

# Weekly Study Guide

The week of October 25, 2015

---

Wish to view the message again? Go to [vimeo.com/flcwb](http://vimeo.com/flcwb). Will you be out of town soon? Watch online at [livestream.com/flcwb](http://livestream.com/flcwb).

Would you like to ask Pastor Steve a question about today's message? Contact him at 651.429.5349 x215 or [sturnbull@flcwb.org](mailto:sturnbull@flcwb.org).

## Daily Readings

---

Monday	John 8:31-38	Tuesday	John 1:14-18	Wednesday	1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Thursday	Romans 3:21-26	Friday	John 3:16-17	Saturday	1 John 3:16-17

## Next Week in Worship

---

**Next week's message:** *A Cloud of Witnesses*

**Next week's readings:** Hebrews 12:1-3

As we continue to learn The Heart of the Story, it helps to know the stories of fellow Christians, past and present. Join us next week on All Saints Day to be encouraged by the stories of our fellow saints today.

first lutheran church

4000 linden street • white bear lake, mn • 55110 • 651.429.5349 • [flcwb.org](http://flcwb.org)

# Group Discussion

## Connect

We're learning a little about the history of the church this week. What's your history with church? Have you been a part of a church before First Lutheran? How did you get here?

## Learn and Respond

In this week's message, we learned some stories from Christian history, specifically from Martin Luther and the time of the Reformation (in the 1500s).

- What do you find helpful about connecting with the stories of Christians in the past?
- The Reformation led to the formation of many Christian groups (or "denominations"). What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of having so many different kinds of Christian churches?

**Read John 8:31-36.** "Freedom" is a major theme in early Christian teaching, and Luther even modified the spelling of his own last name to mirror the ancient word for freedom in the New Testament.

- One thing we need to be freed from is the guilt of our sins. Why do you think this kind of freedom matters?
- We also need freedom from our shame, that is, our sense of failure, rejection, and alienation. Why do you think this kind of freedom matters?
- Finally, we also need freedom from the addictive power of sin - even though we often return to it. Why does this matter?

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:2.** The most central teaching of the Lutheran Reformation is the emphasis on the cross of Jesus. Luther once explained, "The cross alone is our theology."

- When you think about Jesus' commitment to lay down his life for us and that he shows us the character of God, what does that tell you about what God is like? Is this what people usually think when they imagine God? What difference does it make to know God specifically through the cross of Jesus?
- In the Lutheran branch of the Christian family tree, the cross is also central for how we choose to live and treat others. We are guided by the command to "love our neighbor" and understand love as "laying down our lives" or "bearing the cross" for one another. This is how we are "free from the law" even in our ethics. What are the strengths of using the cross as our central image for how we treat our neighbors? What are the challenges of this approach?

What do you think God might want you to hear in the story of Luther or the Lutheran emphasis on the cross? How do you think God invites you to take next steps of response to him?

## Pray

Pray today for unity in the Christian church, that the strengths of different Christian denominations could be leveraged without the bitterness of unhealthy division.