. He was called a disciple of Hus & Wycliffe. Luther was aghast. He was a good Catholic. Then he read their stuff and said, “Actually, they have a lot right.”

And that debate continued to put Luther on a path that he could not return from. He saw that if the church held that the Pope had ultimate authority over and against the Bible then there would not and could not be real reforms. God’s word could not even reform his church.

That caused Luther to begin to ask questions about the Papacy in general. Luther had begun to think about repentance in general.

Luther saw that God was all judge and angry and wrathful and no love. He realized that forgiveness from God was not offered based on how sorry the sinner was, but based on the promise of God that he forgives the sinner.

Then he looked at Romans 1:17—Here is what happened. I’ll let him tell it,

“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. 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." Michael Reeves, *The Unquenchable Flame* (pp. 47-48).

There his understanding of God changed. God's power, God's wisdom, God's righteousness, God's glory are not things God holds against us for NOT having but shares with us in Christ.

Luther saw,

“Here now was a God who does not want our goodness but our trust.” Michael Reeves

After that Luther called for reform in the church and if they would reform he would call to break from the church.

He came to one of the great tenants of the Reformation that was in the Bible all the while but rediscovered—the believer has the right to interpret the Bible for themselves. And further there was no difference before God between the clergy and the laity, what we would call the Priesthood of all believers.

Luther saw that the chief problem with mankind is the sin of unbelief. The sin of not trusting Christ and from that all other sins flow.

The Church gave him 60 days to recant or be excommunicated. He was called to the Diet of Worms and had his famous response—‘Here I Stand.’

He got married—and lit the match that would change the world from then on.

He was not a perfect model—

Later in life he grew bitter and angry and wrote horrible things against the Jews that the Nazis would later pick up. And he held onto an understand of the Lord’s supper that no one in the main of the Reformed World holds today.

There is a story illustrative of what I mean. Lyndal Roper relates the following story late in his life,

“The emphasis on the Incarnation and on the materiality of religion, which was so central to this developing vision, meant that he found it in some ways easier to make common cause with Catholic traditions than to ally with those who were part of the evangelical movement. He retained the elevation of the sacrament...and in Wittenberg in 1543, when some Communion wine was spilled on a woman’s jacket and the back of her pew, he and Bugenhagen not only licked it off her coat but went so far as to cut out the bits of the jacket they had been unable to clean, plane away sections of her pew where the wine had splashed, and burn the lot. The body and blood of Christ had to be treated with utmost respect.” Lyndal Roper

That is a bit out of mainstream.

There were other reformers from other countries that I can’t get into. Here are some:

- Ulrich Zwingli: Switzerland
- Jan Hus: Czech Territories
- England: Tyndale/Cramner

Most significant was John Calvin.



What Luther started others took further than he did or probably even could. The man who did more for the reformation was John Calvin.

Calvin hung out with the Renaissance Humanists, he loved it. These guys were eager to bring about a Golden age for mankind through great learning. But after a dust-up about the Mass in France he had to flee to Switzerland.

He ended up in Geneva to help the Reformation in that city get going and take hold there. As he was working on this Cardinal Sadoletto sent a letter to Geneva accusing them of splitting the church and wandering off into theological innovation.

He called them to come home to Rome.

And Calvin was chosen by the city officials to respond.

Reeves reports on what Calvin said,

“In the Reformation mind-set, salvation is a gift of God’s grace alone (*sola gratia*), found, not in any pope or Mass, but in Christ alone (*solus Christus*), and received by simple faith alone (*sola fide*). And we can know this for certain only through Scripture (*sola Scriptura*). Only if all these things are true, the sinner contributing nothing to his own salvation, can all the glory go to God. Reformation thinking therefore had this as its guiding light for all theology: does the theology lead one to say ‘to God alone be the glory’ (*solus Deo gloria*), or does man retain some of

the glory for himself? Sadoletto's problem, said Calvin, was exactly this: 'if the blood of Christ alone is uniformly set forth as purchasing satisfaction, reconciliation, and ablution, how dare you presume to transfer so great an honor to your works?' Michael Reeves

And further, Calvin brings up the point that the church is meant to be continually being reformed by the word. *Semper Reformanda*: always being reformed.

Let's take these each—These truths are not things that are imposed on the text, but things that the Bible teaches.

### Sola Scriptura: Scripture Alone

This one is the most important because it is the foundation for all the others. This means that the Bible is authoritative and sufficient to guide the believer for everything in both life and doctrine. It is the highest authority and no human tradition can usurp this.

This is different than the medieval church that taught that authority was scriptures, sacred traditions and the pope.

### Sola Gratia: Grace Alone

A soul is saved by grace alone, there is no way in which works can commend a sinner to God. There is no amount of obedience sufficient to gain salvation.

Catholics: Saved by a combination of grace, merits accumulated through our good works and other saints.

### Sola Fide: Faith Alone

The Bible teaches that we are declared righteous before God and not made righteous, slowly. Christians are justified before God by through faith alone. God gives us an alien righteousness we could not earn.

Catholics: Taught that we were saved by faith and the works that we produce and God infuses righteousness into us.

### Solus Christus: Christ Alone

The Bible teaches that we are saved by the merits of Christ alone and come to God by Christ alone and by no other means whatsoever.

Catholic: Saved by the merits of Christ and the saints and approach God by Christ and Mary who intercede for us.

### Soli Deo Gloria: To the glory of God Alone

This one summarizes all of the ones above. The Christian is to live for the glory and fame of God alone in all that we are, do and will become.

The big issue is justification over the years. The reformers and the scriptures see justification as a divine declaration

that the sinner—while still a sinner—is declared righteous by being given the righteousness of Christ.

This does seem foolhardy, because many ask (Catholic or not) then can't we do whatever we want and know that it will all be forgiven?

No. The Christian has the Holy Spirit indwelling in him/her so our affections change and we will not want to sin. It makes sense. Sounds logical to a degree.

If salvation is by faith what if faith is fake?

We would say that salvation IS by faith but for that faith to be genuine it always is accompanied by good works. The good works do not and cannot save, but they are a sign of genuine faith.

The Council of Trent responded to the Reformation—very clearly.

“Canon 9: If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone . . . let him be anathema [eternally condemned].”

Canon 11: “If anyone says that men are justified either solely by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness or solely by the remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and charity which is poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit and stays with them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema.”

Canon 12: “If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than trust in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ’s sake . . . let him be anathema.”

Canon 24: “If anyone says that the righteousness received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of the increase, let him be anathema.” Michael Reeves, *The Unquenchable Flame* (p. 182).

After Trent the Catholic church was cleaned up and there were sweeping reforms that took place. The Jesuits swept throughout the world and Roman Catholic thought and beliefs took hold.

There have been many reforms that took hold in the Catholic church and that is wonderful. But the Roman Catholic church holds to the same basic beliefs about Justification.

And holds to all of Trent.

We do have many common commitments—and agree on many core doctrinal beliefs.

- The Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- The Nature of God: Omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, aseity, immutability etc...

- Salvation is Trinitarian: The Father redeems sinful humanity by means of the death, burial and resurrection of the son by the regenerating work of the Spirit.
- God has revealed himself in nature and in the scriptures.
- The Person of Jesus Christ—100% God/100% man.
- The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ achieved the atonement.
- Holy Spirit: All of his person and works.
- Human beings: Made in the image of God, fallen and in need of redemption.
- Salvation is rooted in History in real events and not in legend.
- God will make all things right in the end and recreate the heavens and earth.

The main issue is justification—

“Our fundamental disagreement concerns the reason why God ultimately accepts sinful people. For Catholics, this acceptance is the culmination of a religious process, a faithful life nurtured by grace conveyed through the sacraments in which one grows in holiness. In the course of this growing, one merits divine favor and, by doing so eventually receives the divine declaration of acceptance.”

“Instead, divine acceptance is based on the perfect righteousness of Christ, which is imputed (attributed or reckoned) to sinful people. In other words, believers are ‘in

Christ, clothed in his perfection, they are regarded by God as completely righteous.” Allison & Castaldo (pp. 37-38)

How are we to think about the Roman Catholic church today?

- Clear part of the broader, Christian tradition (unlike JW and Mormons).

How about relatives that are in the Catholic Church?

While the Bible is clear that we will only be saved with faith alone it does not require that we believe in faith alone as a point of doctrine.

In other words, where someone really puts their faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, that person is saved no matter the official teaching of the Catholic church.

“Sometimes we forget that Luther, Calvin, and the rest of the Reformers were born and bred in the Roman church...and it was within the Roman church that they came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. To be sure, the pope would not tolerate their plain teaching of the gospel, so eventually they were thrown out of the church. But God can and does carry out his saving work to this day, even where his gospel is not preached in all its clarity.” Philip Ryken

This is true in many evangelical settings.

The gospel becomes—You have tried to do things your own way for so long, why don't you give Jesus a chance to take the wheel of your life.

That is no better. There are many so called Christian churches that would never present themselves as Roman Catholic but need a reformation too.

How does the Reformation impact our church?

*The Scriptures:*

Our Sunday services are going to put the scriptures up front and center. We are going to sing the scriptures, we are going to pray the scriptures, we are going to preach the scriptures, we are going to want to hide the scriptures in our hearts.

On our own, we are going to want to search the scriptures and ensure that we understand for ourselves and not just blindly agree with all that we preach and teach. Think about it for yourselves!

But this is not a 'just me and the Bible' teaching. The Bible is meant to be interpreted together with the help of others.

There are some things that are hard to teach, but if they are Biblical we are going to do just that. That is why we



generally preach through books of the Bible as they come or sections, but there are times we tackle topics too. Whatever the case we want our guide and direction to be dictated by the scriptures.

[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)

*Grace:*

We are going to constantly talk about the wonderful grace of God in Christ for us. We will never tire of the truth that God gave us grace when we did not deserve it. We are saved because he has saved us by grace and not from any works we have done.

This means we are going to seek to be:

Grateful for all we have been given  
Kind to others because of his kindness to us  
Serve others because he serves us  
Overlook sins and slights because he over looks ours

[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,

which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

### *Faith:*

We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. This means that though we sin and fall short in many different and serious ways—a genuine Christian is justified before God. Genuine faith always exhibits genuine works.

The amount of the faith never matters it is the substance of the faith in Christ that counts.

[21] But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—[22] the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: [23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. [26] It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Romans 3:21-26 (ESV)

### *Christ:*

He is the most important person to us. He reveals to us the Father and sends to us the Spirit. This means that we are not going to be able to understand the father or the Spirit without the Son.

He is the only way to eternal salvation with God. In no other name may anyone be saved but in Christ alone.

[6] Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [7] If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”  
John 14:6-7 (ESV)

*To the Glory of God Alone:*

We do not belong to ourselves, we are bought with a price and we must live for him, and not first for ourselves.

[33] Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

[34] “For who has known the mind of the Lord,  
or who has been his counselor?”

[35] “Or who has given a gift to him  
that he might be repaid?”

[36] For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. Romans 11:33-36

(ESV)

Books I have found helpful—

The Unfinished Reformation by Allison & Castaldo

The Unquenchable Flame by Michael Reeves

Luther: Renegade & Prophet by Lyndal Roper

Here I Stand by Roland Bainton

The Mighty Weakness of John Knox by Bond

Calvin—A Biography by Parker