FIVE SOLAS OF THE REFORMATION

SOLA FIDE
Faith Alone
The only means of our justification before God is through Christ alone, not by works.

SOLA SCRIPTURA
Scripture Alone
The Bible is the only sufficient and infallible rule for doctrine and practice.

SOLUS CHRISTUS
Christ Alone
Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and people. Salvation is possible only by His only Incarnation.

SOLA GRATIA
Grace Alone
Our justification and salvation are both gifts of the sovereign grace of God and not the result of any action or condition we provide.

SOLI DEO GLORIA
Glory to God Alone
The purpose of justification is to bring glory to God. All glory and honor is due to God alone.

VISUAL THEOLOGY
Introduction to The Five Solas of the Reformation

The date October 31, 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing the 95 theses onto the Castle Church door at Wittenberg, Germany. The event would set into motion the Protestant Reformation.

The Protestant Reformers were a group of churchmen and leaders who were guided by the conviction that the church of their day had drifted away from the essential, original teachings of Christianity, especially in regard to what it was teaching about salvation—how people can be forgiven of sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and receive eternal life with God. The Reformation sought to re-orient Christianity on the original message of Jesus and the early church.

The Five Solas are five Latin phrases (or slogans) that emerged during the Reformation to summarize the Reformers’ theological convictions about the essentials of Christianity.

The Five Solas are:

1. **Sola Scriptura** (“Scripture Alone”): The Bible alone is our highest authority.

2. **Sola Gratia** (“Grace Alone”): We are saved by the grace of God alone.

3. **Sola Fide** (“Faith Alone”): We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

4. **Solus Christus** (“Christ Alone”): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King.

5. **Soli Deo Gloria** (“to the Glory of God Alone”): We live for the glory of God alone.

Let’s have a brief look at each of these five points.

**Sola Scriptura**

The Scriptures are our ultimate and trustworthy authority for faith and practice. This doesn’t mean that the Bible is the only place where truth is found, but it does mean that everything else we learn about God and his world, and all other authorities, should be interpreted in light of Scripture. The Bible gives us everything we need to know God and live a life honoring to him (2 Timothy 3:17).
Every word of the 66 books of the Bible is inspired by God’s Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also helps us to understand and obey Scripture.

**Sola Gratia and Sola Fide**

We are saved solely through faith in Jesus Christ because of God’s grace and Christ’s merit alone. We are not saved by our merits or declared righteous by our good works.

We can only stand before God by his grace as he mercifully attributes to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ and attributes to him the consequences of our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus’ life of perfect righteousness is counted as ours, and our records of sin and failure were counted to Jesus when he died on the cross.

Sola gratia and sola fide express the teaching of Ephesians 2:8-10:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

**Solus Christus**

God has given the ultimate revelation of himself to us by sending Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15). Only through God’s gracious self-revelation in Jesus do we come to a saving and transforming knowledge of God. He is the one mediator between a holy God and a sinful people (1 Timothy 2:5).

**Soli Deo Gloria**

Glory belongs to God alone. God’s glory is the central motivation for salvation (Philippians 2:5-11). God’s glory is the display of his infinite worthiness and value.

The goal of all of life is to give glory to God alone: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). As The Westminster Catechism says, the chief purpose of human life is “to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”
Week One - *Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone)*

**Scripture:**

2 Timothy 3:16 - *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,*

2 Peter 1:21 - *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

John 17:17 - *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*

**Watch Week One on the DVD**

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think the doctrine of ‘Scripture alone’ is still important today?

2. In what way did the video discussion challenge your view of Scripture?

3. How does the Bible, in tandem with the Holy Spirit, change lives?

4. Why is it important to believe that the Bible is more than a normal book?

5. In what ways do you struggle to look at God’s Word as the final authority for your life?
Week Two - *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone)

**Scripture:**

*Romans 3:21-28 - But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.*

Watch Week Two on the DVD

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think this doctrine is still important today?

2. How did the video discussion challenge your view of grace?

3. Why is it important that grace is unmerited?

4. Summarize the difference between ‘infused’ and ‘imputed’ righteousness?

5. Why is the assertion of works-based salvation bad news, not the good news of the gospel?

6. In what ways do you try to earn God's grace or favor?
Week Three - *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone)

**Scripture:**

*Ephesians 2:8-9* - *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

*Titus 3:4-5* - *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit*

**Watch Week Three on the DVD**

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think this doctrine is still important today?

2. How did the video discussion challenge your view of faith?

3. Why is it important that faith isn't simply a belief but an act of trust?

4. If salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, what role do good works have in our Christian walk (hint: see Ephesians 2:10)?

5. In what ways can you point others to Christ by showing them that their works can't justify them before God?

6. How does this doctrine bring a confidence that we can have assurance of salvation?
Week Four - *Solus Christus* (Christ Alone)

**Scripture:**

*John 14:6* - *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

*Acts 4:12* - *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

**Watch Week Four on the DVD**

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think this doctrine is still important today?

2. How did the video discussion challenge your view of Christ?

3. Why do we need to remember that faith is always directed at an object – Christ himself?

4. Why can no person, apart from Christ, serve as a mediator between God and us?

5. In what ways do you need to trust more in Christ and less in yourself?

6. Why is the object of our faith so crucial?
Week Five - Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God Alone)

Scripture:

Romans 11:33-36 - Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 10:31 - So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Watch Week Five on the DVD

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think this doctrine is still important today?

2. How did the video discussion challenge your view of God’s glory?

3. In which ways is God’s glory the end point of all the ‘solas’: Scripture, Faith, Grace, Christ?

4. How does God’s glory affect our daily lives?

5. Why is it important for salvation to be directly connected to God’s glory?

6. In what ways do you try to steal glory from God (be more concerned with taking the credit, building your reputation and fame)?