

Engage with the Reformation

1 Corinthians 10:31

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Businesses know how to capitalize on catchphrases or slogans to help identify what it is they do. These short statements are designed to grab attention, they're easy to understand and they're memorable. Edgewood follows four key words that identify what it is that we believe and how we strive to behave – *Gather, Grow, Give and Go.*

The goal behind these mottos, according to one website, is “*to leave a key brand message in consumers’ minds so that if they remember nothing else, they’ll remember the slogan.*”

Let’s see how many you can pull from your memory banks...

Nike	<i>Just Do It</i>
Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups	<i>Two Great Tastes that Taste Great Together</i>
Dollar Shave Club	<i>Shave Time, Shave Money</i>
M&Ms	<i>Melts in Your Mouth, Not in Your Hand</i>
Lay’s Potato Chips	<i>‘Betcha Can’t Eat Just One</i>
Meow Mix	<i>So Good, Cats Ask For It By Name</i>

These slogans aren’t as well known but are certainly true...

Best Buy	<i>Try it Out Before Buying it on Amazon</i>
Hot Pockets	<i>Every Bite is a Different Temperature</i>

The American Revolution gave rise to dozens of rallying cries like, “*No Taxation Without Representation*” and “*Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death.*”

Monday is the 499th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, out of which came some short slogans or battle cries.

We’re continuing in our *Engage* sermon series. So far we’ve studied how to engage in prayer, how to engage in groups, how to engage with the ordinances, engaging globally (globally and locally), engaging with our families, and engaging with the Holy Spirit. Our focus today is engaging with the Reformation. Next

weekend we'll learn how to engage as citizens and the following week how to engage with the persecuted church. Come to think of it, I may be persecuted for tackling what it means to be a Christian citizen during this season of political conflict.

Let's define two key words.

The word *Protestant* originally was used to describe those who protested the Catholic Church's teachings, beginning with Martin Luther. *The Reformation* refers to a spiritual rebirth and a return to the gospel in the 16th Century.

One ministry offers this summary: "*The Protestant Reformation was a widespread theological revolt in Europe against the abuses and totalitarian control of the Roman Catholic Church. Reformers such as Martin Luther in Germany, Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, and John Calvin in France protested various unbiblical practices of the Catholic Church and promoted a return to sound biblical doctrine.*"

Five sayings or slogans were developed shortly after the Reformation to summarize the key doctrinal distinctives.

<i>Sola Scriptura</i>	In Scripture Alone
<i>Sola Gratia</i>	By Grace Alone
<i>Sola Fide</i>	Through Faith Alone
<i>Solus Christus</i>	Because of Christ Alone
<i>Soli Deo Gloria</i>	For the Glory of God Alone

I'm not so interested in having us learn the Latin but I do want us to lock into these five foundational truths in English.

Let's say them together:

In Scripture Alone
By Grace Alone
Through Faith Alone
Because of Christ Alone
For the Glory of God Alone

The key word in these five phrases is the word “*alone*” or only. The idea is that it’s “*solely*” not “*and*” or “*in addition to.*” In the words of theologian R. C. Sproul, “*It is no exaggeration to say that the eye of the Reformation tornado was this one little word.*”

- Each of these statements are essential
- All five are closely tied together and build on one another
- Deviation from one statement can lead to denial of the others
- These slogans serve as *corrections* from error and *confessions* of faith

I recognize my challenge today. Some of you are wondering why we’re studying statements from the 16th Century and your eyes are already glazing over at the thought of a history lesson. I want to show that these statements come right from Scripture and are as relevant to our cultural context as they were back then. In fact, in light of the state of the American Church, we need a new reformation today. These statements provide a great summary of what it is that we believe. Because there’s such a dearth of doctrinal teaching in churches today, I want to make sure that we are both educated and equipped in these core truths of Christianity.

Historian John Hannah describes it this way: “*The Reformation was a call for authentic Christianity, an attempt to escape the medieval corruption of the faith through renewal and reform. It’s teaching, which swirled around a fivefold repetition of the word sola was a radical message for that day (and should be for ours) because it called for a commitment to an entirely God-centered view of faith and life.*”

The first “sola” is foundational because the other four flow from it.

1. Sola Scriptura: In Scripture Alone. 2 Timothy 3:16: “***All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.***”

Notice the very first word “***all.***” Every single word, letter and “jot and tittle” of Scripture, from the first verse in Genesis to the last verse in Revelation, is “***breathed out by God.***” That’s where we get the word “*inspiration.*” Because Scripture is inspired, it’s also inerrant, infallible, authoritative, completely sufficient and magnificently potent.

In Deuteronomy 32:47, Moses told the people that they were to obey God's Word and teach it to their children: "***For it is no empty word for you, but your very life...***" And Jesus, quoting Deuteronomy said this in Matthew 4:4: "***Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.***"

The word "***profitable***" means beneficial. Notice the four ways the Bible is beneficial in our lives:

- **Teaching** provides content so we know what *is right*.
- **Reproof** brings conviction so we know what is *not right*.
- We're then **corrected** so we know how to *get right*.
- And **training** changes our character so we can *stay right*.

Verse 17 tells us that when we allow the Word to do its work, we are then equipped and outfitted for effective ministry: "***That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.***" There's nothing more needed. The word "***complete***" means capable and "***equipped***" has the idea of being fully furnished. Do you see the link between learning in verse 16 and living in verse 17? What a great reminder that we're to get the Bible into our heads and hearts and then live it out through our hands.

We declare that Scripture is our highest and final authority, not tradition or our politically correct culture or our feelings or our political party or the church or the Pope or the Supreme Court. This has become known as the "material principle" because it's at the core of biblical Christianity. The Bible and *only* the Bible is the basis of our faith.

In 1521, Martin Luther, was summoned to appear before the Roman Emperor to defend what he had taught and written. Here's what he said: "*The works are mine...but unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.*"

Where did Luther and the other reformers get such boldness and certainty? They believed in Sola Scriptura.

- Psalm 19:7-8: "***The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the***

LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.”

- ***Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”***

The conviction that all Scripture is breathed-out by God led men like John Wycliffe to translate the Bible into the mother tongue of the people. At that time only Latin translations were available, which most couldn't read and the only copies were kept in churches where only clergy could teach its text.

Several years later, William Tyndale translated the text of the Bible into the language of the people. When a priest criticized him, Tyndale replied, *“If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest.”* Tyndale also said, *“It was impossible to establish the people in any truth unless the Scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue.”*

When challenged by hostile church officials almost a hundred years before the Reformation, John Huss repeatedly answered his opponents with this statement, *“Show me from Scripture and I will repent and recant!”*

The Bible alone became the foundational battle cry of the Reformation. The question is the same in our day, isn't it? What is the final authority for the Christian? Luther laid it out clearly: *“A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or council without it.”* When asked to explain why the Reformation spread throughout Europe, Luther simply said, *“The Word did it all.”*

When the preacher Charles Spurgeon was asked to defend the Bible, he replied, *“Defend the Bible? I would as soon defend a lion! Unchain it and it will defend itself.”* If you want God to speak to you, open the Bible and start reading.

We get the Bible into our head by *getting into it*. The Word resides in our heart when we *let it get into us*. And, it's fleshed out in our daily lives through our hands when we *live it out* obediently.

I listened to an interview with Chuck Swindoll recently and wrote down something he said: *“It's not how quickly you get through the Bible but how quickly the Bible gets through to you.”*

Will we stand on the Scriptures more than what society says? Will we hold to its precepts or be swayed by polls and politicians? I was grieved this week to hear that another well-known evangelical author now denies the biblical definition of marriage as one man and one woman for life.

So, here's a question: *Do you profess Sola Scriptura?* Here's a bigger question: *Do you practice Sola Scriptura?*

Listen. It will become more and more difficult for Christians to believe the Bible and say, "*Here I stand. I can do no other.*" That doesn't mean we clobber sinners but it most certainly means that we don't cave on the Scriptures. John 1:14 reminds us that Jesus was filled with grace and truth. A Christian response is always filled with truth about sin *and* grace toward sinners.

Friends, let's determine to live out what we know to be true – regardless of the cost, no matter the pain, without regard for the consequences. To borrow another slogan, "*Just do it!*"

Let's say this first sola together: *In Scripture Alone.*

2. Solo Gratia: By Grace Alone. Ephesians 2:8-9: "***For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.***" Salvation is by grace alone not by our own efforts. These two verses are expanding on verse 7 where we read of the "***immeasurable riches of His grace.***" Grace refers to God's unmerited and unearned favor.

Grace can be defined as "*God's favor toward the unworthy*" or "*God's benevolence on the undeserving.*" This passage teaches that we are saved by grace. It's nothing we have done but rather is a gift. We don't work for it; we simply receive it. 2 Timothy 1:9 says, "***Who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus...***"

Someone has suggested the following helpful acrostic for GRACE:

God's
Riches

At Christ's Expense

The website *Got Questions* does a great job breaking this down by focusing on five facets of a gift.

- A gift is much different from a loan, which requires repayment or return by the recipient. The fact that grace is a gift means that *nothing is owed in return*.
- There is no cost to the person who receives a gift. A gift is *free to the recipient*, although it is not free to the giver, who bears the expense.
- Once a gift has been given, ownership of the gift has been transferred and it is now *ours to keep*.
- In the giving of a gift, the giver voluntarily forfeits something he owns, willingly losing what belongs to him so that the recipient will profit from it.
- The Bible teaches that grace is completely *unmerited*. The gift and the act of giving have nothing at all to do with our merit.

Seven years ago we were looking for a new car for me to drive. We had ruled out brand new cars because of the price and so we visited every used car lot in a 30-mile radius from where we lived. We checked the newspaper and websites and couldn't find one we could afford. After one very frustrating Monday spent searching for a car, we decided to just give up.

On Tuesday morning I received a phone call from a friend in our church. He told me to go across the street to a car dealership and ask for a guy named Jim. I called Beth and we immediately went over. Jim showed us two brand new cars and invited us to take test drives. When we were done, we thanked him somewhat awkwardly because we didn't know what was going on.

Later that afternoon our friend called again and asked us which car we liked. I picked the cheaper one, still not knowing what was going on. He pointed out that the red one had more options and was the better car. I reluctantly agreed with him. He told me to go back to the dealership and ask for Jim. I immediately called Beth and she met me there. When we found Jim, he simply smiled, handed us the keys to the red Cobalt and said, "*Congratulations on your new car.*"

I'm still driving that car and every time I do so I'm reminded what grace is all about. I didn't earn it and I certainly don't merit it. It's simply a grace gift.

In his outstanding book on the Reformation called, *Rescuing the Gospel*, Erwin Lutzer writes: "...*the basic teaching [of the Catholic Church] was that each sacrament dispensed grace; however no one sacrament dispensed enough grace to save a sinner. Assurance of salvation was beyond reach because no one could be assured that they had enough grace to gain admittance into heaven.*"

One of the many excesses and errors in the Catholic Church was the selling of indulgences for the forgiveness of sins. If people gave enough money they could have their sins forgiven and even pardon a loved one from purgatory. One of the jingles sung in German during that time has since been translated into English: "*As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, another soul from purgatory springs.*"

It was the selling of indulgences that led Luther to write out his 95 Theses. As an example, listen to #32: "*Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.*"

Let me make a point about giving. When you and I give during the offering or through our secure online option on our website, we are not paying for our salvation nor are we giving in order to get something. Simply put, we give *in gratitude* for all we've been given.

Beth and I are also looking forward to participating in our end of the year Christmas offering that will go towards the remodeling of a Community Center in inner city Fresno that Manuel and Kim Contreras are serving in. Half of all the money that comes in will go towards this project and the other half will go to help pay for the translating and printing of *Anchor for the Soul* in Spanish. You can read more about how to participate in the bulletin.

Let's say the solas we've covered so far...

In Scripture Alone
By Grace Alone

3. Solo Fide: Through Faith Alone. Romans 4:4-5: "*Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not*

work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.”

We come now to the heart of the Reformation – the free gift of salvation is received *through faith alone*. Notice how verse 4 points out when we work we receive wages. How would you respond if your boss gave you your next paycheck and said, “Here’s your gift?” You may react by saying, “Wait a minute. I earned this paycheck. I worked hard for these wages.”

In verse 5 we see that we don’t work for righteousness – “***one who does not work.***” This verse also says that we are “***ungodly.***” No one is good enough. By nature we are ungodly and unengaged. We can’t work for our salvation because we are wicked.

Notice that the “***ungodly***” individual who “***believes***” in Christ is justified and that “***his faith is counted as righteousness.***”

Have you ever been taught that justification means, “*Just as if I never sinned*”? That’s only somewhat helpful because it misses a deeper truth. It’s not just that I’ve been forgiven or even that I never sinned, it’s that I’ve been declared righteous.

One pastor puts it like this: “*Justification by faith—getting right with God, being acquitted in his court, being forgiven for our sins, being declared righteous and having the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and our sins imputed to him, (not becoming righteous, but being counted as righteous while we are still sinners), and all this by faith alone—that is what the first eight chapters of Romans are mostly about. For the apostle Paul, it was the heart of the gospel message.*”

Luther called justification by faith “*the article by which and by which the church stands.*” Look at Romans 3:22 – “***The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe***” and Romans 3:28: “***For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.***”

You can’t do enough good to be good to go because you are not good enough for God. Works don’t work. If you want to be saved, Acts 16:31 says, “***Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.***”

Let’s say the solas we’ve covered so far...

*In Scripture Alone
By Grace Alone
Through Faith Alone*

4. Solus Christus: Because of Christ Alone. 2 Corinthians 5:21: ***“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”***

We see that Christ died ***“for our sake”*** by...

- **Taking our place.** As our representative, Jesus took all of our sins collectively on Himself. He was our substitute. Isaiah 53:6: ***“And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”***
- **Taking our penalty.** God the Father poured out the wrath we deserved for our sins upon His Son. He was our sacrifice. He died so we can live.

If that were all that He did, it would be more than enough. But He did even more. All the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed, or credited to our accounts. We could call this the Great Exchange. He took our place and our penalty and gave us His position of right standing with God the Father.

Theologians have a term for this exchange. They call it the doctrine of imputation. That’s a term from the banking world. It means that when we trust Christ our sin is credited to Christ’s account and his righteousness is credited to our account. He takes our debt and we get His credit. He paid what we owed (and could never pay) and He gives us what He has (and we could never earn).

Listen. You cannot substitute anyone or anything else with the one and only *Savior who is our sin substitute*. Neither a priest nor a pope, neither Mary nor the Mass, neither saints nor superficial spirituality, neither relics nor religion.

Listen to 1 Timothy 2:5: ***“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”*** Jesus Himself made this bold declaration in John 14:6: ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** That’s why when Peter was preaching in Acts 4:12, he made this statement: ***“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be***

saved.” I’m eager to get back into the Gospel of Mark in January so we can learn more about Jesus.

Here’s a very helpful equation: JESUS + NOTHING = EVERYTHING!

Let’s add the fourth sola and say them together...

In Scripture Alone

By Grace Alone

Through Faith Alone

Because of Christ Alone

5. Soli Deo Gloria: For the Glory of God Alone. 1 Corinthians 10:31: “**So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**” During the middle ages, there was a clear distinction between the clergy and the laity. The Reformation got rid of the dividing line between the sacred and the secular, arguing that all of life is to lived under the lordship of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Luther reinforced the priesthood of all believers and concluded that all work – even the most mundane – could be done to the glory of God: “*How could the devil have led us more effectively astray than by the narrow conception that service to God takes place only in church and by the works done therein...the whole world could abound with services to the Lord, not only in churches but also in the home, kitchen, workshop, field.*”

We can all live on mission in the vocation God has called us to. How we do our work is a way to worship and a way to witness.

Here’s a news flash: *Life is not about you.* He’s God and you’re not. Our purpose in life is not to gain popularity, gather possessions or garner pleasure. The goal of life is to give God the glory alone; to live our lives in such a way that He is pleased and others are drawn to Him. I love how the question from the Westminster Shorter Confession: “*What is the chief end of man?*” is answered, “*Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.*” One pastor has reworded this: “*The great business of life is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever.*”

I sort of get it when people say that the Bible is God’s love letter to us. But it’s actually a lot more than that. The story of the Bible is all about God’s glory.

Isaiah 48:11 says, ***“My glory I will not give to another.”*** Romans 11:36: ***“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”***

Let’s pull these spiritual statements together:

*In Scripture Alone
By Grace Alone
Through Faith Alone
Because of Christ Alone
For the Glory of God Alone*

While Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany almost 500 years ago, the reverberations of the Reformation are still felt today. Listen to the very first one and take it to heart: *“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”*

Let’s watch this video to get a sense of how earth shattering what he did really was.

→ Show Luther Video

The hope of all humanity was nailed to a piece of wood. Every person a priest. Every member a missionary. Everyone engaged. A new reformation. Transformation. And through us, transforming the world!

If you need a reformation in your life, by all means repent and ask Jesus to give you rebirth. If you’re already a believer, then ask Him to revive you by His grace.

Undergirding these five solas is another Latin phrase: *“ecclesia semper reformanda,”* which means, *“the church (is) always reforming and must continually be reformed.”* The idea is that we must continuously examine ourselves in order to maintain purity of doctrine and practice as we keep asking Him to revive us again.

Let’s stand and recite the battle cry of the Reformation one more time...

In Scripture Alone

*By Grace Alone
Through Faith Alone
Because of Christ Alone
For the Glory of God Alone*

Closing Benediction

This benediction from Ephesians 3:21 is a good reminder why Edgewood even exists: ***“To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”***