

In an age when modern devotionals have been published at an exponential rate, untold riches still lie untapped in the commentary, sermons, and devotional writing of our great forebears. This work makes some of the most spiritually penetrating material of the past accessible to readers today. Don't miss this!

Timothy Keller, *Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City*

Imagine bringing the great Reformers to your house for family or personal devotions. This book comes closest to that. Meditate on God's word through these teachers, in simple and succinct but richly profound excerpts, and fresh wind will fill your sails.

Michael Horton, *J. G. Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics,
Westminster Seminary, California*

The Protestant Reformers were primarily Bible scholars who wanted the sacred text to transform the church of their day through their preaching and teaching of it. Much of what they said remains relevant to us today, and there is no better way to celebrate their legacy than by sharing in the spiritual impetus that gave their work such great and enduring power.

Gerald Bray, *Research Professor of Divinity, History and Doctrine,
Beeson Divinity School, Samford University*

There is a freshness and power to the words of these Reformers as they share their knowledge of the word of God with us. This book will be a blessing to you as you spend time in the company of these men of God.

Peter Jensen, *Former Anglican Archbishop of Sydney*

I'd love to say that I regularly read the writings of the Reformers but it wouldn't be true. This *Explore by the Book*, however, has the power to change that for me and many others, as Lee Gatiss presents readers with 90 days' worth of pearls from the writings of key Reformers that help us to grasp and cherish and apply truths from God's word.

Nancy Guthrie, *Bible teacher and author of the "Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament"
Bible-study series*

If there was an easy way each day to get some food from the Bible, some gold from the Reformers, some hooks to my brain, and some light for my prayers, I'd be very grateful. I am now very grateful.

Simon Manchester, *Senior Minister, St Thomas' North Sydney,*
and author of "Six Steps to Talking about Jesus"

When I need help understanding the Bible, I turn to the Reformers. Their interpretations are relentlessly faithful, their insights are profoundly pastoral, and their theology is unfailingly biblical. For those reasons, don't miss this fantastic opportunity to read the Bible with Calvin, Luther, Bullinger and Cranmer. With the Holy Spirit's help, you will certainly walk away in awe of God and his gospel.

Matthew Barrett, *Tutor of Systematic Theology and Church History,*
Oak Hill Theological College

Here is a devotional every Christian will find helpful for their walk with Christ. In an accessible and understandable way, the riches of the Scriptures are laid open by some of the great stalwarts of church history. Though belonging to a previous generation, the words of Luther, Calvin, Bullinger and Cranmer will challenge, stir and encourage as they expose the text and the soul of the reader.

Jason Helopoulos, *Associate Pastor, University Reformed Church, and author of*
"A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home"

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EXPLORE BY THE BOOK
Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, Galatians

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Introduction

“The words of the LORD are flawless, like silver purified in a crucible, like gold refined seven times.”
(Psalm 12 v 6)

This book is not an end in itself. It is a means of accessing the treasures of a far greater book. Its words are valuable only to the extent that they help you to enjoy the infinite value of words that are perfectly true, gloriously beautiful and utterly wonderful—the words of the LORD.

It is a magnificent thing, in a world which is used to mistakes, to deceit and to confusion, to be able to read flawless, pure, refined words. And that is what you do each time you open your Bible. God does not make errors in anything he says. He does not obscure the truth, by accident or by design. He does not fail to do anything he has said he will do.

That is why this devotional is an “open Bible devotional”—that is, you will need to keep your Bible open, on your lap or on your screen, as you use these studies. You’ll be asked questions that bring you to examine and think hard about the text. The aim of the authors is to cause you to spend more time thinking about God’s words than their words.

So, rather than seeing these devotionals as snacks, view them as meals. Set aside half an hour in your day to work through the study, and to respond to what you have seen. They are best done daily—but the most crucial thing is for you to find a pattern that is sustainable—better five studies a week for life than seven studies a week for only a week!

INTRODUCTION

Further, since every word of the Lord is flawless, we need to read every word in the Scriptures, rather than sticking to our favourite passages, or to an author's favourites. So *Explore by the Book* works, verse by verse, through whole books or large sections of the Bible. You will be moving through both famous books and not-so-popular ones, and within each book through much-used passages and less-travelled parts. Expect to discover new favourite passages and memory verses that you had never read or noticed or appreciated before!

At the same time, God's word is not always easy to understand. Whether we are completely new to reading it, or have mined its riches many times, all of us still experience "huh?" moments as we struggle to grasp its meaning! So in this devotional series, some of the greatest Bible teachers in the evangelical world help you to dig up the Bible's treasures, and explain their more opaque aspects. They will show you how what you are reading fits into the great overall story of the Scriptures, and will prompt you to apply what you have read to your life.

God's word is not simply pure—it is also purifying. It is the way his Spirit works in his people to challenge and change us. It is designed to move us to worship him with our lips, in our hearts and through our lives. Each day, you will see both of these headings: *Apply* and *Pray*. Use these sections to turn what you have read in God's word into words to speak back to God, and into ways in which you will change your life in response to God.

At the end of each study you'll find a journaling page, for you to record your response to what you have read, either in words or in drawings. Use these pages as you are led to—we all have different ways of making sure we remember what we have seen in the Scriptures, and of responding to those Scriptures. But here are a couple of very straightforward suggestions that you might like to try:

Before you work through the study, read the passage and record...

The Highlight: the truth about God that has most struck you.

The Query: the questions you have about what you have read (and your best attempt at answering them).

The Change: the major way you feel the Spirit is prompting you to change either your attitudes, or your actions, as a result of what you have read.

After you have done the study, record:

One sentence summing up how God has spoken to you through his word.

A short prayer in response to what you have seen.

INTRODUCTION

I hope you enjoy these 90 days listening to the flawless words of the LORD. Be sure that they will excite, change, challenge and comfort you. Be praying that God would use his word to bless you. There is literally nothing like the words of the LORD.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Laferton', with a stylized, flowing script.

Carl Laferton, Editorial Director
The Good Book Company

Note: This devotional is based on the NIV2011 Bible translation, but it will also work well with either ESV or NIV1984 translations.

Meet the Authors



MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546) kickstarted the Protestant Reformation by posting his *Ninety-five Theses* against the Roman Catholic practice of indulgences on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on 31st October, 1517. Or so the story goes. A German monk turned university lecturer, Luther had a fiery personality and a penetrating intellect, and his refusal to retract his early writings led to his excommunication by the Pope in 1521. He translated the Bible into vernacular German, and continued to teach theology at Wittenberg until he died in his home town of Eisleben in 1546. His complete works run to 121 volumes, spanning about 80,000 pages.

Featured here are extracts from Luther's commentary on Galatians, transcribed from his lectures given in 1531 and first published in Latin in 1535. The text is taken from the 1575 English translation, which I have freely modernised and updated. "The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle," Luther once said. "I am betrothed to it. It is my Katie von Bora." Since he compared it to his beloved wife, it is safe to say that he felt a special affinity for Galatians, and this commentary contains many of his key Reformation insights.



JOHAN CALVIN (1509-1564) was born in the French town of Noyon, and educated at the University of Paris. He fled France in 1535 and eventually settled in Geneva, having become a Protestant. "I was determined to study in privacy in some obscure place," he wrote in his commentary on the Psalms some years later. But William Farel eventually persuaded him to stay and help him reform the church in Geneva. Calvin reports him saying, "that God would surely curse my peace if I held back from giving help at a time of such great need."

His most famous work is his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a highly influential book of systematic theology which he revised and enlarged several times between 1536 and 1559. But also he was a prolific preacher, wrote commentaries on almost all the books of the Bible, founded an academy for the training of pastors and church planters, and reformed the church government and liturgy of Geneva.

MEET THE AUTHORS

Many of Calvin's works were translated into English during his lifetime. The extracts from his commentaries on Genesis and the Psalms featured here are edited and adapted from the nineteenth-century translations by John King and James Anderson in the 22-volume edition of Calvin's commentaries.



HENRICH BULLINGER (1504-1575) was a Swiss Reformer and pastor of the Grossmünster in Zurich. Though less famous today than Luther and Calvin, he was one of the most influential figures in the Reformation during the sixteenth century itself. He was the primary author of the Second Helvetic Confession (published in 1566), a prolific letter-writer, and part of a wide network of Protestant Reformers throughout Europe. He also wrote several Bible commentaries and works of theology, many of which were translated into English during his lifetime.

Bullinger's most influential work was his *Decades*—not an outline of church history but a collection of Latin sermons, carefully arranged into five sets of ten (and totaling around 700,000 words!). The extracts here from his sermons on the Apostles' Creed and on the Ten Commandments are updated and modernised from the first English translation, which was published in 1577.



THOMAS CRANMER (1489-1556) was the chief architect of the English Reformation. Educated at the University of Cambridge, Cranmer rose to become Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533. He helped Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell break England away from Rome, and established the liturgical and doctrinal framework for the newly independent and reformed Church of England. For this (and probably because he helped to build the case against Henry's marriage to her mother), the Roman Catholic Queen Mary had him burnt at the stake in Oxford.

The *First Book of Homilies* was published in 1547, and was intended to ensure that there was good, sound preaching in every Church of England parish each Sunday. Not all ministers were licensed or able to preach their own sermons, and so the Homilies (written by Cranmer and others) were there to make up for this obvious lack. The extracts here (every seventh day) are almost all by Cranmer, with a couple also being taken from the homily on sin first drafted by John Harpsfield (1516-1578), who was educated at New College, Oxford, and was a notable professor of Greek.

Article 35 of *The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion* (still the legal doctrinal basis of the Church of England) states that these official Homilies contain “godly and wholesome

doctrine". The great evangelical leader of the 18th century, George Whitefield, said they contain "the grand doctrines of the Reformation". The text here is taken from my updated and modernised edition published by Church Society.



LEE GATISS (a child of the 1970s) has degrees in theology and history from Oxford and Cambridge Universities, Oak Hill College, London, and Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Despite that, he's surprisingly normal, has been married to Kerry for more than 20 years, and has three children, two rabbits, and a couple of guinea pigs. He's currently the Director of Church Society, Lecturer in Church History at Union School of Theology, and Research Fellow of the Jonathan Edwards Centre Africa at the University of the Free State, South Africa. He is the author/editor of a number of books on the Bible, theology and church history, including *The Forgotten Cross* and *The NIV Proclamation Bible*. You can also find him at [facebook.com/lectionarylee](https://www.facebook.com/lectionarylee).

Lee has selected, updated and edited the extracts from the Reformers that you will find here, and has written the opening questions, applications and prayer suggestions. There is also a glossary at the back of the book to help explain some of the trickier words and concepts you may come across.

Many of the works of Luther, Calvin, Bullinger, Cranmer, and other Reformers are available for free online at prdl.org and ccl.org.

Day

I

Sent by Jesus

Galatians I v 1-5

with Martin Luther

We begin our exploration of the Bible with the Protestant Reformers by tucking into the work of Martin Luther on Galatians—“my dear epistle” as he called it.

Read Galatians I v 1-5

Why do you think Paul insists so strongly that his ministry is “not from men” (v 1)?

Does Paul mention his status for his own glory or for some other reason, do you think?

Paul’s Calling

When Paul so highly commends his calling, he is not seeking his own praise. But with a necessary and a holy pride he magnifies his ministry. That is to say, *I want people to receive me, not as Paul of Tarsus, but as Paul the apostle and ambassador of Jesus Christ.* And he does this to maintain his authority, that the people, in hearing this, might be more attentive and willing to give ear to him.

This is the first assault that Paul makes against the false apostles, who ran when no one sent them. Calling, therefore, is not to be despised. For it is not enough for someone to have the word and pure doctrine, but they must also be assured of their calling. So our fantastical* spirits at this day have the words of faith in their mouths, but yet they yield no fruit, for their chief end and purpose is to draw people to their false and perverse opinions.

**Note: Some unusual or jargon words are explained in the Glossary on page 281.*

The Seriousness of Word Ministry

This then is our comfort, that we who are in the ministry of the word have an office which is heavenly and holy. Being lawfully called to this, we triumph against all the gates of hell. We see then how good and necessary Paul's boasting is.

In times past when I was a young theologian and teacher, I thought Paul was unwise to glory so often in his calling in all his epistles. But I did not understand his purpose. For I did not know that the ministry of God's word was so weighty a matter. I knew nothing of the doctrine of faith, because there was then no certainty taught either in the universities or churches, but all was full of the clever subtleties of academics. And therefore no-one was able to understand the dignity and power of this holy and spiritual boasting. True and lawful calling serves, first, to the glory of God and, secondly, to the advancing of our office. Moreover, it also serves to the salvation of ourselves and of the people.

☺ Apply

Would it be right to think of Paul's letters as "just his opinion" or as simply a record of his experience of the grace of God? If not, why not?

Given that they are not apostles as Paul was, how should we think of those who teach and preach the Bible today? Do you think Luther is right to draw some comparisons between them?

☺ Pray

Pray that you would listen attentively to Paul's teaching from Galatians, as a gift to us from God.

Pray too for those who preach and teach in your church, that they would know the weightiness of their calling, and do everything for God's glory.

GALATIANS

~ Notes and Prayers ~

Day

2

Christ Gave Himself

Galatians I v 1-5

with Martin Luther

Today we look at a verse that Luther said was “a singular comfort to those who are terrified by the greatness of their sins”.

Read Galatians I v 1-5 again

What is the link between verses 3 and 4?

Why do you think Paul includes verse 4 in his opening greeting?

Christ Has Given Himself

Paul has nothing in his mouth but Christ, and therefore in every word there is a fervency of spirit and life. Mark how well and to the purpose he speaks. He does not say Christ, “who has *received* our works at our hands”, nor “who has received the sacrifices of Moses’ Law, worshippings, religions, masses, vows, and pilgrimages”.

No. Christ has *given*. What has he given? Not gold nor silver, nor beasts, nor Passover lambs, nor an angel, but himself. For what? Not for a crown; not for a kingdom; not for our holiness or righteousness—but for our sins.

These words are very thunder claps from heaven against all kinds of righteousness. Therefore we must with diligent attention mark Paul’s every word, and not slenderly consider them or lightly pass them over. For they are full of consolation, and confirm fearful consciences exceedingly.

Satisfaction for Sin

How may we obtain forgiveness of our sins? Paul answers that the man called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has given himself for them. These are excellent and most comfortable words—our sins are taken away by no other means than by the Son of God delivered unto death. With such guns and such artillery must the system of our opponents be destroyed, and all the religions of the heathen, all works, all merits and all superstitious ceremonies. For if our sins may be taken away by our own works, merits and satisfactions, why did the Son of God need to be given up for them?

But seeing that he was given for them, it follows that we cannot do away with them by our own works. Again, by this sentence it is declared that our sins are so great, so infinite and invincible, that it is impossible for the whole world to satisfy for one of them. And surely the greatness of the ransom (namely Christ, the Son of God, who gave himself for our sins) declares sufficiently that we can neither satisfy for sin, nor have dominion over it.

☺ Apply

Is it a comfort to you that, rather than demanding something for your sins, Christ gave himself for them? If not, why not?

How awful must our sins be that the only remedy for them was for Christ, the Son of God, to give himself up to death for them? Do you think of your sins in this way?

☹ Pray

Praise God for his grace towards us in sending Jesus to die in our place on the cross.

Thank Jesus for rescuing us from the present evil age, which has been ruined by sin and is under God's curse.

Falling Away Is Easy

Galatians I v 6-10

with Martin Luther

Congregations which are won by great labour may easily and quickly be overthrown, so we ought carefully to watch out for the devil, lest he sneaks in while we sleep.

Read Galatians I v 6-10

How did Paul feel about the churches he had planted deserting the gospel?

How had this happened?

Overturning the Gospel

See how Paul complains that to fall and to err in the faith is an easy matter. A minister may labour ten years to get some little church to be rightly and religiously ordered; and when it is so ordered, there creeps in some mad, unlearned idiot, who knows nothing but how to speak slanderously against the sincere preachers of the word, and they in one moment overthrow all.

We by the grace of God have gotten here at Wittenberg the form of a Christian church. The word is purely taught among us, the sacraments are rightly used, and all things go forward prosperously. This most happy course of the gospel some mad head would soon stop, and in one moment would overturn all that we in many years have built with great labour.

This happened even to Paul, the elect vessel of Christ. He had won the churches of Galatia with great care, but in a short time after his departure the false apostles overthrew them. We so walk in the midst of Satan's snares that one fantastical head may destroy in a short space all that which many true ministers, labouring night and day, have built up.

Caring for the Church

Seeing then that the church is so soft and so tender a thing, and is so soon overthrown, we must watch carefully against these fantastical spirits, who, when they have heard a few sermons or have read a few pages in the holy Scriptures, make themselves masters and controllers of all learners and teachers, contrary to common authority.

At the first, when the light of the gospel began to appear, after such a great darkness of human traditions, many were zealously bent to godliness. They heard sermons greedily and had the ministers of God's word in reverence. But now, when the doctrine of piety and godliness is happily reformed, with so great an increase of God's word, many which before seemed earnest disciples become despisers and very enemies. They not only cast off the study of God's word, and despise its ministers, but also hate all good learning.

☹ Apply

First, we must watch ourselves. Are you still zealous for the true gospel message and keen to pass it on faithfully?

Second, what can you do to help ensure that your church does not turn away to a different gospel?

☹ Pray

Pray for your own heart to remain faithful to the true gospel.

Pray that false teaching does not enter your church; and that if it does, it is driven away by faithful ministers.

