**THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY**

**CHILDREN’S MEETING LESSON**

**DATE:** March 4, 2018

**SUBJECT: GOD’S CALLING IN THE PRESENT AGE: Martin Luther**

**SCRIPTURE:** Romans 1:17; 2 Timothy 1:7-14; 2:9-10, 15

**A1M**: To see God’s calling of Martin Luther to stand for the truth and to bring forth the light in God’s Word concerning the truth of justification by faith.

**MEMORY VERSES:** Romans 1:17 (For the righteousness of God is revealed in it out of faith to faith, as it is written, “But the righteous shall have life and live by faith.”); Galatians 3:11b (...The righteous one shall have life and live by faith”); 2 Timothy 2:15 (Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.); Isaiah 40:8 (The grass withers and the flower fades, But the word of our God will stand forever.)

**SUGGESTED SONGS:** 70 (Thy Word is a Lamp Unto My Feet); 65 (God’s Word); 29 (Not By Might); 25 (I Believe God); 32 (Trust in the Lord); 9409 *The Bible Song #9* (Oh the Grass Will Wither and The Flower Fade); 9420 *The Bible Song #20* (It is Living - Word of God)

**CRAFT IDEA:** Use multiple popsicle sticks and weave together with yarn by going under and over, or gluing onto construction paper background. Glue paper with memory verse onto the sticks.

**INTRODUCTION:** Today we will begin a new series of lessons called *God’s Calling in the Present Age.* The people we will talk about lived closer to our time, a long time after the Lord Jesus had died and resurrected, and well after the last writings of the Bible had been completed. Just as God called people in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, there was a need for people to cooperate with God in the present age. These lessons are not a complete list of people, but we selected a few examples. We hope the biographies of these Christian forefathers will inspire us to also stand firm in the faith for the Lord, and to cooperate to be useful for Him.

***Note to Serving Ones:*** The children may confuse Martin Luther (1483-1546) with Martin Luther King, Jr. the civil rights leader (1929-1968) whom they learn about in schools. We should distinguish that Martin Luther lived hundreds of years before Martin Luther King Jr. but both were Christians who honored and loved the Lord and His Word. The latter was actually named after the former by his father, who had traveled to Germany and became inspired by the Protestant Reformation leader Martin Luther.

Please pray and fellowship over which details to cover with the children. For younger children, it may be appropriate to shorten or skip certain details, or use simpler vocabulary.

**CONTENT:** Martin Luther was a German leader of the Protestant Reformation. (Reformation means the improvement or changing of what is wrong, corrupt, unsatisfactory, etc.) During the time that Martin Luther lived, the influence of the Catholic Church was great, but there were many wrong teachings, including teaching people that they had to pay something to be forgiven of their sins. Martin Luther was instrumental in bringing to light many truths in the Bible that had been lost over hundreds of years.

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany on November 10, 1483, to Hans and Margaretta Luther. They later moved to Mansfeld where Luther began school at the Mansfeld Latin School at age 7. Subsequently, he attended boarding school and parish school. At age 17, he began studying liberal arts at the University of Erfurt, one of the best universities at the time. The next year he received his Baccalaureate degree and began studying for his Master’s, which he received in January 1505. Then his father arranged for his entry into law school. On May 19, 1505,Luther began his divinity studies at the University of Erfurt. One day in July of that same year on his way back to Erfurt from his parents’ house, he was caught in a bad thunderstorm. He was nearly struck by lightning and was thrown to the ground. He vowed he would become a monk if St. Ann would save him. He was saved from the thunderstorm and kept his vow and became a monk.

On July 17, 1505*,* Luther entered the Black Monastery in Erfurt, and the following year took his monastic vows. He began studying theology at the University of Erfurt in 1507, and in April he was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest. At age 24, he began teaching at the new Wittenberg University. In October 1512, Luther became a Doctor of Theology. Three days later, he was admitted to the senate of the theology faculty at the University of Wittenberg. In May of 1515, Luther began a year of lectures on the Epistle to the Romans. In his studies he came to the personal conviction that the just shall live by faith. He became disturbed by the Catholic Church’s interpretation of man’s relationship with God. After intense study of the Bible, he realized that God’s love to man was not based on man’s abilities or accomplishments, but on acceptance of God’s gift of love. Luther became very anxious about his salvation, and in studying the writings of Paul (the books of Romans and Galatians) found a loving God who gave to sinful mankind the free gift of salvation received by faith, and not by works. One of Luther’s greatest contributions centered on the recovery of the Biblical truth of justification by faith, whereby man stands justified before God not because of his own good works, but simply by believing in and receiving God’s free gift of salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ.

As a priest, Luther protested against the Catholic Church selling indulgences. (The practice became especially abusive when they were sold in an effort to raise money for the completion of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.) The Church sold these indulgences in exchange for release from punishment or imprisonment, and even for the forgiveness of sins. Sinners paid a sum of money to acquire God’s forgiveness, or paid for a deceased relative to enter heaven, even though the Bible never made such a requirement. Luther publicly exposed the corruption of the Catholic Church and denounced the assertion that our sins could be remitted (forgiven) by a certification of remission provided by an agent of the Pope. For this Luther called for the reformation of the Church from the power of the Pope. He also rejected the idea that the Pope cannot err in matters of faith and that he alone can interpret the scriptures.

The Disputation at Heidelberg began. It was a debate of Luther’s ideas at a meeting of the Augustinian chapter. Luther joined the debate and published many writings which exposed and denounced the false doctrines and corruption of the Catholic Church. A papal decree was issued condemning all of his writings and he was given sixty days to recant. By order of the Church, his books and writings were burnt, after which he, in turn, publicly burnt the papal documents. He taught that the Lord’s Table should not be exclusively celebrated by the priests, but should be shared by all Christians, including laymen. He also encouraged marriage for priests and nuns.

Martin Luther was taken into protective custody on the orders of the Church. This enabled him to translate the New Testament into the German language and to begin translation of the entire Bible. Because of his forceful writings and preaching, he was excommunicated from the Catholic Church in 1521. No longer able to carry out his ideas of reform within the Church, he became a leader to a new religious movement known as Protestantism. On June 13, 1525*,* Luther married Katherine von Bora, and they had six children. Martin Luther died of heart failure on February 18, 1546, at the age of 62. His funeral was held in the castle church in Wittenberg, and he was buried in the castle church.

**SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM:** *Please pray and fellowship over which applications to cover. It is sufficient to cover just one or two applications which are appropriate for the age group of the children you are serving.*

* As God’s called ones we must take a stand for the Lord, not teaching anything that differs from the Bible truths. In the Bible the books of Deuteronomy and Revelation tell us not to add or subtract from the Word of God. When we memorize weekly verses in children’s meeting, we should memorize them accurately and not skip or add words. We should cut straight the Word of God. As a child and as we grow older, we should read the Bible. Even though we may not understand everything, that is okay. The Lord can open our understanding more and more as we grow. Martin Luther and other brothers and sisters spent much time reading the Bible and trying to understand its meaning. Their writings can help us to understand the word. We “stand on their shoulders” and do not have to discover all the truths in the Bible all by ourselves.
* It is also important to know God’s Word accurately so that we know when we hear or see something that is against what God likes. Sometimes people twist God’s Word to fit their own desires, and even say that sinful things are not sinful. If we are clear about the Word of God, we would not be deceived.
* As God’s called ones we need to be faithful and bold, as Martin Luther was, to speak forth the truth. Martin Luther was bold in speaking the truth in God’s Word. Some people in the Catholic Church did not like that, and as a result he suffered by being kicked out of the Church. Others have even suffered physical harm. Although we may be persecuted we must remain firm in our beliefs. Matthew 5:10 (Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.)

Adapted from the Church in New York City Children’s Meeting Lessons–03/18/01; 03/18/07