



LUTHER

STUDY GUIDE

LUTHER: STUDY GUIDE

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PART 1
BEFORE
THE FIRE



What to Watch

Watch “Part 1: Before the Fire” from the beginning of the video until you see the title screen for “Part 2: The Monk Who Changed the World.”

Duration: 17 minutes

“The Reformation motto *post tenebras lux*—‘after darkness light’—tells us that just before the Reformation this was a time of darkness.”

—STEPHEN J. NICHOLS

Summary

To properly grasp the significance of Martin Luther's life and legacy, we must first understand the world into which he was born. In this section of the film, we learn about the darkness in which the church found itself at the end of the medieval period. Characterized by political intrigue, moral corruption, and burdensome ritual, the church had replaced the authority of Scripture with its own and obscured the message of the gospel. Yet even in the midst of this darkness new light began to break through in the lives of John Wycliffe and John Hus, preparing the way for the full rise of reformation beginning with Luther.

Study Questions

1. What are some of the particular problems with the state of the church in Luther's day? What does the film suggest is the greatest tragedy and why?
 2. What characterized the ministries of Wycliffe and Hus? How did God use them to prepare the way for Luther?
 3. Do you see any signs of darkness in the church today? What about the modern church is in need of being reformed by the Word of God?
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For Further Study

- "[Introduction to the Reformation](#)." A video lecture by W. Robert Godfrey from part 3 of his series *A Survey of Church History*.
- "[The Morning Star of the Reformation](#)." An article by Stephen J. Nichols published in *Tabletalk* magazine, July 2014.
- "[The Fifteenth Century](#)," the July 2015 issue of *Tabletalk* magazine.
- [The Making of the Protestant Reformation](#), a teaching series by R.C. Sproul.





PART 2: SECTION 1

THE MONK
WHO CHANGED
THE WORLD



What to Watch

Watch the first half of “Part 2: The Monk Who Changed the World” from the 17-minute mark to 42:25, just before Carl Trueman begins “Luther’s understanding of the church . . .”

Duration: 25 minutes

“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.”

—MARTIN LUTHER

Summary

Growing up, Martin Luther most likely never imagined that he would stand before some of the highest political and ecclesiastical rulers in the world, much less that it would be in opposition to their command. In this section of the film, we trace God's providence in Luther's early life as, thanks to a lightning storm and the printing press, he goes from law student to monk and eventually to great Reformer of the church. We see how Luther's commitment to the Word of God, as well as an inescapable sense of his own unrighteousness, drove him to discover and courageously defend the transforming truth of the gospel despite great opposition.

Study Questions

1. Before he came to understand the gospel, how did Luther seek assurance of salvation, and what was the result?
 2. How did Luther find freedom from the false and burdensome theology that was obscuring his understanding of the gospel?
 3. What gave Luther the confidence to stand in opposition to the majority opinion of his day, not to mention all the ecclesiastical and political power of Rome? What example, if any, does he provide for the modern church in this?
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For Further Study

- [“Luther & the Lightning Bolt.”](#) A video lecture by R.C. Sproul from his series *Luther and the Reformation*.
- [“Fortress for Truth: Martin Luther.”](#) A blog post by Steven J. Lawson. Published on Ligonier.org September 11, 2017.
- [Martin Luther's 95 Theses](#) by Stephen J. Nichols





PART 2: SECTION 2
THE MONK
WHO CHANGED
THE WORLD



What to Watch

Watch the second half of “Part 2: The Monk Who Changed the World” from 42:25 until you see the title screen for “Part 3: The Untamed Tongue.”

Duration: 21 minutes

“It is high doctrine that always promotes high devotion to God, and Luther was responsible for this.”

—STEVEN J. LAWSON

Summary

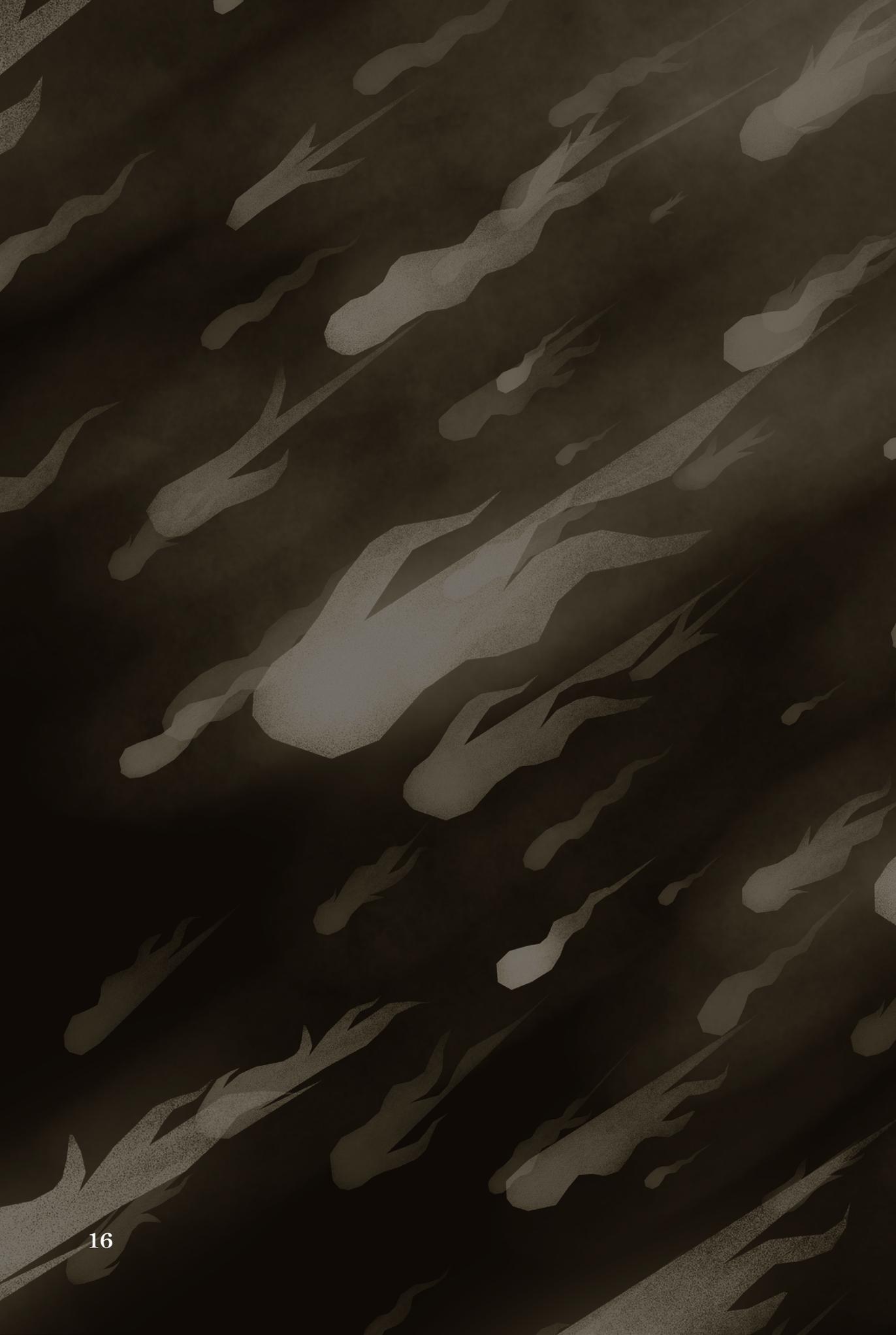
The rediscovery of the doctrine of justification by faith alone is undoubtedly Martin Luther's chief contribution to the church, but he also had significant influence on other areas of Christian life and devotion. In this section of the film, we consider his legacy regarding the centrality of the proclamation of the Word of God in corporate worship, the need for accurate Bible translation, the unique power and influence of sacred music, and (perhaps most unexpected for him) the blessings of marriage and children.

Study Questions

1. How did Luther's understanding of the gospel influence his approach to corporate worship? What did he change from how it was understood and practiced previously?
 2. Why was music so important to Luther? What benefits to the Christian life did he identify and experience in music?
 3. What do we learn about Luther from his ministry as husband and father? What lessons, if any, can modern Christian families take from his family?
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For Further Study

- [*The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther*](#) by Steven J. Lawson.
- [*The Legacy of Luther*](#) edited by R.C. Sproul and Stephen J. Nichols.
- "[The Legacy of Luther.](#)" An audio interview with R.C. Sproul and Stephen J. Nichols. Originally broadcast on *Renewing Your Mind*, October 24, 2016.
- [*Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom*](#) by Carl R. Trueman.





PART 3
THE UNTAMED
TONGUE



What to Watch

Watch “Part 3: The Untamed Tongue” from the 1-hour-3-minute mark until you see the title screen for “Part 4: The Fire Still Burns.”

Duration: 16 minutes

“With all his rare and excellent virtues, he has also serious faults. Would that he had studied to curb his restless, uneasy temper, which is so ready to boil over everywhere.”

—JOHN CALVIN

Summary

Martin Luther's tongue was a mighty ax that he wielded in defense of biblical truth, but at times it fell upon the wrong targets or with too much force. In this section of the film, we learn about the damaging downside of Luther's powerful character and voice. In his passion to defend the newly rediscovered gospel message, he at times lost his temper and resorted to language that caused unnecessary harm and obscured the central issues. Like every man, he was a sinner. Yet he found confidence to press on in repentance knowing that Christ had already paid the penalty for all his sin.

Study Questions

1. According to W. Robert Godfrey, what do the people whom Luther attacks in his writing have in common? What does he think Luther is trying to accomplish in writing so sharply against them?
 2. How would you describe the character flaw that Luther often displays when confronting his opponents?
 3. How does Luther recommend Christians respond when "the devil throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell"? How might Luther have responded before he understood the gospel?
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For Further Study

- "[Was Luther Guilty of Anti-Semitism?](#)" A blog post by Nathan W. Bingham. Published on Ligonier.org, March 29, 2017.
- "[The Insanity of Luther.](#)" A video lecture by R.C. Sproul from his series *The Holiness of God*.
- [Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther](#) by Roland H. Bainton.





PART 4
THE FIRE
STILL BURNS



What to Watch

Watch “Part 4: The First Still Burns” from the 1-hour-19-minute mark until the end of the film.

Duration: 11 minutes

“Insofar as the gospel is always in danger of being distorted, it has to be maintained with clarity and urgency in every generation, including our own.”

—R.C. SPROUL

Summary

Though the fire of Martin Luther's Reformation appears to have diminished in the West, the flame has not died, nor will it ever. In this final section of the film, we consider the need for reformation in every age, as each new generation faces the same danger that threatened Luther's: the obscuring of the gospel and of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in particular. While we grieve the return of darkness in our own land, we are encouraged to hear of the light spreading to others. In any case, we are full of hope because the sovereign God of the gospel has promised that His church will be victorious.

Study Questions

1. According to Stephen J. Nichols, what did Luther fear most for the church? Do you think he was right to be so concerned? Explain.
 2. With Luther and the events of his life now five hundred years behind us, is it accurate to say that the Reformation he began is now over? Why or why not?
 3. What about the story of Luther and the Reformation gives us hope for the future of the church?
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For Further Study

["A Doctrine for Today."](#) A video lecture by R.C. Sproul from his series *Justified by Faith Alone*.
[The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World](#) by Stephen J. Nichols.
[The Next 500 Years: Ligonier Ministries 2017 National Conference.](#)

