

## How The Protestant Reformation Changed The Life Of Millions

I don't know if it was rainy or sunny, cloudy or chilly on the 31st of October 1517. I don't know what made that day different from any other day in the life of Martin Luther. But, it was a day that changed the world of religion (and politics) forever.

One thing's for sure, Martin Luther had had enough of the status quo.

This day was the "official" start of the Protestant Reformation, when Luther nailed his 95 Theses (on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences) on the Castle Church in [Wittenberg](#). Even facing excommunication, Luther never backed down. He was excommunicated on January 3, 1521. Doesn't sound like much to us today, but back then it was unthinkable for churchgoing folks to be "tossed out" of the church.

You see, back in Martin Luther's time the Catholic Church held a tight grip on the daily lives of the people, permeating just about every aspect of it. Luther and others like him (John Calvin, for one) felt the Church was corrupt, in the habit of "selling" indulgences (money paid for God's forgiveness); as well as the buying of high clerical offices.

Of course there was more to it than just these two issues, celibacy and the Pope's authority (ironic since Pope Alexander VI fathered seven children) were other big points in the reform that Luther and his followers were asking for.

One of the biggest changes to the Church was the translation of the Bible from Latin to German in 1522, thus bringing the Word of God to the people. The book was translated from Latin to English in 1526, so there was more religious reform going on the world (like the establishment of the Church of England in the 1530's).

The Church did not meekly accept it, allowing all these changes or the threat to its "authority." Some nobility and rulers remained loyal to the Catholic Church, adding to the conflict and opposition.

Reformation was sweeping the German nation regardless, as well as the Swiss, the English, and other European countries; even starting war. Both [Germany's Peasants' War](#) (1524-1526) and [Thirty Years' War](#) (1618-1648) were both a direct and indirect effect of the changing attitudes and social changes the Reformation brought about.

One of the biggest changes brought on by the Reformation had to do with the "sacraments." No longer was the bread and wine of the ritualistic Catholic Church considered to be the "blood & body" of Christ. It was more symbolic in the Reformed services, reverting back to its original form

(bread and wine) after services were over.

The issue of marriage was a big change as well. Men of the Cloth weren't allowed to marry within the Catholic Church (as it remains to this day), but Luther himself changed that. Yes, there were other reverends and monks who were legally married before Luther, but the issue was cemented when Luther married Katharina von Bora (he was 41, she was 26); going on to bear him six children. They were totally devoted to each other, as well as to God.

It might appear that almost 500 years later, the Reformation (and subsequent Protestant) services are nothing out of the ordinary. But, in the wake of what Luther and his friends did back more than five centuries ago it was revolutionary.

It also wasn't an overnight process. Luther nailed his Theses on the church door in 1517; the religious and political strife didn't end in Germany until the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia (thus ending the Thirty Years War) until 1648. That was a total of 131 years, not to mention almost (depending on whose account) 25-40 percent of Germany's population lost due the religious conflict of the Thirty Years War alone.

The road of the Protestant Reformation wasn't an easy one. Martin Luther and others like him paid a heavy price for the reform of the Church.

Today you'll find many monuments and churches dedicated to him throughout Germany; a mere pittance to pay back to a man who changed the world.