

MISSION UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2017

THE CONTINUING REFORMATION

TY GIBSON

“THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION WAS the 16th-century religious, political, intellectual and cultural upheaval that splintered Catholic Europe.”

That’s how the History Channel website defines the Protestant Reformation—as an historical event that “was,” something that happened a long time ago. What I’d like to suggest is that the Reformation is still under way, *right now*, and that you and I can be part of helping to move it forward to completion.

First, according to Scripture, God is in the process of bringing about the “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21). So think of history in general as a restoration project that God is guiding forward until everything is back the way it’s supposed to be, back to the place where evil is banished from existence and all relationships are defined by faithful love.

Secondly, the Protestant Reformation is only one part of this restoration process, beginning in the 14th-century with the bold move of John Wycliffe to openly suggest that (1) each individual has direct access to God and should obey conscience before any human intuition, and (2) that salvation is the free gift of God’s grace to be received by faith alone in Christ. After Wycliffe came John Huss, who lost his life to be

true to the protest. Then Martin Luther burst upon the stage of history like a lightning bolt, so powerfully articulate that none could refute his gospel-logic. When he nailed his 95 Theses to that church door, it was certain that Rome would no longer dominate the minds and lives of human beings unchallenged. In tandem with Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli and many others courageously stood up to the most powerful and corrupt empire the world has ever known to assert individual liberty before God.

Thirdly, the Reformation launched a revolution that must continue until the whole world is illuminated with the true light of God’s character, chiefly enshrined within the twine truths of individual liberty of conscience before God and the unmerited grace of God by which alone we are saved. The question is, will you and I join the movement? Will we use our influence and resources to advance the continuing Reformation forward to completion?

I’m in!

Are you?

As the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation approaches this October, I’ve written *95 Theses for the Continuing Reformation*. The goal with this item is to stimulate discussion in churches, homes and Bible study groups regarding what the continuing Reformation might look like. See the ad on the back page of this newsletter for special pricing as you consider how you might use this powerful resource in your home, church, and community. 



THE GREAT BIG POWER OF TEENY TINY THINGS

ANNELIESE WAHLMAN

IN 2005, A FRESH-OUT-OF-PRISON graffiti artist was asked to paint some murals in the office of a small startup in Palo Alto, California. As payment, the artist was offered thousands of dollars in cash or company stock. Eight and half minutes of searching Google will tell you that even though the artist thought the startup was stupid, he made a gamble and chose company stock. In 2012, when Facebook went public with their stocks, the artist's shares were worth around \$200 million.

It's nice when things work out like that.

But that's not usually the way it works. Whether you're picking up produce at the store, beginning a new relationship, or buying stocks, there's no guarantee that an investment will live up to your expectations. Sometimes you score big. Other times you cut open your farmer's market avocados and find they're the color of your toddler's diarrhea.

Not cool.

The risk of failure makes it difficult to know how we should invest. As we grow older, we become a little less daring. We have a little less faith in goodness and lot more belief in the real world.

Unlike us though, Jesus was the kind of guy who took risks on unlikely investments. He was the kind of guy who believed in the little things, not as a philosophy to cross-stitch and hang above the toilet, but as part of who He was. It caused Him to applaud women who emptied not just the last couple pennies out of their wallets, but their hearts onto the offering

plate. It caused Him to multiply a hungry boy's lunch into a picnic for five thousand people. He had maximum belief in those who felt minimized or that their actions were small. He wasn't a cynical gambler. He was a small gift investor and believer.

We have a passion for bringing the gospel to the entire world . . .

At Light Bearers, we have a passion for bringing the gospel to the entire world through the little opportunities we have every day. One of the most cost-effective methods we've found to do this is printing and sending gospel literature in containers overseas. If you look at one tract, it doesn't look like much. How far can a piece of paper possibly go? Well, that tract gets put with another and then another and then another and then ano—you get the idea. Those tracts get put into boxes and those boxes fill up a container that carries roughly 2 million pieces of literature. The containers are then sent to conferences and divisions all over the world.

The East-Central Africa Division (ECD) believes in the power of little things too, so much so that they want every member—from the oldest pastor to the guy whose clothes are still wet from baptism—to be involved in evangelism. It's part of an evangelistic initiative called Total Member Involvement (TMI) and they're using Light Bearers literature as part of the process.

Made up of 11 countries, the ECD is using the tracts in a variety of settings. Some literature is divided between individual churches so the members can easily access it as they do personal evangelism. Some are used in large-scale evangelistic initiatives. For example, in Rwanda, over 2,100 evangelistic campaigns were held simultaneously, and over 100,000 people were baptized. A container of literature is being used to follow up with these new members. Kenya and Tanzania are on the same track as well, with thousands of evangelistic sites organized and a plan to use literature during the meetings.

The tracts are also going where people aren't free to attend an evangelistic series. In Kenyan prisons, the literature is being warmly received. In fact, one prison was given a two-

acre piece of land because they had so many inmates study the lessons and they established a church.

When it comes to earthly pursuits, there's always a level of risk that comes with giving our time and resources, whether it's to a social media startup or a new relationship. But when it comes to investing in the gospel, there will always be a return, and though you may not see it till heaven, it will be worth way more than \$200 million. No matter what your past experience is with people, careers, or business endeavors, Jesus is always worth investing in. A smile, a tract, helping someone change a tire—there will never be a time where it won't be worth the energy and love it takes to share who He is with someone else, even in the smallest of ways.

"So shall My word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11, ESV). 🔥



ARE YOU A BELIEVER IN TINY THINGS?

Your support sends gospel tracts around the world. Consider partnering with us as we use small gifts to make a big impact! Learn more at lightbearers.org/tiny-things/

SPEAKING SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER 2

Fall Creek Adventist Church
Fall Creek, Oregon
James Rafferty
fallcreekor.adventistchurch.org

SEPTEMBER 17-23

Fountainview Academy
Lillooet, British Columbia, Canada
Ty Gibson
fountainviewacademy.ca

SEPTEMBER 16

Fall Creek Adventist Church
Fall Creek, Oregon
James Rafferty
fallcreekor.adventistchurch.org

OCTOBER 13-14

Azure Hills Church
Grand Terrace, California
Ty Gibson
www.azurehills.org

see more events at lightbearers.org

95 THESES FOR THE CONTINUING REFORMATION

In 1517 Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church, sparking a debate that would rock the world around him. In 2017 Ty Gibson wrote his own 95 Theses for contemplation of a continuing reformation.

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95 THESES

— FOR THE CONTINUING REFORMATION —

Martin Luther and John Calvin changed the world by the power of their good theology in spite of their bad theology. The Dark Ages from which they were emerging were very dark, indeed, and some of that darkness clung to the great Protestant Reformers even as they ran toward the light. The revolution they sparked lay chiefly in two seismic shifts of understanding they released into public discourse:

- » The Bible alone, speaking to individual conscience, is to be our rule of faith and practice, not the authority of any man or any church.
- » Salvation is the gift of God's grace to be received by faith alone and therefore cannot be earned by any deeds we might do.

With these two powerful ideas, the Protestant Reformers initiated a trajectory of change they could not see through to its logical end. Other Reformers arose after them and discovered additional lost truths, and the work of Reform continues even now.

Here are 95 Theses to ponder for the continuing Reformation.