



SOUTHERN CROSS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

growing followers of Jesus

Term 3 Studies 2017

HERE WE STAND

Celebrating 500 years of Reformation

1	July 23	SCRIPTURE	Matthew 15:1-9
2	July 30	SIN	Romans 3:9-20
3	August 6	JUSTIFICATION	Romans 3:20-26
4	August 13	GRACE	Ephesians 2:1-10
5	August 20	THE SPIRIT	Romans 8:1-17
6	August 27	SACRAMENTS	1 Corinthians 11:17-34
7	Sept 3	CHURCH	Ephesians 4:1-16
8	Sept 10	EVERYDAY LIFE	Romans 6
9	Sept 17	JOY & GLORY	Romans 5:1-5

Here We Stand

While most of us would prefer to be agreeable and take the path of least resistance, sometimes it's important to take a stand. 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of a moment in history when one man decided that he had to do just that. The consequences of his actions were so significant that they are still worth remembering and celebrating today. The man was Martin Luther and the moment was when he publicly questioned some of the teachings and practices of the Catholic church by nailing his "95 Theses" to the door of his local church.

The movement that this act of brave protest sparked became known as "The Reformation" - a theological revolution with dramatic social, political and spiritual implications for the entire western world. This term at SCPC we're going to dig deeply into our own spiritual heritage, focusing on some of the key theological building blocks of the Reformation and considering what it will mean for us to take our stand on the gospel in our own place and time in history.

So regardless of whether you're all over your *ordo salutis* or struggle to remember the difference between the Reformation and the Renaissance, don't worry! This is going to be a great term for all of us to do exactly what the Reformers did 500 years ago—turn our attention to God's true and unchanging word and discover there the glorious life-giving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria



How to be growing followers of Jesus as you study God's Word...

In community

It's good to study the Bible by yourself but it's even better to do it with friends. Bible study is best when it happens in the context of community. Bible study shouldn't be just an unrelated add-on to the rest of your busy life, it should be an essential part of an integrated whole—Christian friends doing what Christian friends do. There are two key ways we should be making use of God's word in community: "word to life" and "life to word".

Word to life

When we study the Bible together we're letting God set the agenda. That's very important! We listen to God speak in the Bible, we work hard to help each other understand exactly what he's saying, and then together we apply what God is saying to our lives in the confidence that our loving Creator and Redeemer knows what's best for us. The important thing to remember is that we actually need each other throughout this whole process. It's great to study the Bible together!

Life to word

The second crucial way that we should be making use of the Bible in community is in day-to-day conversation, starting with the everyday happenings of our lives and applying the gospel to those situations. The great thing is that the better we get at moving from "word to life", the better we'll get at moving from "life to word" and the more our communities will be shaped by the gospel of Jesus! So enjoy—make the most of it—and let's watch as God shapes us to be more and more like his glorious Son!



#1

THE BIBLE

Kick-off: before jumping into God's WORD, it's worth taking a few minutes to reflect on your own thoughts and attitudes and on the thoughts and attitudes you encounter in the WORLD...

1. How would you describe your own feelings and attitudes towards authority?

2. What different sources of authority does the world look to and for what purpose?

Discover: the "D" in DNA stands for DISCOVER. It's now time to read God's word and discover what God wants to teach us and why it matters...

READ Psalm 19

3. What two sources of authority does the Psalmist recognise and celebrate? Where does their authority come from and what is its purpose?

READ Matthew 15:1-9

4. What does Jesus say is the Pharisees' fundamental error?

READ 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

5. What does God achieve through the Holy Scriptures?

6. Why is preaching so important?

READ Luke 24:44-48 & Hebrews 1:1-3

7. What is the focus of the Bible and how should this shape how we read it?

NURTURE & APPLY: the “NA” in DNA stands for “Nurture & Apply”. These questions help us to care for each other and live out God’s word...

8. What sources of authority do you elevate above the Bible and why?

9. What opportunities do you have to hear God speak through his word?

10. What attitudes and habits do you need to put off and put on in order to esteem God’s word appropriately?



#2 SIN

Kick-off: before jumping into God's WORD, it's worth taking a few minutes to reflect on your own thoughts and attitudes and on the thoughts and attitudes you encounter in the WORLD...

1. What do you find is the best way to deal with sin?

2. Do you think our culture sees people as fundamentally good or fundamentally evil? What is the basis of these opinions?

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READ Rom 3:9-20

3. What problem do these verses describe and how serious is it?

4. What strikes you most about these verses? Do you think they are a fair description of mankind?

5. The consequences of sin are both relational and legal. What are these consequences?

READ Matthew 15:10-20

6. One of the most remarkable things about Jesus' teaching about sin is who he points the finger at. Why does Jesus condemn good people?

7. Last week we read the earlier part of this chapter and saw that the religious leaders had elevated tradition above God's word. In this next part of the chapter Jesus warns his disciples against a superficial view of sin. According to Jesus, what is the real source and nature of sin?

NURTURE & APPLY: the "NA" in DNA stands for "Nurture & Apply". These questions help us to care for each other and live out God's word...

8. If you were standing in the dock in God's courtroom, what charges could be justly brought against you? How would you plead?

9. What makes it hard for you to be real about your sin with God and with others?



#3

JUSTIFICATION

Kick-off: before jumping into God's WORD, it's worth taking a few minutes to reflect on your own thoughts and attitudes and on the thoughts and attitudes you encounter in the WORLD...

1. Most Australians (60%) say they believe in the existence of heaven and assume that they'll go there when they die. What do you think this assumption is based on?

2. How do you go at asking others for help when you're struggling?

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READ Romans 3:20-26

3. Under the law, righteousness would have to be deserved. But in these verses Paul speaks of a righteousness that comes apart from the law. How is righteousness achieved, and how is it received?

4. What part do we play in being declared righteous?

5. What does Paul mean by “all” in verses 23 & 24?

6. How can God be just AND also justify the unjust?

7. The Reformers taught that salvation came “by faith alone, in Christ alone, through grace alone, to the glory of God alone”. Discuss how you might back that theology up from this passage.

NURTURE & APPLY: the “NA” in DNA stands for “Nurture & Apply”. These questions help us to care for each other and live out God’s word...

8. What are some of the practical implications of being “reckoned as righteous” rather than being “made righteous” or “achieving righteousness”?

9. Most of us feel that we need to justify or prove ourselves in one way or another. When, why & how do you do this? What difference would a deeper belief in justification by faith through grace make for you?



#4

GRACE

Kick-off: before jumping into God's WORD, it's worth taking a few minutes to reflect on your own thoughts and attitudes and on the thoughts and attitudes you encounter in the WORLD...

1. One of the challenges in theology is that different people use the same word to mean different things. "Grace" is one of those words. Make a list of the different ways in which grace (and its derivatives—graceful, gracious etc.) is used in everyday life and what we mean by it.

2. If you're a Christian, share the story of how you were saved.

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READ Matthew 20:1-16

3. Discuss how you feel about the decision of the generous landowner.

READ Ephesians 2:1-10

4. Verses 1 & 2 appear to contain a contradiction, saying that people who don't know Jesus are both "dead" and "alive" at the same time. What does Paul mean?

5. As in Romans 3, Paul first establishes that our sin makes us deserving of wrath. What three reasons are given in Ephesians 2:4-10 for why doesn't God give us what we deserve?

6. In medieval theology (and standard Catholic theology today) grace was something God gave you to help you to become righteous. How is this different to the grace described in Ephesians 2?

READ Titus 2:11-14

7. Some people fear that teaching "grace alone" will encourage Christians to continue to sin. How would you address this concern from Ephesians 2:1-10 & Titus 2:11-14?

NURTURE & APPLY: the "NA" in DNA stands for "Nurture & Apply". These questions help us to care for each other and live out God's word...

8. In light of God's grace to you in Christ Jesus, think of three people who you need to start treating better than they deserve? Make a plan and pray that you'll do it.

9. Have another go at sharing/writing out the story of your salvation, this time with the emphasis on grace—i.e. on what God has done to save you.



#5

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Kick-off: before jumping into God's WORD, it's worth taking a few minutes to reflect on your own thoughts and attitudes and on the thoughts and attitudes you encounter in the WORLD...

1. An increasing number of Australians are identifying as “spiritual but not religious”. What do you think they mean by “spiritual” and “religious”?

2. Do you think of yourself as a spiritual person—why/why not?

3. The Holy Spirit has sometimes been called “the forgotten God”. This was certainly the case in medieval theology. From what we've seen already in this series, can you think of any reasons the Holy Spirit was so neglected at this point of church history?

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READ 1 John 16:4b-11

4. How does Jesus comfort his disciples about his departure?

5. How does the Holy Spirit interact with the Father & the Son and what role does he play for God's people?

READ Romans 8:1-17

6. In two columns, compare life according to the flesh and according to the Spirit.

7. Medieval theology saw sin primarily as a behaviour issue. What very different view of sin and Christian growth is portrayed in Romans 8?

NURTURE & APPLY: the "NA" in DNA stands for "Nurture & Apply". These questions help us to care for each other and live out God's word...

8. Spend some time helping each other to discern the heart issue that lies beneath one of your surface sins and how the gospel—"the law of the Spirit of life" - sets your heart free so that you no longer need to live that way. Use the "gospel growth" questions on page 5 if you need help.

9. Discuss how you might use your studies of the reformation as a pathway to sharing the gospel with a "spiritual but not religious" friend, then pray for them.



#6

THE SACRAMENTS

Kick-off: before jumping into God's WORD, it's worth taking a few minutes to reflect on your own thoughts and attitudes and on the thoughts and attitudes you encounter in the WORLD...

1. The Catholic church recognises 7 sacraments. How many can you name?

2. Reformed churches only identify 2 sacraments: baptism & the Lord's Supper. Using the scale below, identify how important you rate these two sacraments from 1 (insignificant) to 5 (essential and supremely important) and then discuss your rating?



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READ Hebrews 9:23-28

3. According to Catholic theology Jesus is physically present in the bread and wine and therefore re-sacrificed every time the Lord's Supper occurs. Why do you think the Reformers objected to this teaching?

READ 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

4. In verse 23 Paul says to the Corinthian church "I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you". Who is the Lord's Supper for?

5. Jesus told his disciples “this is my body”. How literally do you think he meant this and how do you know? If you don’t think he meant it literally, then what did he mean?

6. How many reasons can you find in the passage to celebrate the Lord’s Supper?

7. What pastoral issue is Paul addressing in this passage and how does a right understanding of the Lord’s Supper address the issue?

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8. Calvin said that “the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace”. How do the symbols of baptism and the Lord’s Supper enhance the ministry of the word?

9. What are some good things to focus on during the Lord’s Supper?



#7

THE CHURCH

Kick-off: before jumping into God's WORD, it's worth taking a few minutes to reflect on your own thoughts and attitudes and on the thoughts and attitudes you encounter in the WORLD...

1. One of the big questions of the reformation was "what makes church, church?" What's your answer to this question?

2. Ask a non-Christian friend how they would answer this question.

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READ Ephesians 4:1-16

3. What is God's over-riding concern for his church and what attitudes are required to achieve it?

4. Paul uses the metaphor of the body to describe the church. Why is it so helpful?

5. What kind of work builds up the body of Christ and who is meant to do it?

6. What particular group of people is singled out in this passage and what part do they play in the body?

7. What kinds of attitudes and behaviours are the opposite of what is described in this passage?

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8. Are you a body builder, living a life worthy of the calling you have received? What attitudes do you need to grow in? What works of service could you engage in? Who are you speaking the truth in love to? And what equipping do you need for all of the above?

9. The church is not a man-made institution it is God’s great project, drawing everyone and everything together under Jesus Christ. Pray for our church—that we would live a life worthy of the calling we’ve received.



#8

EVERYDAY LIFE

One of the great achievements of the reformation was that it broke down the artificial distinction between the “sacred” life and the “secular” life. The Reformers rightly taught that everyday life was the context in which we’ve all been called to follow Jesus and glorify & enjoy God. This week we will spend some time thinking about the everyday implications of the glorious reformation truths we have been studying.

1. How could the reformed doctrine of scripture enable you to live every day for Jesus?

2. How could the reformed doctrine of sin help you to be real about the temptations you face in every day life?

3. How could the reformed doctrine of justification help you to pursue your daily work for God’s glory and the good of others?

4. How could the reformed doctrine of grace help you identify the good works God has prepared for you and to do them with gratitude, humility & joy?

5. How could the reformed doctrine of the Holy Spirit help you when you're tempted to serve yourself by avoiding someone?

6. How could the reformed doctrine of the sacraments help you not to be rocked by the criticism of a friend or colleague?

7. How could the reformed doctrine of the church give you a greater passion for sharing your daily life with your church family?



#9

JOY & GLORY

Kick-off: before jumping into God's WORD, it's worth taking a few minutes to reflect on your own thoughts and attitudes and on the thoughts and attitudes you encounter in the WORLD...

1. How would you describe the primary purpose of your life?

2. Ask your friends who don't know Jesus what they think their main purpose in life is.

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In unearthing the ancient gospel, the reformers encountered a God who is both righteous and loving and who does all things for our joy and for his glory. This was a very different God to the distant and disapproving God of medieval theology. Knowing him made all the difference.

READ Romans 5:1-5

3. These verses strike a very confident note. What is the basis of this confidence?

4. Paul sounds genuinely stoked. Make a list of the things that he is excited about.

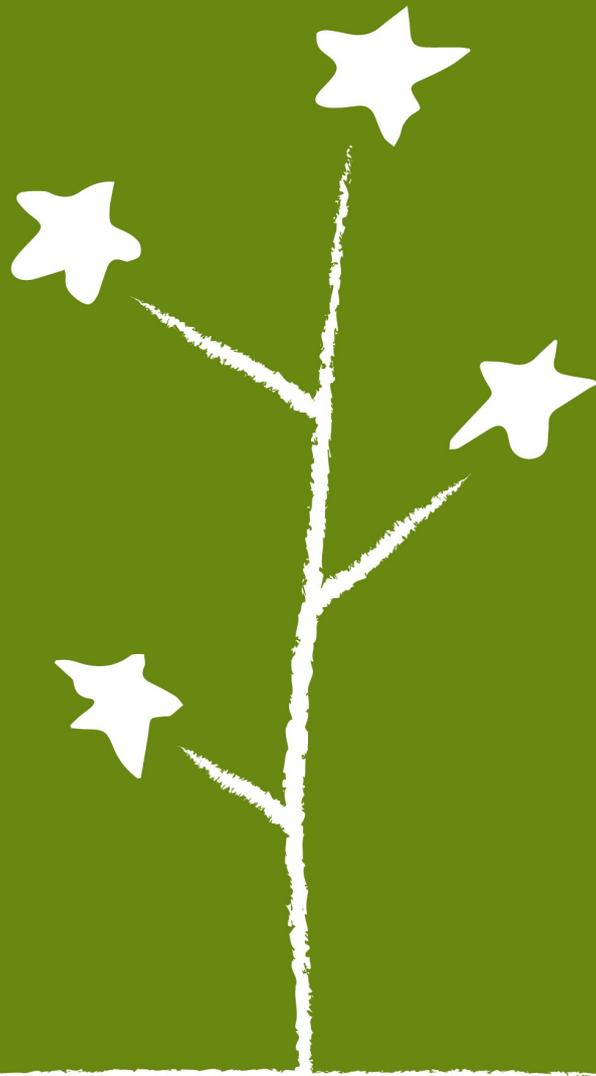
5. Paul talks about glory twice in these verses. What is surprising about when glory will be experienced?

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READ 1 Peter 1:3-9

6. In similar terms to Paul, Peter also writes of a “glorious joy” that fills those whose hope and trust are placed firmly in Jesus. Do you know this joy?

7. The Reformers took on the almighty task of hacking away the weeds of tradition, ritual and false teaching that were obscuring the gospel and so keeping people from the joy and glory of knowing God. Look back through this booklet to remind yourself of the good news of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone revealed in Scripture alone to the glory of God alone. Spend some time together giving thanks to God that this wonderful gospel has been handed down safely to us for our joy and for his glory.



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