

Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation
Guide for Note Taking

1. Explain the concept of indulgences.

2. What are the *95 Theses*? What are they about? How were they disseminated? What was Luther's intention in writing them?

3. Compare Luther's writing of the *95 Theses* and their dissemination with modern weblogs.

4. Consider Luther as a dissident. How do his experiences compare with those of Confucius, Lao-tse, Gandhi, Havel, and others? In the context of this example, are dissident and heretic equivalent labels?

5. Discuss the relationships between culture, economics, politics, and religion in 16th century Germany, as portrayed in this film. After class, you should consult your *Visual History* book and find what else was happening in Europe and the rest of the world at this time.

6. The Catholic Church celebrates seven Sacraments. Sacraments are rites, means of communing with God, signs of grace and salvation. The seven are:

- Baptism/Christening
- Confession/Penance
- Communion/Eucharist
- Confirmation
- Marriage
- Ordination/Holy Orders
- Last Rites/Anointing of the Sick

Which of these did Luther retain or defend as properly belonging to the teachings of the bible?

7. What happened at the Diet of Worms?

8. How did Luther set the stage for a modern understanding of personal and institutional freedom?

9. Luther lived long enough to see some results of his words and actions. What did other people do with his ideas and how did he react? Compare the experiences of Luther and Muhammad.

**Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther
on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences
by Dr. Martin Luther (1517)**

Out of love for the truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following propositions will be discussed at Wittenberg, under the presidency of the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and of Sacred Theology, and Lecturer in Ordinary on the same at that place. Wherefore he requests that those who are unable to be present and debate orally with us, may do so by letter.

In the Name our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said Poenitentiam agite, willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.
2. This word cannot be understood to mean sacramental penance, i.e., confession and satisfaction, which is administered by the priests.
3. Yet it means not inward repentance only; nay, there is no inward repentance which does not outwardly work divers mortifications of the flesh.
4. The penalty [of sin], therefore, continues so long as hatred of self continues; for this is the true inward repentance, and continues until our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.
5. The pope does not intend to remit, and cannot remit any penalties other than those which he has imposed either by his own authority or by that of the Canons.
6. The pope cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring that it has been remitted by God and by assenting to God's remission; though, to be sure, he may grant remission in cases reserved to his judgment. If his right to grant remission in such cases were despised, the guilt would remain entirely unforgiven.
7. God remits guilt to no one whom He does not, at the same time, humble in all things and bring into subjection to His vicar, the priest.
8. The penitential canons are imposed only on the living, and, according to them, nothing should be imposed on the dying.
75. To think the papal pardons so great that they could absolve a man even if he had committed an impossible sin and violated the Mother of God – this is madness.
76. We say, on the contrary, that the papal pardons are not able to remove the very least of venial sins, so far as its guilt is concerned.
77. It is said that even St. Peter, if he were now Pope, could not bestow greater graces; this is blasphemy against St. Peter and against the pope.
78. We say, on the contrary, that even the present pope, and any pope at all, has greater graces at his disposal; to wit, the Gospel, powers, gifts of healing, etc., as it is written in I. Corinthians xii. 79. To say that the cross, emblazoned with the papal arms, which is set up [by the preachers of indulgences], is of equal worth with the Cross of Christ, is blasphemy.
91. If, therefore, pardons were preached according to the spirit and mind of the pope, all these doubts would be readily resolved; nay, they would not exist.
92. Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Peace, peace," and there is no peace!
93. Blessed be all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Cross, cross," and there is no cross!
94. Christians are to be exhorted that they be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, deaths, and hell;
95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven rather through many tribulations, than through the assurance of peace.

Full Text Available at: <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/web/ninetyfive.html>
or run a Google Search for "95 Theses"