

# CHURCH HISTORY

## SOME NOTES ON THIS COURSE

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This course was written by a very amateur church historian. Thus, while I did extensive research to write and teach it, I would not at all be surprised if you find some errors and some rather important events left out. (Please note, that the list of major events is meant more to be representative of the different movements during each era than the top 14 events.) In addition, some scenarios may not be entirely historically accurate. As I taught, I clearly explained these things to my participants, as I would encourage you to do so. If you find any of these kinds of mistakes, I would appreciate if you could let me know, so that I can adjust and improve the course for future use.

Although I hope the structure, timeline, and scenarios will enable you to teach church history more easily, this course will also require you to do your own research. I do not have any accompanying notes for the major events or scenarios. Here is how I prepared for and taught the class:

After writing the lesson, I would further research the era and the events I had included in the timeline. This step usually included reading a church history book and lots of internet searching and reading as I learned more details about each event and determined the most important points to emphasize while walking through the era. I would then go through the scenarios, taking note of relevant Bible passages and stories, present-day parallels, and learner goals for each one.

I would open and close class with prayer and spend approximately 5 minutes on the opening question, 25 minutes on the timeline, and 35 minutes on the scenarios. For the timeline, I lectured and took questions. For the scenarios, I would read all six and let the class decide which ones they wanted to start with. We rarely covered all six scenarios in depth. Instead, we discussed three or four of them in more detail, answering these three questions: How do you think a Christian at that time would have answered those questions? What Bible stories or passages help us to answer those questions correctly? What similar situations does this same Word of God speak to in our lives today?

I hope this course can be a beneficial resource for you. Use it in whatever way you see fit to help you incorporate church history into your congregational life. If you would like an editable version of this course or have any questions, comments, mistakes to correct, or suggested improvements, please reach out to me by email at [nathanael.j.jensen@gmail.com](mailto:nathanael.j.jensen@gmail.com). God's blessings to you as you show your people that Christ is the center of history and of each and every one of their stories too!



*church*

# **HISTORY**



GROW



# *church* **HISTORY**

## **LESSONS**

**ONE:** THE FIRST FEW CENTURIES

**TWO:** CONSTANTINE, COUNCILS, AND CREEDS

**THREE:** THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH #1

**FOUR:** THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH #2

**FIVE:** LUTHER AND THE REFORMATION

**SIX:** THE RESPONSE TO THE REFORMATION

**SEVEN:** THE CHURCH IN A CHANGING WORLD #1

**EIGHT:** THE CHURCH IN A CHANGING WORLD #2

**NINE:** THE CHURCH IN A CHANGING WORLD #3

**TEN:** CHRISTIANITY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY



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# CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON ONE

## THE FIRST FEW CENTURIES

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"History is the record of God administering his world for the purpose of gathering his elect by means of the gospel." As we study the history of the Christian Church, we are looking at God's grace and providence in action, just as they are constantly in action in our lives too.

What are some of the benefits and blessings of studying history? What do you especially hope to get out of this study of church history?

### MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- c. 30 AD - DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS, PENTECOST
- c. 65 AD - MARTYRDOMS OF PETER AND PAUL
- 70 AD - THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AND THE CITY OF JERUSALEM
- c. 100 AD - DEATH OF JOHN
- c. 100-300 AD - THE HERESY OF GNOSTICISM IMPACTS THE CHURCH
- c. 108 AD - MARTYRDOM OF IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH
- c. 100-120 AD - PUBLICATION AND CIRCULATION OF THE DIDACHE
- c. 140 AD - MARCION FORMS HIS OWN CANON
- c. 155 AD - MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP OF SMYRNA
- c. 160s AD - THE MONTANIST MOVEMENT EMERGES
- c. 200 AD - THE FIRST KNOWN USE OF THE TERM "TRINITY"
- c. 210-254 AD - THE WRITINGS OF ORIGEN OF ALEXANDRIA
- 250 AD - WIDESPREAD PERSECUTION UNDER DECIUS
- 303-311 AD - THE GREAT PERSECUTION UNDER DIOCLETIAN



## SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 145 AD in Sinope. A teacher named Marcion is claiming the Old Testament isn't Christian and only Luke's Gospel and some of Paul's letters are truly God's Word. Some in your church are listening. The Church hasn't reached a consensus on what books are truly God's Word. How do you respond to Marcion?



## DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 170 AD in Phrygia. You're visiting a church where Montanus, along with Priscilla and Maximilla, claims to speak directly from the Holy Spirit. Their movement is strict, emotional, and focused on Christ's imminent return. Some are inspired; others alarmed. Even Tertullian supports them. What are you to make of them?



## WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 190 AD in Smyrna. Your church celebrates Easter on 14 Nisan, following apostolic tradition. Rome insists it must be on a Sunday and threatens to break fellowship over it. Other worship practices vary too. Some follow Jewish customs and others worship secretly before dawn. What needs to be the same and what can differ to be in fellowship?



## LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 180 AD in Rome. False teachings are spreading. Leaders like Irenaeus insist that true doctrine is found in churches whose bishops trace their line back to the apostles, especially in places like Rome. But what if they seem to be wrong? Is it a specific office or a specific teaching that gives real authority and makes someone trustworthy?



## MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 252 AD in Carthage. Persecution has just ended. Some Christians (even church leaders!) denied Christ or bribed officials for fake certificates. Now they're repentant and want to return. Some welcome them with penance. Others, like Novatian, say the lapsed can never come back. Can they come back? If so, what does that look like?



## DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 110 AD in Thyatira. You're a leatherworker. To stay in business, you must attend guild feasts honoring idols. If you refuse, you may lose your job and your only means of supporting your family. Some say you can participate without meaning it, and God won't hold that against you. Others say that to do so is to deny Christ. What do you do?

# CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON TWO

## CONSTANTINE, COUNCILS, AND CREEDS

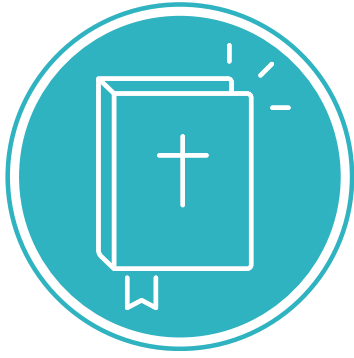
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The year 312 AD marked a major turning point in the life of the early Christian Church. With Constantine's rise to power, Christianity moved from being a persecuted minority to a faith increasingly favored by the Roman Empire. This change set off a chain of events that gave the church new power, influence, and challenges. In this lesson, we'll explore how that transition shaped the future of Christianity, for better and for worse.

What pros and cons do you think would come from Christianity gaining power and popularity?

### MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- 312 AD - CONSTANTINE DEFEATS MAXENTIUS AT THE BATTLE OF THE MILVIAN BRIDGE
- 313 AD - THE EDICT OF MILAN LEGALIZES CHRISTIANITY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE
- c. 318-381 AD - THE HERESY OF ARIANISM IMPACTS THE CHURCH
- 325 AD - THE FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA
- 381 AD - THE FIRST COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE
- 382 AD - THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON IS CONFIRMED AT THE COUNCIL OF ROME
- 392 AD - CHRISTIANITY BECOMES THE STATE RELIGION UNDER THEODOSIUS
- c. 405 AD - JEROME COMPLETES THE VULGATE (LATIN TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE)
- 410 AD - ROME IS PLUNDERED BY THE VISIGOTHS (A GERMANIC TRIBE)
- 413-426 AD - AUGUSTINE WRITES *CITY OF GOD*
- 451 AD - THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON
- 452 AD - LEO THE GREAT MEETS WITH ATILA THE HUN
- 476 AD - THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE FALLS
- 300s-400s AD - THE SPREAD OF MONASTICISM



## SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 382 AD in Rome. You're a bishop attending the council of Rome. The gathering would like to agree on what books belong in the New Testament, but there are still some questions about books like *Hebrews*, *James*, and *Revelation*. On what basis should the group be making this decision, and is this even a wise distinction to make?



## DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 410 AD in Alexandria. A teacher named Pelagius argues that people can choose to follow God because we have free will. Others like Augustine say we can't and are born in sin. Does a debate like this really even matter to someone like me who's not a theologian? If it does, how do I know who is right and what does that mean for me?



## WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 400 AD in Antioch. Worship is elaborate. There's incense, chanting, special vestments, and a long liturgy. Some in your congregation want even more ceremony, but others think ritual has replaced simplicity and sometimes sincerity too. How do you decide which practices truly glorify God, which might distract, and what is essential versus cultural?





## LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 390 AD in Milan. Bishop Ambrose refuses communion to Emperor Theodosius after a massacre, insisting even rulers must submit to Christ. Some praise his courage; others worry he's overstepping and endangering the church. Was he right to do so, or just playing politics? What is the relationship between the Church and worldly powers?



## MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 450 AD in Gaul. As barbarian tribes invade and settle, some Christians want to defend their homes by force, while others see the newcomers as a mission field. Many fear losing the peace won after years of persecution. What do you do? Fight, flee, or stay and reach out? How do you live out your faith amid a collapsing culture?



## DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 417 AD in Hippo. Your family is now part of the Christian majority. But with comfort comes complacency. Fewer attend worship, Scripture isn't memorized, and Christian values seem to be assumed more than taught. How do you raise your children to truly follow Christ when the whole empire claims to be Christian but doesn't really live it?

# CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON THREE

## THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH #1

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Christianity had survived persecution, gained legal status, and become the dominant faith of the Roman world. But then the Roman Empire in the West collapsed. Chaos, warfare, and political instability ensued. Physical and spiritual attacks from the new Muslim religion added to the trouble.

As the Christian Church marched on during these centuries of difficult times, would it thrive, compromise, retreat, or rise to power? And what are the dangers or blessings in each of those paths?

### MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- 529 AD - ST. BENEDICT FOUNDS HIS MONASTIC ORDER
- 590-604 AD - THE PAPACY OF GREGORY THE GREAT
- 597 AD - ST. AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY DOES MISSION WORK IN ENGLAND
- 610 AD - MUHAMMAD CLAIMS TO RECEIVE A REVELATION
- 636 AD - THE BATTLE OF YARMOUK
- 711 AD - THE MUSLIM CONQUEST OF SPAIN
- 732 AD - THE BATTLE OF TOURS
- 787 AD - THE SECOND COUNCIL OF NICAIA
- 800 AD - POPE LEO III CROWNS CHALEMAGNE AS HOLY ROMAN EMPEROR
- 862 AD - CYRIL AND METHODIUS BEGIN THEIR MISSION TO THE SLAVIC PEOPLE
- 904-964 AD - THE DARK CENTURY
- 910 AD - CLUNY ABBEY IS FOUNDED
- 1014 AD - "FILIOQUE" IS OFFICIALLY ADDED TO THE NICENE CREED IN ROME
- 1054 AD - THE GREAT SCHISM BETWEEN THE EASTERN AND WESTERN CHURCH



## SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 800 AD in Aachen. Charlemagne is trying to standardize the Bible, and as a monk, you've been tasked with copying Scripture. Some Latin manuscripts have slightly different phrases or include or leave out certain passages. How do you know which wording truly reflects God's message? How do you faithfully preserve His Word with these variants?



## DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 1014 AD in Constantinople. More churches in the West have been including a new phrase in the Nicene Creed: the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father "and the Son." The Eastern church accuses the West of changing doctrine without a council. Is this an actual doctrinal disagreement, or are the two sides just talking past each other?



## WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 726 AD in Thessalonica. The Eastern church has ordered the removal and destruction of all icons from churches. Some in your congregation support this, believing that images lead to idolatry. Others cherish the icons as important aids for worship and teaching. How do you respond? What does Scripture say about the use of images in worship?



## LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 800 AD in Rome. The pope has gained significant political power by receiving land from King Pepin and crowning Charlemagne as emperor. Everyone celebrates the strengthened role of the church. But are the pope and the church becoming too worldly? Are these good changes? What does Scripture say about the Church's role in politics?



## MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 850 AD in Cordoba. Like most Christians, you live quietly under Muslim rule as a second-class citizen, but some openly denounce Islam, seeking martyrdom. Others fear this provokes more persecution. How should you live under a government that restricts faith? When is quiet witness actually compromise, or boldness actually recklessness?



## DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 715 AD in Frisia. You're a missionary in a newly Christian village. Some missionaries insist that all pagan customs must be abandoned completely. Others believe that certain cultural traditions can be adapted to honor Christ. What do you do? How do you help villagers live faithfully without losing their cultural identity?

# CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON FOUR

## THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH #2

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When the Western Roman Empire fell, the Christian church became a stabilizing force that grew in power and spread throughout Europe. But pressure from Islam, and a split between East and West brought new challenges. As the church's political power and wealth increased, its faithfulness to Scripture decreased. Towering cathedrals, violent crusades, theological conflict, an extremely deadly plague, and growing papal corruption and control all led to repeated cries for reform.

How would these cries for reform be met by the church? Would they listen or silence those voices?

### MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- 1095 AD - POPE URBAN II CALLS THE FIRST CRUSADE
- 1122 AD - THE CONCORDAT OF WORMS RESOLVES THE INVESTITURE CONTROVERSY
- c. 1150-1350 AD - THE RISE OF UNIVERSITIES, SCHOLASTICISM, AND CATHEDRALS
- 1170s AD - THE WALDENSIAN MOVEMENT BEGINS
- 1204 AD - THE FOURTH CRUSADE SACKS CONSTANTINOPLE
- 1215 AD - THE FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL
- 1231 AD - THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PAPAL INQUISITION
- 1300-1302 AD - THE YEAR OF JUBILEE IS DECLARED AND THE *UNAM SANCTAM* IS ISSUED
- 1347-1351 AD - THE BLACK DEATH
- 1378-1417 AD - THE GREAT WESTERN SCHISM
- 1382 AD - JOHN WYCLIFFE TRANSLATES THE BIBLE INTO ENGLISH
- 1415 AD - JAN HUS IS BURNED TO DEATH AT THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE
- 1453 AD - CONSTANTINOPLE FALLS TO THE MUSLIM OTTOMAN EMPIRE
- 1455 AD - JOHANNES GUTENBERG PRINTS THE BIBLE WITH MOVABLE TYPE



## SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 1382 AD in England. For the first time ever, you've been given access to the Bible in your own language. You're excited, but the church has condemned these translations. Your priest says that reading them without guidance leads to heresy. Should everyone be allowed to read the Bible, or should it only be interpreted by trained theologians?



## DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 1475 AD in Mainz. The local priest is preaching about purgatory - an intermediate state where souls are purified before entering heaven. Indulgences are sold to reduce time there. What does Scripture say about what happens when we die? How do we weigh church tradition and Scripture? What comfort or confusion does this doctrine bring?



## WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 1418 AD in Prague. At your church, everyone receives both bread and wine in Communion. But the Roman church forbids this, saying Christ is fully present in either element and the wine should be reserved for the priests to prevent desecration. There's talk that a war will break out if you don't give in. How important is it to stand firm on this?



## LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 1409 AD in Florence. Your city is divided. One group follows Pope Gregory XII in Rome, another follows Pope Benedict XIII in Avignon—and now there's a third pope in Pisa! Each claims to be the true head of the Church. Your local bishop says loyalty to his pope is a matter of salvation. How do you know who speaks for Christ's Church?



## MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 1096 in Mainz. Crusaders passing through have turned violent against your Jewish neighbors. Entire families are slaughtered. Some people try to hide them. Others cheer the attacks. How could this be God's will or God's mission, when it looks more like persecution? When "Christian" actions contradict Christ's teaching, how do you respond?



## DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 1348 in Avignon. The Black Death has reached your city. Thousands are dying, including your loved ones. Some say it's God's punishment. Others blame the Jews. Still others publicly flog themselves to earn God's mercy. Your neighbor mocks the church and says God must not care. Who is right? Is there any real source of hope or comfort?

# CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON FIVE

## LUTHER AND THE REFORMATION

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As more and more Christians were calling out power, wealth, and corruption and calling for reform in the church, the church did what it could to silence them...until it couldn't. Lots of different factors, all under Christ's gracious control, changed the church in drastic ways that have continued to this day. Through Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformation began and the Lutheran church was formed.

What things do you already know about Martin Luther? If somebody asks you, "What is a Lutheran?" how do you respond?

### MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- 1517 AD - MARTIN LUTHER POSTS HIS 95 THESES
- 1518-1519 AD - THE HEIDELBERG DISPUTATION & LEIPZIG DEBATE
- 1520-1521 AD - LUTHER IS CONDEMNED, EXCOMMUNICATED, AND WILL NOT RECANT
- 1522 AD - LUTHER'S GERMAN NEW TESTAMENT IS PUBLISHED
- 1524-1525 AD - THE PEASANTS' WAR
- 1525 AD - THE ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT BEGINS & LUTHER'S *BONDAGE OF THE WILL*
- 1526 AD - TYNDALE'S ENGLISH NEW TESTAMENT & LUTHER'S GERMAN MASS
- 1529 AD - THE MARBURG COLLOQUY & LUTHER'S SMALL AND LARGE CATECHISMS
- 1530-1531 AD - THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION AND THE APOLOGY ARE PRESENTED
- 1531 AD - THE FORMATION OF THE SMALCALD LEAGUE
- 1534 AD - HENRY VIII BREAKS FROM THE CHURCH & LUTHER'S FULL BIBLE IS PUBLISHED
- 1536 AD - TYNDALE IS EXECUTED & CALVIN FIRST PUBLISHED HIS *INSTITUTES*
- 1537 AD - THE SMALCALD ARTICLES ARE WRITTEN
- 1546 AD - THE DEATH OF MARTIN LUTHER





## SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 1529 AD, and the Diet of Speyer is underway. Some princes who follow Luther have emphasized that Scripture is the only source of doctrine. However, some argue that church tradition and councils must still have authority or you're taking your own personal authority. When conflicts arise between tradition and Scripture, which do you prioritize?



## DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 1533 AD in Zurich. There's a group who insists your infant baptism isn't valid. They urge you to be baptized as a believing adult, claiming that only those who personally confess their faith can receive true baptism. Their zeal and use of Scripture give you pause. Should you be baptized again? What does baptism actually do? Who is it really for?



## WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 1531 AD in Nuremberg. You like the teachings of Luther, but it's also hard. Church isn't the same. You miss the sacredness of the Latin mass and the choir songs. You don't sing well, and it doesn't feel right to take Communion so often. Did they have to make so many changes? How do you handle losing familiar things you loved in worship?



## LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 1526 AD in Erfurt. Your town has embraced the teachings of Luther. The bishop no longer oversees your church, and the town council says it will appoint your new pastor. Some people support this, but others worry it gives too much power to politicians. Who should decide who serves as your spiritual shepherd? What makes a call legitimate?



## MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 1535 AD in Antwerp. You've embraced Luther's teachings, but the rulers are cracking down against them. A few members of your secret church were just arrested. Now some are planning to flee to safe cities. Others urge staying to be a witness. Should you stay or go? If you stay, you know the risk. But if you leave, who will faithfully proclaim Christ?



## DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 1530 in Mansfeld. Your pastor has just given you Luther's Small Catechism. You want to teach your children, but work hours are long, you're tired, and you struggle to understand some parts yourself. How do you find the time and confidence to lead your family in this way? What will you do when your kids ask you questions you can't answer?

# CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON SIX

## THE RESPONSE TO THE REFORMATION

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The Reformation had brought to light the Scriptures and its central message of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, but it also divided the visible church. The new spiritual landscape in Europe was uncharted territory for everyone. Each different group responded to the Reformation by reevaluating or reaffirming who they were and what they believed, and they looked to defend and spread their beliefs with the sword of the Spirit or the literal sword.

In what ways would the Reformation have immediate and lasting impacts in the church and world?

## MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- 1555 AD - THE PEACE OF AUGSBURG
- 1563 AD - END OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT & THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM IS PUBLISHED
- 1572 AD - ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY MASSACRE IN PARIS
- 1580 AD - THE BOOK OF CONCORD IS PUBLISHED
- 1582 AD - THE FIRST JESUIT MISSION TO CHINA
- 1598 AD - THE EDICT OF NANTES
- 1611 AD - THE KING JAMES VERSION OF THE BIBLE IS PUBLISHED
- 1618 AD - THE SYNOD OF DORT & THE START OF THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR
- 1620-1640 AD - THE GREAT MIGRATION OF PURITANS TO NEW ENGLAND
- 1646 AD - THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION IS PUBLISHED
- 1648 AD - THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA & ENGLAND'S SECOND CIVIL WAR
- 1675 AD - PHILIP JAKOB SPENER PUBLISHES *PIA DESIDERIA*
- 1685 AD - THE EDICT OF NANTES GETS REVOKED
- 1689 AD - THE ENGLISH TOLERATION ACT



## SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 1575 AD in Augsburg. Your family has become divided on which books belong in the Bible. Some side with the Catholic Church and say the Deuterocanonical books should be included. Others side with the Protestants and say you can read them, but they're not Scripture. Which books really belong in the Bible, and how can you be sure?



## DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 1649 AD in Leipzig. Even though the war is over, there's still a lot of hurt and blame to go around. Some say strict doctrinal stances caused the war and now is the time to come together. Others insist you can't compromise doctrine. Should Christians let doctrinal disagreements divide them? What is necessary for spiritual and political unity?



## WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 1670 AD in Nuremberg. A new hymnal edition has just come out. Some find the new hymns deeply encouraging, But others think the new songs focus too much on the individual's experience, rather than on clear Lutheran doctrine. But is that really a bad thing? What's the real purpose of hymns? To instruct the mind or stir the heart?



## LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 1692 AD in Erfurt. Some in your church have started a small group Bible study, led by members, not the pastor. They tell you they've never felt so encouraged in living their faith. But others warn that these kinds of groups can easily lead to divisions and subjectivity and undermining the pastor. Can studying the Bible with others ever be a bad thing?



## MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 1700 AD in Halle. Plans are in the works to send missionaries to India. Some are excited, but others aren't. Resources are precious, and there are still a lot of poor people and spiritual decline in your own community. Is it right to spend so much money to send pastors abroad when your own country still has so many physical and spiritual needs?



## DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 1672 AD in Ulm. Your son is interested in marrying a Reformed girl. He doesn't think the different confessions are that big of a deal since she's still a Christian, but you're not so sure. It just seems like it's bound to cause problems: Where would they go to church? How do they raise the kids? You wonder: How important is theological unity in marriage?

# CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON SEVEN

## THE CHURCH IN A CHANGING WORLD #1

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The changes set in motion by the Reformation and the various reactions to it continued rolling as the world began to change. Politics transformed, science and technology advanced, and society shifted. As the church found itself in the middle of all this, it also wrestled with questions about personal piety, assurance of faith, human reason, and social issues.

What do real Christians look like? How do you know if you are one? How, if at all, do faith and human reason go together, and how does faith inform my interactions with society?

## MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- 1700-1750 AD - THE AGE OF PIETISM
- 1719 AD - ISAAC WATTS PUBLISHES *THE PSALMS OF DAVID IMITATED*
- 1727 AD - AWAKENING IN HERRNHUT (MORAVIAN REVIVAL)
- 1730s-1740s AD - THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING
- 1748 AD - THE FIRST LUTHERAN SYNOD IN AMERICA IS FORMED
- 1748-1794 AD - THE MAJOR WRITINGS OF HUME, VOLTAIRE, ROUSSEAU, AND PAINE
- c. 1750 AD - THE BEGINNING OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION
- 1773 AD - SUPPRESSION OF THE JESUITS BY POPE CLEMENT XIV
- 1774 AD - JOHN WESLEY PUBLISHES *THOUGHTS UPON SLAVERY* PAMPHLET
- 1776 AD - THE AMERICAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
- 1780 AD - ROBERT RAIKES BEGINS SUNDAY SCHOOL
- 1789-1799 AD - THE FRENCH REVOLUTION
- 1793 AD - WILLIAM CAREY SAILS TO INDIA
- 1793 AD - IMMANUEL KANT PUBLISHES *RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF BARE REASON*



## SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 1794 AD in Königsberg. You've grown up reading and believing the Bible, but the philosophers are the talk of the town. They promote human reason, scoff at miracles, and claim that parts of Scripture are outdated. Is it possible that not all of the Bible is true? Then how do I know what is true? Can reason and Scripture go together?



## DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 1742 AD in Bristol. You've been attending Methodist meetings where people share dramatic stories of their conversion and profound inner experiences. Their stories and excitement are fascinating, but you've never really had a moment like that. You start to wonder if you're really a Christian. How can you be sure of your salvation?



## WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 1740 AD in Philadelphia. A popular preacher is coming to town soon and many are getting excited to hear his personal preaching which is so full of emotion. Others find his emotion to be distracting and disruptive to true, liturgical worship. What is the place of expressing emotion in worship? Which is better - a set structure or spontaneity in worship?



## LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 1785 AD in Boston. Your church is choosing a new pastor. Some members believe the elders should decide, like they always have. Others argue that a democratic vote is the only fair way to do it. You see pros and cons to both. Does the Bible have an answer to this question? Should the church be as democratic as the country?



## MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 1708 AD in Tranquebar. You're a missionary sent to teach the gospel. But colonial officials accuse you of disrupting social order and trade in the colony. They demand you stop challenging local customs and threaten imprisonment. Is it possible to share the gospel faithfully without being seen as a political or cultural disruptor?



## DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 1775 AD in Manchester. Like many, you work long hours in a factory to survive. You have little time for family, community, or church, but what can you do? Times have changed. Many others have concluded there isn't time or space for church and Christianity anymore. How do you hold onto your faith in the midst of so much cultural change?



# CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON EIGHT

## THE CHURCH IN A CHANGING WORLD #2

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The 1700s brought enormous changes: revivals stirred hearts, Enlightenment thinkers challenged truth, and society began to shift in ways the Church had never faced before. As the 1800s began, those changes only accelerated. Scientific advances, global exploration, political revolutions, and industrialization reshaped everyday life, and the Church was right in the middle of it all.

Would the Church stay grounded in the gospel or be swept away by modern ideas? How do you tell the difference between real reform and false teaching?

### MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- 1800-1840s AD - THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING
- 1816 AD - FOUNDING OF THE AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY
- 1817 AD - FORMATION OF THE PRUSSIAN UNION
- 1830 AD - FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS
- 1835 AD - DAVID STRAUSS PUBLISHES *THE LIFE OF JESUS, CRITICALLY EXAMINED*
- 1844-1845 AD - THE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT, YMCA IS FORMED, SBC IS FOUNDED
- 1847-1850 AD - THE FOUNDING OF THE LCMS AND THE WELS
- 1854 AD - THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION IS DECLARED AS CATHOLIC DOGMA
- 1859 AD - CHARLES DARWIN PUBLISHES *THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES*
- 1865 AD - THE CIVIL WAR ENDS AND THE SALVATION ARMY IS FOUNDED
- 1870 AD - THE FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL DEFINES THE DOCTRINE OF PAPAL INFALLIBILITY
- 1872 AD - THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE IS FOUNDED
- 1878 AD - JULIUS WELLHAUSEN PROPOSES THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS
- 1893 AD - THE WORLD'S PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS



## SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 1887 AD in New York City. Your pastor has started sharing some new ideas. He says Genesis was put together over centuries, not written by Moses, and it shouldn't be taken literally. That doesn't sound right, but he knows more than you do about the Bible. Does the Bible have to be literally true to be beneficial? If it's not true, what does that change?



## DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 1850 AD in Boston. A new preacher says that God's love is so great that everyone will eventually be saved, even those who don't believe in Christ or live faithfully. You know that God is love, but the Bible also talks about judgment. But you're not sure how to answer this question: How could a loving God send some people to eternal damnation?



## WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 1888 AD in Chicago. Some of your friends have started going to a big church and invite you to come. The building is beautiful, the preacher is dynamic, and the music is excellent. The church you've grown up in is much smaller and the worship doesn't compare. What things should you prioritize as you consider staying or going to a different church?



## LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 1897 AD in Minneapolis. Your growing congregation just got its first associate pastor. He's young and brings fresh ideas about worship and congregational life. He even wants to start some English outreach. The senior pastor is uneasy, but others are excited. What do you do when your spiritual leaders are at odds with each other? Who do you follow?



## MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 1868 AD in Milwaukee. Your synod is small, and you've relied on money from mission societies for your schools. But those groups have different doctrinal stances. Some say we should keep taking money from them to do the good we want to do. Others say truth is more important than money. When is saying "no" to money what's best for the mission?



## DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 1895 AD in Cleveland. Your children go to the same public school you did, but things seem different. You want them to trust their teachers, but you're worried the biblical criticism of higher education is seeping in. You're also concerned about the influence of non-Christian peers. What do you do to help your children hold onto their faith and live it?

# CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON NINE

## THE CHURCH IN A CHANGING WORLD #3

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While the entire course of church history helps us to understand how we got to where we are today, a look at what happened in the United States in the 1900s is very revealing. It's even easier to see how many of the events and movements of the past century have shaped Christianity and Christians in America, including us.

What events or movements from the 1900s do you remember most vividly? What impact do you think those events and movements had on the church?

### MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- 1906 AD - AZUSA STREET REVIVAL IN LOS ANGELES
- 1910 AD - THE EDINBURGH MISSIONARY CONFERENCE
- 1925 AD - THE SCOPES MONKEY TRIAL
- 1929-1945 AD - THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II
- 1949 AD - BILLY GRAHAM CRUSADES BEGIN
- 1961 AD - WELS BREAKS FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LCMS
- 1962 AD - THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL BEGINS
- 1963 AD - MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON
- 1960s-1970s AD - THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND THE JESUS MOVEMENT
- 1979 AD - THE MORAL MAJORITY IS FOUNDED
- 1980 AD - SADDLEBACK CHURCH IS FOUNDED BY RICK WARREN
- 1988 AD - THE FORMATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA
- 1993 AD - BIBLEGATEWAY.COM LAUNCHES
- 1999 AD - Y2K ANXIETY OVER THE APOCALYPSE



## SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 1974 AD in St. Louis. All your seminary professors teach that the Bible is God's Word. However, some teach that God uses human means to communicate, so it doesn't have to be historically exact to be true. Those professors are being labelled as heretics and are leaving to start their own seminary. Is the Bible all historically true? Do you stay or go?



## DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 1950 AD in Tulsa. Some of your friends have started telling you that God's will is to heal your sickness and bless you financially, if you believe enough and give generously enough. You think about your own sufferings. Are they because you lack faith, or is trusting God in the face of suffering what faith is all about? What is God's will for your life?



## WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 1995 AD in Dallas. Your church wants to reach more people with the gospel. Some say you need to get a praise band, use modern music, and be more casual. Others fear worship will turn into entertainment and will neglect the current flock. How do you balance the following in worship: nurture and outreach, old and new, transcendence and imminence?



## LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 1970 AD in Milwaukee. Your denomination just ordained its first woman pastor. Some in your congregation rejoice, seeing it as a step toward recognizing the value of women in the church. Others feel uneasy, concerned that it breaks with Scripture. Should or shouldn't women be allowed to lead a church? What should women's roles be in the church?



## MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 1983 AD in Phoenix. You attend church freely and talk openly about your faith. But you hear stories of Christians behind the Iron Curtain who are imprisoned, beaten, or forced to worship in secret. You feel grateful yet guilty. How do you support the persecuted? How do you make sure that you don't take your religious freedom for granted?



## DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 1973 AD in Atlanta. You grew up going to church every Sunday, but you didn't really talk about faith as a family. You were mostly taught to keep the 10 Commandments and honor your country. Now that you're in college, you realize there's a whole lot more out there than what you were told. How do you figure out who you are and what you believe?

# CHURCH HISTORY | LESSON TEN

## CHRISTIANITY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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At the quarter mark of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many of the trends from 20<sup>th</sup> century America have continued: the rise of secularism, technological advancements, non-denominational expansion, a movement toward progressive theology, and more.

What events or movements from the 21<sup>st</sup> century do you think have impacted the Christian church the most? What events or movements from the 21<sup>st</sup> century do you think have impacted you and/or our church the most?

## MAJOR CHURCH EVENTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD

- 2000 AD - "LEFT BEHIND: THE MOVIE" IS RELEASED
- 2001 AD - THE 9/11 TERRORIST ATTACK
- 2002 AD - THE BOSTON GLOBE'S INVESTIGATION INTO CATHOLIC CLERGY ABUSE
- 2003 AD - THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH CONSECRATES ITS FIRST OPENLY GAY BISHOP
- 2007 AD - LAUNCH OF THE IPHONE & MULTISITE MEGACHURCHES SURGE
- 2012 AD - CROSS OF CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH IS FOUNDED
- 2014 AD - THE RISE OF THE "NONES" BECOMES WELL-DOCUMENTED
- 2016 AD - THE EVANGELICAL RIGHT ALIGNS TO HELP GET TRUMP ELECTED
- 2019 AD - THE FIRST SEASON OF "THE CHOSEN" IS RELEASED
- 2020 AD - COVID 19 SHUTDOWNS & THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT GROWS
- 2021 AD - THE DECONSTRUCTING FAITH MOVEMENT GROWS
- 2022 AD - ROE V. WADE IS OVERTURNED
- 2024 AD - EXPANSION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS
- 2025 AD - ASSASSINATION OF CHARLIE KIRK & 15,000 CHURCHES PREDICTED TO CLOSE



## SCRIPTURE & CANON

It's 2012 AD in Los Angeles. Your congregation is deciding which Bible translation to use. Some love the readability of the new NIV 2011, but others worry it changes familiar wording and traditional renderings. When there are so many different translations available, how do you determine whether or not they are faithful and which one to choose?



## DOCTRINE & HERESY

It's 2019 AD in Albuquerque. A friend of yours just announced that they are LGBTQ+. They say God accepts them just as they are and share stories of so many others, even Christians, celebrating their news. You know this goes against God's design and will, but how do you navigate the friendship? What do you say? What do you do?



## WORSHIP & LITURGY

It's 2021 AD in Austin. Your church started live-streaming services during Covid and has continued to since. However, some people rarely attend in person. They say that online worship is just as good. Is it? If not, what are the benefits of in-person worship that aren't there with online worship? What do you say to those who prefer to worship online?





## LEADERSHIP & CHURCH ORDER

It's 2016 AD in Denver. Your pastor has resigned, confessing to a serious sin that disqualifies him from the public ministry. The congregation is in shock. Everyone had trusted him and looked up to him as their shepherd. Some say they're never coming back to this church or maybe any church again. How should you respond when your spiritual leader falls?



## MISSION & PERSECUTION

It's 2022 AD in Detroit. Fewer and fewer people you know go to church. Most of your friends and family politely decline any invitations, saying they're not into organized religion. They see Christianity as one of many spiritual paths, or outdated, or even harmful. How do you share the gospel in a subjective culture that doesn't see its need for a Savior?



## DISCIPLESHIP & DAILY LIFE

It's 2025 AD in Las Cruces. Technology keeps advancing, but it's adding more stress to your life. You spend more time on a screen and less time with people. You don't know what's real anymore. You feel anxious and isolated, and you know many others feel the same. What comfort, hope, and guidance does God's Word give for a digital age?