

Brand Luther

A Reading Guide

Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin
2017: The Year of Grace



Dear Friends in Christ,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Welcome to 2017: The Year of Grace. As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, the Northwestern Ohio Synod will celebrate the gift of God's grace through prayer, worship, Bible study, and book reading circles.

A few years back, I was teaching an Adult New Members Class. As I covered some of the basic theological insights of Lutheranism, one of the students asked, "Pastor, if you were to pick 1 word to describe Lutherans, what would that 1 word be?" I didn't hesitate. The word is "grace".

One of the great gifts of the Protestant Reformation was a renewed emphasis on God's transformational grace, and the word transformational is fitting. The Protestant Reformation was a transformational event, which caused a seismic shift in Western Civilization. In the book, *Brand Luther: 1517, Printing, and the Making of the Reformation*, Dr. Andrew Pettegree captures the spirit of the Protestant Reformation by focusing on the transformation that occurred in 4 related areas:

- The transformation of Martin Luther, from unknown monk to Europe's bestselling author – ever.
- The transformation of the printing industry.
- The transformation of book production and marketing.
- The transformation of the town of Wittenberg.

What follows is a 13-session reading guide based on Andrew Pettegree's book, *Brand Luther: 1517, Printing, and the Making of the Reformation*. I want to encourage you to get a copy of *Brand Luther*, gather with a group of friends, get outside the 4 walls of the church, and read, discuss, and learn what God may be saying to you and your community through *Brand Luther*.

Let us pray, Lord Jesus, transform our minds to see the world as you see the world. Transform our will to do your will. Transform our hands to serve as you call us to serve. Transform our hearts to love the world as you love the world. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Blessings,



Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin
January 26, 2017
St. Titus, Pastor and Confessor

Brand Luther

Preface

Opening Scripture: **Luke 5:36-39**

Dr. Andrew Pettegree is a professor at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. His specialty is Reformation History. In his book *Brand Luther: 1517, Printing, and the Making of the Reformation*, Dr. Pettegree provides an inside look at Martin Luther's masterful use of printing and marketing. Dr. Pettegree begins *Brand Luther* with these words, "In 2017 we mark the five-hundredth anniversary of one of the seminal moments in Western Civilization: the inception of the Protestant Reformation" (ix). The Reformation greatly transformed Western Christendom, and its impact continues to be experienced today. Pettegree argues that transformation also occurred in 4 distinct areas:

- The transformation of Martin Luther into Europe's bestselling author.
- The transformation of the printing industry.
- The transformation of book production and marketing.
- The transformation of the town of Wittenberg.

Some discussion questions:

1. Is there anything you or your congregation are planning to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation?
2. What are 2 or 3 technological transformations that you have experienced in your life?
3. Do you enjoy "new technology" or does it cause you great anxiety?
4. What are some ways the church might use new technology to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
5. Early theological books were written in Latin. Martin Luther wrote many of his works in German? Why was this important?
6. Who are some of today's bestselling Christian writers? What do you like about their writing?
7. Lucas Cranach was a court painter who helped revolutionize the religious book industry. What role do the arts play in our Christian faith?
8. How does **Luke 5:36-39** relate to this preface?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 1: A Small Town in Germany

Opening Scripture: **Matthew 5:14-16**

In chapter 1 of *Brand Luther*, Dr. Pettegree leads us on a walk through the town of Wittenberg. He charts the transformation that occurred in Wittenberg over 30 years (1513 to 1543). At the time of Luther's arrival, Wittenberg "...was a poor, unattractive town, with old, small, ugly wooden houses, more like a village than a town" (pg. 7). 30 years later Wittenberg was a growing town with a renowned university, a booming printing and book publishing industry, and an intense monk named Martin Luther, who was (and still is) Germany's best-selling author.

Some discussion questions:

1. To get his writings out quickly, Martin Luther learned the art of brevity. When is less better than more? Are there places in your life that could use a little "more" brevity?
2. Take an opportunity this week to walk through your community or neighborhood. Try to picture what it was like 30 years ago. Try to envision what it might be like 30 years from now. What are your hopes and dreams for your community or neighborhood?
3. When reading, do you prefer a real book in hand or do you prefer an electronic device (Kindle, tablet, phone, computer)? Why or why not?
4. How did Wittenberg become Germany's largest publishing center in less than 30 years? For what is your community best known? Do you play a role in that service or industry? What would happen to your community if that service or industry suddenly went away?
5. Luther's German Bible played a major role in the Protestant Reformation. What role has the Bible played in your life? Why do you think that is?
6. What is the hardest thing to transform: people, an industry, a community or neighborhood? So, where might you start?
7. How does **Matthew 5:14-16** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 2: The Making of a Revolutionary

Opening Scripture: **2 Timothy 3:14-17**

In chapter 2 of *Brand Luther*, Dr. Pettegree provides the reader with some important background material. We learn about Martin Luther's early years and his shift from the study of law to the study of Scripture. We learn about the founding of Wittenberg University and the city's fledgling printing industry. We learn how the study of Scripture and Augustine's works began to eclipse the study of Aristotle and the Scholastic method. These foundational elements would soon come together in the "Making of a Revolutionary".

Some discussion questions:

1. As a group try to come up with 10 facts about Martin Luther's life.
2. How do you think Hans Luther's involvement in the mining industry influenced Martin Luther's later involvement in the printing industry? Are there some ways that your parent's vocation(s) influenced your vocation?
3. How would you describe Martin Luther's 1510 visit to Rome (pgs. 34-35)? Have you ever been disappointed while doing God's work (pilgrimage, mission trip, service event, retreat)? Please share your experience.
4. How would you describe the education you received? What were some of the challenges you faced? What were some of the joys you experienced? Can you think of certain teachers who made a difference in your life?
5. Johann Rhau-Grunenberg was a notoriously slow and unimaginative printer (pg. 42), yet Martin Luther continued to employ him. What price do we sometimes pay for loyalty? Do you value loyalty? Why or why not?
6. From 1511-1517, Martin Luther spent a lot of time studying Scripture. Have you ever engaged in Bible study? If yes, how would you describe it? If no, what is holding you back? How might you get started?
7. How does **2 Timothy 3:14-17** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 3: Indulgence

Opening Scripture: **1 John 1:5-10**

In chapter 3 of *Brand Luther*, we learn about indulgences and theological disputations. The selling of indulgences was not without controversy. It was a boon for the papacy, the printing industry, and the traveling indulgence preachers. But there were critics, including many of the German princes and Martin Luther. The posting of the 95 Theses by Martin Luther on October 31, 1517, as a call for academic theological debate quickly became a topic of public conversation and controversy.

Some discussion questions:

1. The selling of indulgences raised a lot of revenue for the Western Church. How were some of these funds used (hint: think Sistine Chapel ceiling)?
2. What was Martin Luther's concern about the selling and purchasing of indulgences (pg. 57)? What did the printers think about indulgences? How about the German princes?
3. Talk a bit about confession, repentance, and forgiveness. How do we confess our sins? How do we know we are truly forgiven? What does real repentance look and feel like?
4. Dr. Pettegree argues that Martin Luther actually posted the 95 Theses on the Castle Church door on October 31, 1517 (pgs. 71-72)? Why was October 31 an important date in Wittenberg?
5. Did your view of "indulgence hawker" Johann Tetzel change by the end of this chapter? What do you think about Martin Luther's claim that he reached out to Tetzel to offer him spiritual comfort in his final days (pg. 83)? What does that tell you about Martin Luther?
6. Why do you think Martin Luther embraced the eight-page pamphlet that could be read aloud in ten minutes (pg. 81)? Think of the last sermon / teaching you experienced. How long is too long? How short is too short?
7. How does **1 John 1:5-10** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 4: The Eye of the Storm

Opening Scripture: **2 Timothy 2:8-13**

In chapter 4 of *Brand Luther*, Dr. Pettegree takes us into *The Eye of the Storm*. “In the two years 1518 and 1519 Luther’s world changed out of all recognition” (pg. 87). He became a public figure and a bestselling author. German readers devoured his books. “It is no wonder that printers came to love Luther, and Luther came to transform the German printing industry” (pg. 109). By 1519, theology, politics, and economics were converging to create a perfect storm: Reformation and Brand Luther.

Some discussion questions:

1. On pages 94 and 102-103, Martin Bucer and Petrus Mosellanus record their personal impressions of Martin Luther. Based on their words and your reading thus far, how would you describe Martin Luther the man?
2. In the years 1518-1519, Martin Luther's world changed dramatically. He became a public figure, an enemy of the church, and a bestselling author. Can you recall a 2 to 3 year period when your life changed dramatically? Did you grow? Were there things you had to leave behind? Looking back, what might you do differently?
3. On page 97, we read that Martin Luther begins to address the spiritual needs of lay Christians. How would you describe the difference between “Luther the Theologian” and “Luther the Pastor”? Share a story about a time a pastor made a difference in your life.
4. Martin Luther was stubborn. “...he would never step back from a position once taken” (pg. 103). Stubbornness is not a Christian virtue. Though, when is it a good thing to be steadfast and firm? Then again, when might stubbornness get in the way? At home? School? Work? Church?
5. Martin Luther was instrumental in securing outside printers to set up shop in Wittenberg. Luther was not afraid to ask or to delegate. Is asking one of your gifts? How are you at the art of delegation? How might you grow in these skills to further God's Kingdom?
6. How does **2 Timothy 2:8-13** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 5: Outlaw

Opening Scripture: **1 Kings 19:11-14**

In chapter 5 of *Brand Luther*, Martin Luther is excommunicated and declared an outlaw by the Roman Catholic Church. Luther appears before Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms, where he refuses to recant his theological writings. The Emperor is scandalized and Luther is quickly ushered into hiding. But even in hiding, Martin Luther continues to get his message out to an ever-growing, ever-hungry audience.

Some discussion questions:

1. On page 118 we catch a glimpse of Pastor Martin Luther. He is writing. He is preaching three days a week. He is teaching lessons on the 10 Commandments and the Lord's Prayer every evening. How did this "day to day" pastoral work make Martin Luther a better theologian?
2. In 1520, Martin Luther wrote 3 manifestos: 1. *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nations*. 2. *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. 3. *The Freedom of a Christian*. What were each of these manifestos about? Try to recall at least 2-3 things about each work? Have you ever read any of these manifestos? They are online. Google them, and read them.
3. On April 18, 1521, Martin Luther appeared before Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms. He was commanded to renounce his writings, but he could not do it. "*Unless I am convinced... it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. God help me. Amen*" (read Luther's full statement on pg. 136). Had Luther gone too far? What would you have done? Have you ever had to stand up for a truth or a principle you deeply believed in? Please share that experience with your study group.
4. After the Diet of Worms, Martin Luther went into hiding at the Wartburg Castle. This was a time of silence and solitude for Luther. When was the last time you experienced silence and solitude? Was it life-giving or unnerving? Share that experience.
5. How does **1 Kings 19:11-14** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 6: Brand Luther

Opening Scripture: **John 15:1-8**

In chapter 6 of *Brand Luther*, we meet the artist Lucas Cranach, and discover the major role he played in Wittenberg's book industry. We are also given a glimpse into the friendship that Lucas Cranach and Martin Luther shared. Dr. Pettegree concludes chapter 6, by pointing out that Cranach's woodcuts, Martin Luther's name, and the Wittenberg publishing trade mark were three important elements in the creation of "Brand Luther".

Some discussion questions:

1. On page 147, Dr. Pettegree writes, "*Martin Luther was a man of refined aesthetic sensibility*". Before reading *Brand Luther*, I would have described Luther as boorish and stubborn, but not refined. Has *Brand Luther* caused you to reconsider any previous notions you once had about Martin Luther? Explain.
2. Three well known portraits by the artist Lucas Cranach provide us with a glimpse of Martin Luther's physical features (see pgs. 90, 156, and 227). The Toledo Art Museum has a painting on display by Lucas Cranach the Younger called *Martin Luther and the Wittenberg Reformers*. Take a field trip with your reading group to see it (or Google it if you must). Compare the image of Martin Luther by Lucas Cranach the Younger with the 3 images of Martin Luther by Lucas Cranach Sr. in *Brand Luther*. What is similar? What is different? Notice anything unusual?
3. Lucas Cranach was the godfather to 1 of Luther's children. Martin Luther was the godfather to 1 of Cranach's children. Do you have godparents (baptismal sponsors)? What role have they played in your life. Are you a godparent to a child? If so, what role have you played in their life? Share with your reading group.
4. What role did Cranach's woodcuts, Martin Luther's name, and the publishing trade mark, "Wittenberg" play in creating Brand Luther? See pgs. 158-163.
5. How does **John 15:1-8** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 7: Luther's Friends

Opening Scripture: **Psalm 133**

In chapter 7 of *Brand Luther*, we meet the “Four Evangelists” and the “Four Friends” of the Reformation: Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Justus Jonas, and Johannes Bugenhagen. Each of these “Four Friends” brought their unique gifts and skills to the making of the Protestant Reformation. Friends and colleagues also helped Martin Luther translate and publish the German Bible. Finally, we read about some of the pressures and challenges Martin Luther faced when some of his long-standing friendships became strained.

Some discussion questions:

1. Chapter 7 is entitled, *Luther's Friends*. Name 2 or 3 of your friends. How long have you been friends? Why are these people your friends?
2. The Four Evangelists of the Protestant Reformation were: Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Justus Jonas, and Johannes Bugenhagen. How did each of these colleagues become a friend of Luther's? What gifts or skills did these friends bring to the Reformation?
3. Martin Luther wrote a lot of “prefaces” to help endorse many of his friends' writings. What are some things you've done or are currently doing to help a friend? Is it easy or challenging for you to help a friend? Is it easy or challenging for you to ask a friend for help? Why the difference?
4. Over a 12-year period, Martin Luther and many of his friends worked together to translate and publish the German Bible. It was a publishing sensation and put the Word of God into the hands of the German people. Can you recall a project that you and a team of others brought to successful completion? What was the project? Tell about it. Talk about the joys and the challenges of teamwork.
5. Martin Luther had a “falling out” with former colleague, Andreas von Karlstadt. Have you ever had a “falling out” with a friend or family member? Looking back, what might you have done differently?
6. How does **Psalm 133** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 8: The Reformation in the Cities

Opening Scripture: **Psalm 127**

In chapter 8 of *Brand Luther*, we leave the city of Wittenberg and track the spread of the Reformation in other German cities and states. Local clergy, city leaders, and "...the tumultuous maelstrom of pamphlets cascading from the German presses" (pg. 207), were key factors in the growth of the Evangelical movement.

Some discussion questions:

1. "The Reformation in the cities would be driven very largely by the clergy" (pg. 200). How prominent is the "pastor's voice" in today's society? What types of things do you hope to hear from your pastor? What types of things do you wish not to hear?
2. Name 2 or 3 unsung leaders who played a key role in the Reformation (see pgs. 200-206). Who did you choose? What role did they play? How important are the people who live and serve "behind the scenes"? When you think of "behind the scenes" leaders, who comes to mind?
3. What role did printed pamphlets play in the Reformation? It appears that the Reformers simply "out printed" their opponents. "Luther's works outstrip those of any other author by a factor of ten; he out published the most successful of his Catholic opponents by a factor of thirty" (pg. 213). How do you account for this huge difference in publishing between Luther and his detractors?
4. Why were Luther's opponents so ineffective at shutting the Evangelical movement down? What role did the use of Latin and the printers play in the detractor's lack of success?
5. Duke George refused to allow the printers in Leipzig to publish Evangelical works. The result was a total collapse of Leipzig's printing industry. Can you think about a town or city that has lost its economic engine? What are the results? How might a town or city rebuild? What role might the Church play in the rebuilding?
6. How does **Psalm 27** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 9: Partings

Opening Scripture: **1 Samuel 20:35-42**

In chapter 9 of *Brand Luther*, we celebrate as Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora become husband and wife. However, celebration soon gives way to lamentation because of the violence and loss of many lives in the Peasant's War. Luther's theological "war of words" continues, but this time it's not with Rome. Luther now tangles with the highly respected scholar, Desiderius Erasmus and the great Swiss reformer, Ulrich Zwingli.

Some discussion questions:

1. On August 13, 1525, in a small, private ceremony Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora were married. Luther was 42 and Katharina 26 when they were married. What would you consider to be the "right age" to get married today? Why? Describe the most interesting wedding that you have attended.
2. What was at the heart of the disagreement between Erasmus and Martin Luther (pgs. 232-234)? Luther wrote *On the Bondage of the Will* in response to Erasmus' critique. Google *On the Bondage of the Will* and read through it. Do you agree with Luther that as far as salvation is determined, our human will determines absolutely nothing?
3. Dr. Pettegree argues that the Peasant's War was the Reformers first existential crisis. The peasants used Luther's playbook to propagate their concerns, including evangelical language (pg. 237) and pamphlets. As the violence increased, Luther turned against the peasants, and wrote, "Therefore let everyone who can smite, slay, and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel" (pg. 242). What do you think about Martin Luther's words?
4. What was at the heart of Martin Luther's disagreement with Ulrich Zwingli (pgs. 247-248)? What does the Latin phrase "hoc est corpus meum" mean? Do you agree with Luther?
5. How does **1 Samuel 20:35-42** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 10: The Nation's Pastor

Opening Scripture: **Deuteronomy 6:1-9**

In chapter 10 of *Brand Luther*, Dr. Pettegree traces the trajectory of the Reformation from a “protesting movement” to a fledgling institution. I read with interest that the Protestation of Speyer, a document written to Charles V by John of Saxony and Philip of Hesse, was the origin of the name, “Protestant”. Later in chapter 10, we read that public education for boys and girls and a shift in the Wittenberg printing industry (from pamphlets to books), were two key factors in “constructing” the newly established church.

Some discussion questions:

1. In the mid-1520's, Martin Luther and his colleagues began “...building the institutional structures of a new church” (pg. 254). If God called you to start a new church from scratch, what would you include? Why? What would you not include? Why?
2. Dr. Pettegree calls Katharina von Bora, Martin Luther's “soul mate” (pg. 257). What are the key ingredients of a good and faithful marriage?
3. In what ways did Martin and Katie Luther's family provide a model of “...a powerful archetype of the new Protestant family” (pg. 259)?
4. The *Large Catechism* and the *Small Catechism* are two of Martin Luther's best known works. Tell about your experience with Luther's *Small Catechism* as a teacher or as a learner?
5. Martin Luther was a champion of education for children and especially for girls. Why do you think Luther was so ahead of his time with this emphasis on female education? I would argue that we need to continue educating girls, especially in developing countries. When you see me, please ask me about this, and let's have a conversation.
6. Did Martin Luther have a favorite printer? Why do you think he was so adamant about sharing his works with all the Wittenberg printers?
7. How does **Deuteronomy 6:1-9** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 11: Endings

Opening Scripture: **Psalm 118:5-20**

Chapter 11 of *Brand Luther*, is entitled, "Endings". One can argue that Martin Luther did not end well. In the last decade of his life, he dealt with a long list of physical ailments, squabbling princes, and several writings that would damage his later reputation (*On the Jews and Their Lies*). While traveling to Eisleben to mediate a quarrel, Luther became ill and died on February 18, 1546, in the same town where he had been born.

Some discussion questions:

1. In the last decade of his life, Martin Luther experienced a lot of ailments. Do you know someone who is currently experiencing serious health concerns? What are some ways we might reach out to those who are experiencing illness and suffering?
2. On page 283, Dr. Pettegree writes briefly about Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms: the spiritual kingdom and the temporal kingdom. How do you understand this doctrine? For more clarification check out the article, "Two Kingdoms Doctrine" on the Wikipedia website.
3. How did the German princes support and protect the Protestant movement" (pg. 289)?
4. Were you surprised to read that Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon were students of astrology (pg. 290)? Why do you think there was such a fascination with signs and wonders?
5. Martin Luther's 1543 work, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, was considered a minor work during his lifetime, but very damaging to his later reputation. Why do you think Luther wrote such inflammatory material during the last decade of his life?
6. Martin Luther died on February 18, 1546, in Eisleben, the town of his birth. Dr. Pettegree argues that it was important for Luther to die well. Did Martin Luther die well? See pages 305-307 to help clarify your response.
7. How does **Psalm 118:5-20** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

Chapter 12: Legacy

Opening Scripture: **Psalm 145:1-7**

In Chapter 12 of *Brand Luther*, we read about the legacy left behind by Dr. Martin Luther. Some of this legacy includes: continued theological controversy, a distinct brand of Lutheran worship, an emphasis on Lutheran education, and a growing and well organized German printing industry. At the end of *Brand Luther*, Dr. Pettegree traces the birth of the daily “newspaper” to the German printing industry that was originally shaped by Martin Luther (pg. 338).

Some discussion questions:

1. Soon after Martin Luther's death in 1546, the new Lutheran movement faced several potential disasters. Emperor Charles V defeated the Schmalkaldic League and imprisoned 2 Protestant leaders: Elector John Frederick and Philip of Hesse. Wittenberg was besieged and occupied, and no clear leader emerged with the charisma and drive to fill Luther's shoes. How did the Lutheran movement survive these early challenges?
2. Philip Melancthon was Martin Luther's “heir apparent”, but Philip was unsuited for the role. What were Philip's gifts? Why were these gifts unsuited for leading a movement (pgs. 313-315)? Discuss these questions: Is it the leader who makes the movement? Or is it the movement that makes the leader?
3. Dr. Pettegree argues that the *Book of Concord* “...closed the door to theological equivocation” (page 320). What do you know about the *Book of Concord*? Can you name 3 of the 8 documents that make up the *Book of Concord*? Commit yourself to reading the *Book of Concord* during 2017: The Year of Grace. Ask your pastor where you might buy or borrow a copy. Check your local library.
4. What are some of the traditional marks of Lutheran worship (pg. 321)? What are some of the Lutheran worship traditions that you most enjoy?
5. Did you enjoy *Brand Luther*? Why or why not?
6. How does **Psalm 145:1-7** relate to this chapter?

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Brand Luther

A Random Sampling for Further Reading

Primary Sources

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Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521.
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