

Lutheran FAQ: The 95 Theses

Martin Luther wrote the 95 Theses to start a conversation with the wider church because he thought the church was being unjust and wanted to fix it. What conversation would you want to start in your congregation, or in the wider church? Why do you think this topic is important?

When you have something important to say, please don't nail it to your church's front door! What are some of the ways that we speak our mind in this century?

Take a few minutes to read the 95 Theses. (You can find them at <https://antilogicalism.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/95-theses.pdf>) They're definitely written by a college professor!

One of Martin Luther's objections to the idea of indulgences is that forgiveness can't be earned. It has to be a gift from God. Our lives are to be lives "of penitence," or making right the things we have done wrong. Where have you seen someone mess up and then make it right? Were they forgiven? Did it change things for them? _____

"By works of love, love grows and a [person] becomes a better [person]", Thesis 44 says. What is one thing you've learned by serving others? _____

The Roman Catholic church has changed a lot in the last 500 years. The Lutheran church has, too, and we get along pretty well now. What does your congregation do with other churches in your area? _____

What practices or ideas do you see in the 95 Theses that you don't see in your church? _____

What questions do you have about the 95 Theses? _____

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Indulgences were sold as a way of paying penance, or making up for sin. What are some ways that you have seen people restore a relationship after hurting someone? Can you think of a time that your relationship with God has needed restoring? What is helpful penance or reconciliation?

The pope was selling indulgences to fund a building project. If your congregation had extra funds, what would you hope to do with them? How would God be glorified with that kind of gift?

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It’s easy to understand why people would do almost anything to help their friends and family, even the ones who have died. Do you worry about your loved ones who have passed away? Romans 8 tells us that nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God. We trust that the God who loves us even before we’re born loves us beyond our earthly lives.

What questions do you have about the 95 Theses? What do they make you wonder about church, faith, and God?

Deeper Dive:

The 95 Theses: <https://antilogicalism.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/95-theses.pdf> is one place of many to get a very printable version of the Disputation.

Pastor Emily mentioned the Book of Concord. The latest translation was done in 2000 by Kolb and Wengert. It includes the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord.

Written by the ELCA South Carolina Synod to accompany the video “Lutheran FAQ: What are the 95 Theses?” found at <https://scsynod.com/teaching-resources/>