The Dawn of a New Age

BACKGROUND

During the next two centuries, the Holy Roman Empire slowly began to decline. Various states—such as England, Germany, and Bohemia—became angry when their tax dollars went toward building bridges in Rome. People from individual states began building loyalty toward those states instead of Rome. The Roman Empire, for all practical purposes, had become divided into smaller social states with their own unique ideals and customs.

Other changes took place during the 1300s and 1400s as well. Across the empire, people became intrigued with ancient Greek and Roman philosophy and literature. This period of great awakening set the stage for new ways of thinking. By the early 1500s, corruption in the church had reached its peak. Many bishops, priests, abbots, monks, and popes were living in luxury and sin. The church had gained much wealth and power through the practice of selling indulgences. When a person sinned, he or she would confess the sin to the local priest. The priest would then ask that person to pay a specific fee, according to the seriousness of the sin. This fee was viewed as a guarantee that the sin would be forgiven. People also bought indulgences to release persons they knew from purgatory.

Actually, the selling of indulgences was a profitable way to raise money for the government without assessing more taxes. People who were opposed to paying large sums of money in taxes often did not balk at paying small amounts (over time) for the purchase of indulgences. The church split these monies with the government. Profits lined the pockets of church officials, helped build enormous cathedrals, and paid for new roads and bridges throughout the empire. Local parishes, however, were sorely neglected.

Throughout Europe, many government and church leaders opposed the practice of selling indulgences. One such leader in the province of Saxony, Germany, was a young priest named Martin Luther.

Martin Luther began asking questions about the function of the church during a time when many people were dissatisfied with what was happening. Luther’s questions, which led to reform, were part of a larger social setting. Individual states or provinces wanted to become self-governing. They were disgusted with Rome’s greed and misuse of power. The printing press had just been invented. People were thirsty for knowledge. They wanted control of their own destinies. Such was the scene on which Martin Luther stumbled.

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany, in 1483. He was baptized the day after he was born, as was the custom in most Roman Catholic church of that day. Luther’s father was a copper miner who wanted his son to attend the best schools. This meant that Luther learned Latin and German.

A near-death experience during a thunderstorm prompted this young man to join a monastery. He believed that God was vengeful and full of wrath. Luther was certain that God was angry with him for not confessing every sin he had ever committed. He decided he would do everything in his power to get close to God.

Martin Luther fasted until he was weak. He slept without blankets on the cold floor, to deny himself and exhibit true sorrow for his sins. He spent so many hours in confession that he became a nuisance to the confessional priests. Luther tried
everything. He took communion. He did all the things that he had been taught to do, but he did not feel God’s forgiveness. Luther was depressed and lonely. How could anyone come to know the one true God? Who would have enough nerve to stand in God’s awesome presence?

Luther’s fellow monks sent him to the university at Wittenberg, in hopes he would become distracted with theological studies. While studying the Scriptures one day, Luther came across Christ’s words: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Finally, he had found someone who understood his loneliness. Christ had broken down all the barriers between humans and God. Luther began to see God as “all merciful.”

Luther continued to preach, teach, and study the Scriptures. He was well liked by his students, and became known as a gifted speaker and writer. Luther did not seek fame and fortune. His primary goal was to know God and to experience God’s loving forgiveness.

Luther’s view of forgiveness was much different from the church’s view at that time. The church taught that if you sinned, you must buy forgiveness. People actually confessed their sins and were assessed a fee by the confessional priest. They then purchased a certificate of forgiveness (an indulgence). This certificate promised them exemption from that particular sin. The profit from the sale of indulgences was used to raise money for the Roman Catholic Church and the government. Little money stayed in the local parishes.

Luther opposed the practice of selling indulgences. His quiet opposition turned to vigorous dissension when he learned of an archbishop’s misuse of funds gleaned from the sale of indulgences. Albert of Hohenzollern used profits from selling indulgences in his city to pay off the debt he incurred when he unscrupulously bought his position as archbishop. At this point, Luther decided something should be done.

He wrote a list of 95 concerns he had about the church. Basically, Luther’s questions addressed three areas: 1) Who has ultimate authority—God or the pope? 2) How do we gain salvation? Through faith or works? 3) What does it mean to be the church? Luther nailed his propositions to the church door at Wittenberg, to signal a call for debate. They met with great support from the common people, but the pope held a different view.

Luther was soon excommunicated from the church. When called to defend himself during his hearing, known as the famous Diet of Worms, Luther told church officials that if they could show biblical basis for their practices, he would gladly recant (take back) his views. Church leaders were not able to rise to Luther’s challenge, so they sentenced him to death.

Luther had many allies. One of his main supporters was Fredrick the Wise, ruler of Germany and head of the university at Wittenberg. Fredrick kidnapped Martin Luther and kept him in hiding until the pope was distracted by other things (such as plots by other empires to invade Roman territories).

Under protection from Fredrick the Wise, Luther continued to teach and write. He immersed himself in his work. He wrote pamphlets that referred to the pope as the Antichrist. The peasants embraced his writings. Luther believed that the church is actually the priesthood of all believers. He taught that each Christian is a priest of sorts. This means we are each responsible to minister to others and be as Christ-like as we can. Luther wanted to help common people gain access to the Bible. While in hiding, he translated the New Testament into the form of German most common at that time. This insured that all people could read and interpret Scripture for themselves. They no longer relied on the false teachings coming from the church.
Luther’s writings and teachings spread throughout the empire and beyond, because of the new capabilities of the printing press. Luther’s students also took his ideas to faraway places. As people heard about Luther’s teachings and explored the Bible themselves, they began to expand on his ideas and challenge some of them. One such challenger was Ulrich Zwingli, in Switzerland.

Ulrich Zwingli was born in the small village of Wildhaus, Switzerland, in 1485. His family was a free peasant family with strong religious convictions. Several family members eventually became priests. Ulrich’s parents made sure he received a good education in Switzerland and at several fine universities across Europe.

Like most new graduates of his time, Zwingli began his career as a priest in a rural community. His first parish was located in Glarus. The year was 1506. Zwingli seemed to enjoy scholarly endeavors, and often studied into the night.

One of his first challenges in Glarus concerned ministering to mercenaries, who were paid to serve in various armies as soldiers. They were involved in the military for financial gain only. At some point, Zwingli saw several young Swiss men massacred in a battle in which mercenaries were fighting. He could not believe what he had seen, and expressed his horror. He worked diligently to stop this system of terror.

In 1518, Zwingli accepted a position as priest at the Grossmünster Church in Zurich. He was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Roman Catholic Church. Like Luther, Zwingli objected to the sale of indulgences. Zwingli also agreed that priests should not be forced to lives of singleness. Zwingli felt that the church had fallen away from following the Bible. This concern led him to try something radical in his own parish.

In the year 1519, Ulrich Zwingli stepped up to the pulpit during mass. He opened his Bible and began reading the first chapter of Matthew from the original Greek translation. He explained the meaning to his congregation in his own words.

Why was such an act considered radical? The Roman Catholic Church had stringent guidelines about what was read and taught. A priest was expected to read certain excerpts from the Bible each Sunday. He was not encouraged to begin with chapter one and read the entire book of Matthew, verse by verse, over the course of several months. Zwingli was breaking the mold, and it caused quite a stir in the city.

People flocked to Zwingli’s church to hear the priest who actually read portions of the Bible that they had never heard before. As Zwingli continued to read and study the Scriptures, he concluded that the Roman Catholic Church expected parishioners to do many things that were not in the Bible. Where Luther said something like, “If it’s in the Bible, I’ll do it,” Zwingli stated, “If it’s not in the Bible, we shouldn’t do it.” People attending Zwingli’s church were surprised to discover that there would be no more organs, crosses, or other images in the sanctuary. Zwingli’s congregation began to sing a cappella.

Ulrich Zwingli and Martin Luther agreed on several key issues. Yet they had their disagreements as well. Luther was in Germany and Zwingli was in Switzerland. In 1519, Zwingli discovered the writings of Martin Luther.

Both Luther and Zwingli married—Zwingli in 1524 and Luther in 1525. This was unprecedented. Until then, priests were expected to stay single and celibate. Both Zwingli and Luther believed in the authority of Scripture. About communion and baptism, they came to similar but slightly different conclusions.

Priests in the Roman Catholic Church taught that communion was somewhat
magical or mystical. They believed that the communion elements (wine and bread) were actually Christ’s body and blood.

Luther argued that the elements were changed by the priest, although he could not explain how. In other words, the priest served as a bridge, or means of lifting the veil, so the people could gain access to God. Luther suggested that Christ was “with” the wine and the bread in a mystical way.

Zwingli suggested that the bread and wine served as important symbols to remind us of Christ’s body that was broken, and Christ’s blood that was shed for our sins. Zwingli taught that people really didn’t drink Christ’s blood or eat his body, but that they used these symbols to remind them of Christ’s sacrifice and love.

The Roman Catholic Church required a child’s baptism shortly after birth. The Catholic Church at that time used baptism as a way to register people with the government. (Remember the marriage between church and state? They were still together!) Males who were registered were automatically conscripted for military service at a young age. Registration also provided information for taxing the people. It was difficult to escape registration during this period of time.

Luther believed that children should be baptized as infants, although he did not see a biblical basis for it. He regarded infants as “sleeping Christians.” He felt that infants were capable of believing, although they could not yet speak or have understanding. He suggested that Jesus could have been speaking about baptism when Jesus asked the disciples to bring the children to him.

Zwingli came to a totally different conclusion. He taught that baptism is a step of faith. Zwingli felt that a person should be baptized voluntarily, as a sign that he or she was willing to take up Christ’s cross. He felt the Roman Catholic Church was using an important Christian ritual to help the government keep track of its citizens. In other words, the church was totally missing the point. Ulrich Zwingli suggested that a Christians should be baptized when he or she was old enough to grasp the significance of this step of faith. Many people called Zwingli an Anabaptist, which meant that he supported rebaptism—being baptized again, because baptism as an infant held no meaning.

Zwingli became more and more disillusioned with the Roman Catholic Church. In 1522, he resigned as a Roman Catholic priest and became an evangelical minister. In this capacity, Zwingli was invited to participate in public debates before the city council in Zurich (comprised of political and church leaders). These debates brought new changes. The councils agreed to abolish the mass and to hold church services in German instead of Latin, a language which only upper-class persons could understand. Priests and nuns were given permission to marry. Images, relics and organs were removed from sanctuaries.

Zwingli continued to study the Bible in the evenings. A group of interested followers had begun meeting with him to discuss and interpret Scripture. These supporters reveled in the changes brought about through the town council. They felt that changes were just beginning. There was more to be done.

The group of eager students was certain that the town council would soon make the requested changes regarding communion (the Lord’s Supper) and baptism. They wanted Zwingli to push harder. Zwingli, however, felt he had pushed hard enough.

Zwingli’s followers were a band of eager, hardworking men. Conrad Grebel had experienced conversion under Zwingli’s watchful tutelage. Felix Mantz had regularly
attended Zwingli’s Bible classes since hearing about the new practice of reading Scripture passages in their entirety. Both men had grown to respect Zwingli’s judgment. They could hardly believe their ears when Zwingli suggested they wait for the city council to change their minds concerning key church issues.

As Grebel and Mantz argued with Zwingli, a clear difference of opinion emerged. Apparently Zwingli felt a sense of loyalty to the town council of Zurich. After all, they had graciously reinstated him at his beloved church. The council had gone along with many of the changes suggested by the group—with Zwingli as spokesperson.

Zwingli dreamed of a theocratic society where church and state would work hand in hand to establish God’s kingdom on earth. He admitted that the town council was miles away from such an ideal. Yet he firmly believed that he could lead them in that direction in several years, if he remained patient. Zwingli would not challenge the council any further. He wanted to maintain a pleasant working relationship with them.

Conrad Grebel and Felix Mantz were bewildered. They had studied the Scriptures with Zwingli. Together, the group had come to learn that Scripture was the ultimate source of authority for Christians. The biblical teachings were clear. When George Blaurock came to Zurich, planning to consult with Zwingli, Mantz’s and Grebel’s fears were confirmed. Zwingli was willing to go no further. Blaurock, however, continued to meet with Conrad Grebel and Felix Mantz. They prayed together, studied, and discussed the Scriptures. Soon a small group of followers began meeting with these three men in Felix Mantz’s home.

The more deeply they immersed themselves in the study of Scriptures, the stronger their convictions became. This small group of Christians felt that a person should be baptized when he or she understood what being a follower of the risen Jesus Christ meant. They knew that Ulrich Zwingli agreed with them, but were not surprised when he voiced opposition at a council meeting on January 25, 1525. Their convictions were tested when the Zurich City Council passed an ordinance ordering all infants to be baptized before they were nine days old. Anyone who refused to comply with this ordinance would be banished from the city.

Three days passed. The small group of brothers and sisters continued to meet, study, and pray. They refused to baptize their infants. The city council then passed an ordinance forbidding those who opposed infant baptism to gather together.

During one of these meetings in January of 1525, the small group met at the home of Felix Mantz’s mother. They read Scripture and encouraged one another. Over and over again they quoted, “We must obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29). George Blaurock asked Conrad Grebel to baptize him. He committed himself to serve Christ, to be faithful, and to minister to others in building God’s kingdom here on earth. Several others were baptized on that same day.

The choice had been made. Zwingli would keep his ties with the town council. Grebel, Mantz, and Blaurock aligned themselves with a new type of believers—the Anabaptists, or Swiss Brethren. There was no turning back.

This new fellowship of believers moved to the nearby village of Zollikon. One of the town’s leaders was sympathetic with their views. The first Anabaptist congregation was established in Zollikon at the end of January, 1525. The brothers and sisters enjoyed fellowship with one another. Farmers read Scripture and celebrated communion in their simple homes. These new ways of implementing the sacraments were seen as blatant revolution.

The debates continued. The Anabaptist movement grew. Four leaders emerged at this time of new beginnings: Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock, Balthasar Hubmaier, and Pilgrim Marpeck.
Conrad Grebel was from a wealthy family in Zurich. His father held a seat on the city council. Conrad had many opportunities as a young man, but squandered his money and education by drinking and fighting. He returned to Zurich penniless and with plans to marry a woman of whom his family disapproved. Grebel soon met Ulrich Zwingli, who made a lasting impact on his life. Zwingli taught him of Christ’s love and the responsibilities involved in serving Christ. Grebel first heard the Gospel of Matthew while worshiping in Zwingli’s church. He was one of Zwingli’s students. He was also one member of the small group of Zwingli’s followers who left Zwingli to begin the Anabaptist movement.

Conrad Grebel is acknowledged as the founder of Swiss-South German Anabaptism. He was the first person to publicly baptize an adult (George Blaurock) who had been baptized as an infant in Zurich. He preached and baptized in the countryside near Zurich and was imprisoned with Mantz and Blaurock. After six months, Grebel escaped. He resumed preaching and moved to Maienfeld, where his older sister lived. Grebel was weak and sickly by that time, due to his imprisonment and the harsh conditions faced as a traveling preacher. He died of the plague in 1526.

George (Georg) Blaurock’s birthname was George Cajakob. He was best known as George Blaurock, because of the blue coat he frequently wore (blau = blue; rock = coat). Some people called this exuberant man Starke Jorge, because of his unwavering faith. Blaurock came to Zurich from the alpine area of Trins, to talk with Zwingli about his religious convictions. When Zwingli’s stance regarding the council surfaced, Blaurock decided to join the small group of Anabaptists.

Blaurock was the first adult to be rebaptized in the city of Zurich. He was full of life and zest for the gospel. It is reported that he once stopped one of Zwingli’s assistants who was walking to the pulpit to preach. To the assistant’s astonishment, Blaurock simply said, “Not you, but I am sent to preach.” George Blaurock was arrested shortly thereafter. He spent time in prison with Felix Mantz and other rebaptized persons. He was dismissed on a promise of peaceful conduct.

Blaurock and Mantz disobeyed the edict to leave Zurich and began preaching in the highlands surrounding the city. Blaurock was a popular preacher. Throughout his many arrests, he sang songs and remained cheerful.

In spring of 1526, Mantz, Grebel, and Blaurock were sentenced to life in prison. Grebel seized the opportunity to conduct Bible studies with fellow inmates—a captive audience! All three men escaped. Blaurock and Mantz continued to minister near Zurich where they were arrested in Gruningen later that year. Blaurock was flogged in public and banished. If he returned to Zurich, he would be drowned.

Blaurock went into hiding for some time, leaving Switzerland. He preached and baptized his way to Tirol, Austria, where he replaced Michael Kurschner, who had been executed by burning at the stake. (In the small village of Moso, Blaurock had baptized Jacob Hutter, who would later become the leader of the Anabaptist group known as Hutterites.)

In the oddest of places—woods, caves, and ravines—under cover of night, this zesty man shared the gospel with all who had assembled. Eventually, authorities caught up with George Blaurock. He was tortured unmercifully, but refused to recant (take back his convictions). On September 6, 1529, George Blaurock and
his colleague, Hans Langegger, were burned at the stake. On the way to his execution, Blaurock earnestly spoke to the crowds and shared significant Scripture passages with them.

George Blaurock contributed greatly to the growth and vigor of the early Anabaptist movement. He composed two hymns, which are still sung in Hutterite communities today. These hymns can be found in the Ausbund as well. Blaurock’s successor, Jacob Hutter, continued the movement.
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LESSON 3: INTO THE REFORMATION

Objective
To engage students with the background of the Protestant Reformation and two of its leaders, Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. Galatians 2:16a—Yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Key Concepts
• Students will identify key excesses of the Catholic church at the time of the Reformation.
• Students will recognize the primary themes of Luther’s 95 theses.
• Students will identify Zwingli’s emphasis on scriptural study.
• Students will consider their faith in comparison to that of Luther and Zwingli.

Estimated Lesson Time: 50 Minutes

Materials
• Dollar bill and stick of butter
• Overhead transparency of “Butter Tower” handout (p. 88)
• Hat, paper bag with 95 nails, Bible with bookmark inserted at beginning of Matthew, pen
• “Luther’s Life,” “Zwingli’s Life,” and “From L to Z” handouts (pp. 85-87)
• One copy of “Mug Shots” handout (p. 89)
• (Optional) Small snack, if using Extend the Lesson activity with Big Idea
• (Optional) “Check-up” handout (p. 90), if using that Extend the Lesson activity

Teacher Preparation
2. Fill paper bag with 95 nails and add enough copies of “Luther’s Life” handout for one-third of the students in your class to have one.
3. Place bookmark inside Bible at the beginning of the gospel of Matthew, and enough copies of “Zwingli’s Life” handout for one-third of the students in your class.
4. Make enough copies of “From L to Z” handouts for one-third of the students in your class.
5. Make one copy of “Mug Shots” handout.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

A buttery tower. Without comment, place a dollar bill and a stick of butter on a desk or table in view of all the students. Ask, “What do these two objects have in common?” Allow for a variety of responses. Add, “These objects also have something else in common. They represent various problems 15th-century reformers saw with the Catholic church.

“For example, the dollar bill represents the practice of having to pay money to receive forgiveness from the church. If you committed a sin, you could purchase
an indulgence, which was a kind of ‘official get-off-free card.’ The church basically said, ‘Because you paid this money, that sin won’t be held against you.’ This was a problem for anyone who believed that God’s forgiveness could not be bought or sold.

“The stick of butter stands for a similar practice. In the Catholic church at that time, you were required to give up fat and sweets and other good-tasting foods during Lent, the 40-day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Rich church members would pay a set fee to be allowed to eat butter during Lent. It was sort of like paying money to be given official permission to cheat. Church leaders built church towers like this one (Show on an overhead the picture of the Butter Tower) from the money they received from people who wanted to eat butter every day.

“Together, these two items represent the big ideas that started the historical event called the Reformation.”

LESSON STEPS

1. Who objected? Say, “We’re going to figure out who it was that objected to these problems in the church, with the help of clues that Folks and Timester left for us.” Show the paper bag filled with 95 nails, the Bible with the bookmark in Matthew, and the pen clipped to a sheet of paper.

Divide into three groups. Invite students to take out a piece of scrap paper, write down their names, and place the papers in a hat. Pick out names one by one and allow students to choose a clue to investigate. Make a rule that they cannot choose the group of the person immediately before them and that groups must be equally divided.

After students have selected their clues, give the following assignments:

- **Bag of nails and bookmarked Bible**—Read the sheet you find in your bag or Bible. Then prepare a three-minute news interview, in your own words, from the information Folks has given you. Focus your report on the identity of your character and why he did what he did. You will need one reporter, one news anchor, and one person to play the part of your character. The rest of the group should come up with dialogue for the interview.

- **Pen and paper**—Figure out similarities and differences between the two figures listed on your paper. Be prepared to respond to the other groups’ reports with a news report in your own words of the similarities and differences between the two figures. You also need to draw or paste pictures of Luther and Zwingli on the timeline. Timester has provided you two pictures of these men.

2. Group work. Allow each group 15 minutes to prepare their reports and responses. Check in frequently with each group, to encourage, prompt, and ensure that they are putting their presentations in their own words.

3. Presentations. Begin with the Bag of Nails group’s interview. Appoint one person from a group that is not presenting to give a two-minute warning and final buzzer. Follow this presentation with the Bookmarked Bible interview and then the Pen and Paper news report.
4. **Discussion.** Following the presentations, discuss the following questions with your students:

- What would you include in your 95 theses today?
- Who do you think had stronger faith: Luther or Zwingli? Why?
- How do you think Luther felt when he went to bang those theses into the church door? What emotions was he feeling?
- What do you think made Zwingli feel Luther hadn’t gone far enough?
- If you were living during the time of Zwingli and Luther, on whose side would you be?

**EXTEND THE LESSON**

*These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 50 minutes.*

- **Big Idea’s turn.** Say, “Big Idea is demanding that you come up with the big idea from this lesson before you leave.” Break students into groups of three and ask them to identify the central point from the lesson, write it down on a scrap of paper, and hand it in. Glance at each answer and then make a point of carrying the paper scraps into the hallway and leaving them there. Inform your students that it will take Big Idea a moment or two to decide if they have come up with satisfactory ideas. Go back into the hall. If the students have accurately identified key points, such as identifying Luther’s opposition to indulgences, Zwingli’s emphasis on scriptural study, or the differences between them in terms of baptism and communion, allow them to leave, or move to the next activity. OR, reward them with a small snack.

- **Why they got angry.** Invite students to spend three minutes writing down why the Roman Catholic church objected to the reforms initiated by Luther and Zwingli. Then ask each student to identify one reason from their list, out loud. Respond to their speculations with the following historical considerations:

  1. They were in power and wanted to remain in power. Any threat to their control was a threat to their ability to command a country and a church.
  2. They were being called sinful. Priests and other church leaders who had gained their positions through indulgences and used income from selling indulgences to build their cathedrals didn’t want the money to stop rolling in. They also didn’t take too kindly to having their sins pointed out.
  3. They liked the way things were. Change is always threatening.
  4. They had inherited the idea that the Bible and sword went together like bread and butter. The Roman Catholic Church kept track of the population through baptism records and used those records to force young men into military service and to tax the population. The church and government were together. At a time when the Roman empire was under attack from other groups—like the Turks—the call for adult baptism threatened the church’s and government’s ability to control their population.

- **Memory work.** Assign students to memorize Galatians 2:16a: *Yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.* With parents’ permission, invite students to write the verse in small letters on
their forearms and look at it “at least 24½ times a day.” OR, they may carry the
verse in their pockets and look at it “at least 18¾ times a day.” Other ideas might
be to put the verse on a name tag, stuck to clothing, or make a necklace from
decorated posterboard. Discuss that this is one of the verses that captures a main
idea of Martin Luther’s: We are saved by faith, not works.

• **Check-up.** Assign the “Check-up” handout (for Lessons 1, 2, 3). Allow students
to work in groups of two or three to answer fifteen of the listed questions. You
may treat it as an open-book exercise or closed-book one, according to your practice.

• **Alternate assessment.** Allow a student to write a short story as if she or he was
a church leader in the time of Luther. Require them to explain how they would
have responded to Luther’s action, and why.
Luther’s Life

Name: Martin Luther

Birth: 1483 in Eisleben, Germany

History bit: States and provinces in Europe were fed up with how Rome controlled their lives and greedily abused its power. People wanted to learn, and have more say in how they lived their lives. Because Guttenberg had just invented the printing press, more people could get ahold of information in the printed form.

Childhood and young adulthood: Luther learned Latin and German at the best schools, paid for by his copper-miner father.

God thoughts: In the midst of a thunderstorm one day, Luther had a near-death experience and joined a monastery. At that point, he believed God was more about punishing people than forgiving them. Because he thought he could only get close to God by confession and other acts designed to earn God’s forgiveness, Luther confessed every sin he had ever committed to God, and fasted until his body grew weak. He shivered through the night, on the floor without blankets, to show how sorry he was for his sins, and bothered the priests with countless confessions.

Nothing seemed to work for Luther. Nothing seemed to bring him any closer to God. Finally, the other monks sent him to a university in Wittenberg to study theology, in hopes that he would give up his intense searching. It didn’t work. Instead, Luther became aware of the need to study scriptures. He arrived at a new understanding of God as full of love, forgiveness, and mercy.

Five less than a hundred: As he thought more about it, Luther began to object to the idea of indulgences that the church of his day practiced. Instead of having to buy forgiveness—a practice that paid for big cathedrals in Rome—Luther believed people could just ask and God would freely give them forgiveness. When Luther discovered that an archbishop had used indulgence money to pay off debts from bribing his way into his position, he had had enough.

In 1517, Luther wrote down 95 concerns about the church and nailed them to the door of the official church in Wittenberg. His list boiled down to three main questions: Did God or the Pope have the final say? Did salvation come from doing things (works) or believing things (faith)? What did it mean for the church to be the church?

Message: As Luther began to write and speak of his answers to these questions, the common people loved him. He preached that God was the final authority, not the Pope; that faith brought salvation not works; and that church should be made up of priests, not controlled by them. He also translated the New Testament into German, so that more people could read what the Bible said—and not just the leaders in the church who could read Latin.

Leaders of the Roman Catholic Church excommunicated Luther as a result of these teachings.
Zwingli’s Life

Name: Ulrich Zwingli

Birth: 1485 in Wildhaus, Switzerland

History bit: States and provinces in Europe were fed up with how Rome controlled their lives and greedily abused its power. People wanted to learn, and have more say in how they lived their lives. Because Gutenberg had just invented the printing press, more people could get ahold of information in the printed form.

Childhood and young adulthood: Zwingli studied at good schools in Switzerland and at top-notch universities throughout Europe.

Priestly crisis: As was often the custom for new priests at that time, Zwingli started working in a rural community in 1506. In addition to his duties as a priest, Zwingli stayed up late at night, studying.

In Glarus, the town where he was posted, Zwingli came into contact with mercenaries, men who were paid to fight as a profession, not as members of a particular country. After he saw these mercenaries slaughter several young men from Switzerland, Zwingli worked hard to stop this practice of paying men to kill other men.

By 1518, Zwingli had moved to Zürich, Switzerland, to serve as priest there. In addition to objecting to the sale of indulgences, Zwingli made a bold move about the Bible.

Reading the gospel: In 1519, Zwingli came to the pulpit during mass and started reading directly from the book of Matthew. As he went along, he explained the meaning of the words to his congregation. The Catholic church at that time required all priests to read only short portions of the Bible, not entire sections at a time. People started coming in droves to listen to Zwingli. Because of what he found in the Bible, Zwingli informed his congregation that organs, crosses, and other images would be removed from the sanctuary. His congregation would sing without instrumental accompaniment.

Results: Three years later, Zwingli resigned from being a Catholic priest and became a minister focused on evangelism. The leaders of Zürich invited him to take part in debates about the church in front of the Zürich council, a governing body made up of leaders from the government and the church. Zwingli convinced many of these leaders to stop celebrating mass and start holding services in German instead of Latin, a language that only the wealthy had time to learn. Because of Zwingli’s influence, the town council also removed all the images, pictures, and organs from the church sanctuaries.
From L to Z

Fill in the venn diagram below, based on the information given. Put common items in the overlapping portion and differences in the separate circles. Note that common items have been written in different ways, even though they represent the same idea.

LUTHER
• Lived in Germany.
• Served as a Roman Catholic priest.
• Believed that in communion the bread and wine were changed in a mystical process, through the actions of the priest.
• Got married.
• Thought the Bible was the final authority.
• Born in the 15th century.
• Believed in baptizing infants. He thought they could believe, even though they couldn’t speak or understand what a priest said.

ZWINGLI
• Was wed.
• Believed that scriptures had the final say.
• Resided in Switzerland.
• Believed that bread and wine were just symbols of Christ’s broken body and blood.
• Believed that only adults should be baptized, and that if a child was baptized as an infant it did not mean anything.
• Born in the last part of the 1400s.
• Was a Roman Catholic clergyperson.

So alike and yet so different. Makes ya wonder what would’ve happened if they had to run a church together.
—Timester
The Butter Tower

This is the Butter Tower paid for by church members who wanted to eat butter during Lent.
They may not be so pretty, but they both influenced a lot of people. Check 'em out.

—Timester

Mug Shots

Martin Luther

Ulrich Zwingli
Check-Up for Lessons 1, 2, 3

In groups of two or three, write out answers to 15 of the questions in the list below:

1. Identify three similarities and three differences between Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli.
2. Explain why timelines are important.
3. Identify one effect of Constantine's decision to marry the Bible and sword.
4. Identify the three questions behind the 95 theses.
5. Identify who nailed the 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church and why he did so.
6. Identify one big idea from each of the lessons thus far.
7. Identify one reason that church leaders got angry with Luther and Zwingli.
8. Explain an *indulgence*.
9. Explain why Zwingli thought only adults should be baptized.
10. Explain in your own words the reason for the Reformation.
11. In which countries did Zwingli and Luther do their work?
12. In what year did Luther nail his ideas on the Wittenburg church door?
13. Explain why it is important that Constantine saw a cross in the sky.
14. What best represents the idea of cause and effect: ball and bat, eyeglass and case, or horse and cart—why? OR, search engine and word, microwave and popcorn, match and candle—why?
15. Explain why Zwingli resigned his post as a Roman Catholic priest.
16. Where have Timester, Big Idea, and Folks left their messages?
17. What do CE and BCE stand for? AD and BC? Which terms can replace which other terms?
18. How many years is today from when Jesus was born? From when Constantine ruled Rome?
19. Match five dates from the timeline with the events they represent.
20. Explain why each of those dates were included on the timeline.
21. Who is Pilgram Marpeck and why is he mentioned here?
22. Write down the memory verses you have memorized so far.
23. Put the following events in order: Zwingli reading from Matthew during mass, birth of Jesus Christ, Menno Simons' death, Luther's birth, Constantine ending persecution of Christians.
CHECK-UP (For Lessons 1, 2, 3)—Answer Key

1. Identify three similarities and three differences between Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli.

   **Similarities:** Both served as Roman Catholic priests; both thought the Bible was the final authority; both were born in the 15th century; both were married.

   **Differences:** Luther lived in Germany; Zwingli in Switzerland. Luther believed that in communion the bread and wine were changed in a mystical process; Zwingli believed that bread and wine were just symbols of Christ’s broken body and blood. Luther believed in baptizing infants; Zwingli believed that only adults should be baptized.

2. Explain why timelines are important.
   - They help us establish connections with the past.
   - By examining history, we can remember the cloud of witnesses better.
   - Other people’s examples can stir us to follow our faith with renewed conviction.

3. Identify one effect of Constantine’s decision to marry the Bible and sword.
   - It led to the support of the church for war-making,
   - It led to a marriage of church and state
   - It confused the relationship of the church and government.

4. Identify the three questions behind the 95 theses.
   - Did God or the Pope have the final say?
   - Did salvation come from doing things (works) or believing things (faith)?
   - What did it mean for the church to be the church?

5. Identify who nailed the 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church and why.
   Martin Luther, to protest the church’s excesses, such as the sale of indulgences.

6. Identify one big idea from each of the lessons thus far.
   - History connects us with the past and points us toward the future.
   - Our faith roots lead us to stronger faith.
   - The marriage of church and state leads to support for war.
   - We inherit the decisions of those who go before us.
   - Luther and Zwingli made decisions to oppose the excesses of the Roman Catholic church.
   - Luther and Zwingli did not agree on everything.

7. Identify one reason that church leaders got angry with Luther and Zwingli.
   - Church leaders did not want to give up power.
   - Church leaders did not like being called sinful.
   - Church leaders did not want to lose money from indulgences.
   - The church liked the way things were.
   - Church leaders did not want to lose the ability to keep track of their population through recording infant baptisms.

8. Explain an indulgence.
   An indulgence is a fee paid by people in order to receive forgiveness.

9. Explain why Zwingli thought only adults should be baptized.
   He recognized that the church and government were using the practice to control the population. He thought the scriptures showed that only adults who believed should be baptized.
10. Explain in your own words the reason for the Reformation. 
   *The answer should refer to problems in the Roman Catholic Church, indulgences, or any of the beliefs of Luther and Zwingli identified in question one, above.*

11. In which countries did Zwingli and Luther do their work? 
   *Zwingli lived and worked in Switzerland. Luther lived and worked in Germany.*

12. What year did Luther nail his ideas on the Wittenburg church door? 
   *1517*

13. Explain why it is important that Constantine saw a cross in the sky. 
   • *When he saw the cross, he made a commitment that if he won his upcoming battle, he would support the Christian church.*
   • *He kept his commitment and ended persecution again Christians.*
   • *His actions eventually led to the bringing together of the church and state.*

14. What best represents the idea of cause and effect: ball and bat, eyeglass and case, horse and cart—why? OR, search engine and word, microwave and popcorn, match and candle—why? 
   *Answer should refer to the idea of an action leading to others. (Allow for creative interpretation.)*

15. Explain why Zwingli resigned his post as a Roman Catholic priest. 
   • *He had become disillusioned with the Catholic church.*
   • *He no longer believed the same things that they did.*
   • *He disobeyed directions from the Catholic church.*

16. Where have Timester, Big Idea, and Folks left their messages? 
   *In a paper bag and Bible, clipped to a pen, in the teacher’s lesson book. (Also other areas where you have “found” them.)*

17. What do CE and BCE stand for? AD and BC? Which terms can replace which other terms? (Be sure to cover this information in the lesson, “It’s About Time(line).” See note on page 49.)
   • *CE stands for “Common Era”; BCE for “Before the Common Era.”*
   • *AD stands for “Anno Domini”—Latin for “In the year of our Lord”; BC stands for “Before Christ.”*
   • *CE is synonymous with AD; BCE is synonymous with BC.*

18. How many years is today from when Jesus was born? From when Constantine ruled Rome? 
   • *Christ’s birth to present—calendar year (2004, 2005, etc.)*
   • *Constantine—calendar year minus 320 years (approx.)*

19. Match five dates from the timeline with the events they represent. 
   *Answers should be from the timeline in the room (a freebie).*

20. Explain why each of those dates were included on the timeline. 
   *Answers from timeline discussion.*

21. Who is Pilgram Marpeck and why is he mentioned here? 
   • *An Austrian Anabaptist who was persecuted for his beliefs*
   • *He appeared in a story in the first lesson.*

22. Write down the memory verses you have memorized so far.
Hebrews 12:1: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us….

Matthew 5:39: “But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.”

Galatians 2:16a: Yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

23. Put the following events in order: Zwingli reading from Matthew during mass, birth of Jesus Christ, Menno Simons’ death, Luther’s birth, Constantine ending persecution of Christians.

- Birth of Jesus Christ—1 CE
- Constantine ending persecution of Christians—312 CE
- Luther’s birth—1483
- Zwingli reading from Matthew during mass—1519
- Menno Simons’ death—1561