

Theme: Heart issues are Hard issues! And yet when the Lord brings us together in Christ, we have a unity in Him that allows us to work for great unity among each other. The unity in Christ is a reality created by God. It is lived out in our day to day lives as we seek to follow Jesus through the heart and hard issues.

Getting Started: (sharing with each other)

- 1. If someone asked you, "Why was Martin Luther a big deal? What did he do to reform the church?" How would you share the story? See how much of the details you can pull together from your group as you recount the story of the Reformation.
- 2. When were you confirmed? If you have been confirmed, share the where, when, and any other details you remember about it.

In the Word: Read John 8:31-36 (a closer look at the text)

- 3. Jesus talks about truly being His disciple. What is a disciple exactly?
- 4. Jesus told the Jews that He was going to set them free. But they pointed to their biological ancestry for their freedom / salvation. Why is their assertion in verse 33 misguided?
- 5. How does sin enslave us, as Jesus says in verse 34?
- 6. There is a big difference between being a son or daughter in the family and being a hired hand, or, as in Jesus' day, a household slave. Why is it so much better to be a son or daughter in the family than a hired worker?
- 7. How does Jesus set us free, as He says in verse 36?

Putting it all Together (what do we believe or do as disciples?)

- 8. Think back to the Martin Luther story that you talked about in question #1. Martin Luther had a strong sense of his sin, and his bondage to sin. Originally, his last name was Luder. He was born to Hans and Maragrethe Luder in Eisleben, Germany, on November 10, 1483. At some point during the early days of the Reformation, he changed the spelling from Luder to Luther which means "The Freed One" How did Martin Luther become "The Freed One" when He understood the Gospel?
- 9. Can you think of a time when you were enslaved by sin? Why is it impossible to free ourselves from sin on our own?
- 10. If Jesus sets us free from sin, and we are free in Him, then why do we still struggle with sin?
- 11. The Reformation was all about re-centering the church on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures as the Word of God. How do we make sure that in our day, the church stays focused on Christ and the Scriptures?
- 12. When the plague came to Wittenberg, Germany, in the 1520's, most of the people left town, but Martin Luther and his family stayed to care for those left behind. Out of that difficult time, Luther wrote the famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" that sang of our unshakable hope in our Savior Jesus Christ, and how the world and Satan cannot throw anything at us that will separate us from the Kingdom of God. That was a blessing brought about in the midst of a distressing time. What blessings or good things do you see coming about, even in the midst of a distressing time? What "Mighty Fortress" things do you see around you, that might be a lasting testament to God's faithfulness?

Prayer: Thank the Lord for the Gospel, and the good news that we are set free from sin through our Savior Jesus Christ. Ask the Lord to reform our homes, our families, our hearts, and our communities in the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray for our church to boldly proclaim the Gospel, and to hold fast to the faith as it has been passed down to us.

Next Week: All Saints Sunday is the day when we remember the saints above as the saints below. We will also have the commemoration of the faithful departed, or roll call of victory, as we read the names of those who have gone to the church triumphant in the past year. It is always a moving but faith-filled moment.