

# **EQTH105 Basic Bible Doctrine**

## **Unit 6 Activity — The Five Solas**

Presented by the



**LANCASTER BIBLE COLLEGE**  
CAPITAL SEMINARY & GRADUATE SCHOOL

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## Activity 6 – The Five Solas of the Reformation.

Five hundred years ago, an unknown monk named Martin Luther marched up to the church in Wittenberg, a small town in what is now Germany, and nailed a list of criticisms to its door. The date was Oct. 31, 1517, and Luther had just lit the fuse of what would become the Protestant Reformation.

Luther proposed an academic discussion of the practice and efficacy of indulgences in his Ninety-five Theses of 1517. His refusal to renounce all of his writings at the demand of Pope Leo X in 1520 and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in 1521 resulted in his excommunication by the pope and condemnation as an outlaw by the Holy Roman Emperor.

The heart of his criticism was the prevailing practice of elevating church tradition and teaching to level of, or even above, the clear teachings of Scripture. He rejected several teachings and practices of the church; in particular, he disputed the view on indulgences. (A practice of the church granting forgiveness of sins in exchange for money.)

Luther believed that salvation and, consequently, eternal life are not earned by good deeds but are received only as the free gift of God's grace through the believer's faith in Jesus Christ as redeemer from sin. His theology challenged the authority and office of the church by teaching that the Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge. For this, of course, he was opposed, and ultimately excommunicated, by the church.

In his examination and defense of his writings he said, "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen."

Luther's teachings eventually came to be known as the Five Solas. The Five Solas are five Latin phrases that emerged during the Reformation to summarize the Reformers' theological convictions about the essentials of Christianity.

The Five Solas are:

1. *Sola Scriptura* ("Scripture alone"): The Bible alone is our highest authority.
2. *Sola Fide* ("faith alone"): We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ.
3. *Sola Gratia* ("grace alone"): We are saved by the grace of God alone.
4. *Solus Christus* ("Christ alone"): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King.
5. *Soli Deo Gloria* ("to the glory of God alone"): We live for the glory of God alone.

In this activity you are encouraged to explore these "phrases" to understand what they mean, to research their scriptural proof texts, and most importantly, to determine their meaning and relevance in the context of our world today. There is a mountain of Internet resources to explain the Five Solas.

Instructions are simple, but be warned, they read easier than they do. You can use a separate paper for this activity:

1. Research the meaning and provide a brief explanation of each Sola statement.
2. Locate scriptural references and proof texts that support each statement.
3. Write a short reflection describing your personal reaction to each statement and an application for the particular doctrine in the world today.