
CONTENTS

<i>Introduction to Teacher's Guide</i>	v
1 Birth and Background	1
2 Reformation or Radical Obedience	5
3 Swiss Brethren	9
4 Dutch Anabaptism	13
5 South Germany and the Hutterites	19
6 European Developments and Divisions	23
7 The Russian Mennonite Story	29
8 North American Beginnings	33
9 Awakening Movements	39
10 Modernity and Fundamentalism	43
11 Upheaval and New Groups	47
12 The Anabaptist Witness	51
13 Following Jesus Today	55

INTRODUCTION TO TEACHER'S GUIDE

Welcome to this study of Anabaptist history and thought! We hope you will find the study personally enriching and that your class will be blessed as well.

This section of the Teacher's Guide gives some general notes and tips about teaching this course. Following this section are specific notes and background material for each of the lessons.

Recommendations for teaching:

1. Keep the big picture in mind as you go through the course and keep coming back to that as you go through the lessons. The timelines can be a helpful resource to show where you are in history.
2. Ask the class to read the lesson before coming to class. Do not read the lesson in class as there will not be enough time for that. You may need to keep reminding the class to read the lesson week by week.
3. Incorporate some regular time for review into each lesson. Recounting the main focus of the previous lesson can be done in 30 seconds and will help fix the content in the students' mind as well as provide continuity to the story.

4. Suggested sequence of a lesson: (*The items in this list and the allotted times are only suggestions; teachers should adapt the lessons to their own setting and make their own judgments about how to best use the time.*)
 - a. Introduction
 - i. Welcome and prayer (2 min.)
 - ii. Touch on big picture and review previous lesson (1 min.)
 - b. Lesson and discussion
 - i. Summarize the main storyline and the significant developments of the lesson. Here the teacher is briefly refreshing everyone's memory of what they read in the lesson (3-5 min.)
 - ii. Lead a discussion about the lesson and its meaning. Some ideas for this time include: asking the class for clarifying questions or for observations, asking questions that help the class probe into the beliefs, values, and commitments of the people in the story; looking at some related Scripture passages; picking some of the discussion questions from the book to put before the class. (18-20 min.)
 - c. Wrap-up
 - i. Think together about the connection between the lesson and your own setting. What are the takeaways? (5-7 min.)
5. Manage the time for the class. Of course, the teacher is limited in how much he or she can direct comments and class discussion, but having a plan for how to budget the class time can help to ensure that it is used well.
6. Discussion questions for each lesson are provided as a resource for the teacher. The teacher can choose to use these questions or generate other questions. As class time is limited, the teacher will need to choose which questions are most helpful or pertinent to the class and prioritize those.
7. At the end of each lesson is a Selected Writing. The purpose of this section is to let the reader hear some of the early Anabaptists speak in their own words. Hearing

their commitment to God and love for His church firsthand often has more impact than simply describing their beliefs and actions. The writings are not intended to be discussed in class, although they certainly can be referenced if desired.

8. General advice regarding the study of history:
 - a. It is appropriate to remain humble about our ability to understand completely what is happening in historical accounts. We usually have limited information to work with.
 - b. We should also remember to be respectful and gracious toward people in history. They are one of the “neighbors” that God calls us to love as ourselves.
 - c. We do well to make sure that we understand a situation clearly before too quickly evaluating something as “good” or “bad.”
 - d. While we know that God is sovereign over history, outside of Scriptural accounts, we usually do not know what His role is in particular events.
9. Supplementary resources. Each lesson of the Teacher’s Guide provides additional information about the context and background of the lesson for the teacher. In addition, it lists recommended resources for further reading and study.

NOTE TO THE SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

1. The lessons of this course are organized around historical narratives, not Scripture passages, but a number of relevant Scripture passages are provided at the beginning of every lesson. These Scriptures speak to issues that come up in the lesson.
2. If you want a suggestion for a Scriptural passage to read for a devotional, the passages listed at the beginning of each lesson are good options for that part of the service.
3. Note that Daily Readings are provided in the back of the main text. It would be helpful to mention this to the congregation so that they know they can use this as a daily guide for their Scripture reading if they would like to.

Ideas for arranging teachers and classes:

1. It would be ideal for one person to teach all 13 lessons rather than passing the job around to multiple teachers. This will provide greater continuity throughout the lessons and allow the teacher to keep the bigger picture in mind as the study progresses. If one person is not able to teach all of the lessons, then communication between the teachers about how to integrate their approaches would be helpful.
2. While background knowledge of this subject is not necessary to teach this course, some familiarity with church and Anabaptist history would be beneficial for the teachers. Consideration should be given to which people in the congregation are the best equipped to teach this particular study.
3. It may be beneficial to divide up classes differently than your normal divisions for Sunday school or for whatever context you are doing this study. In some contexts, it might work better to put all men and women together and then divide that group into two or three smaller groups. Or men, women, and youth could all be combined and then divided into enough groups to get manageable class sizes. Yet another option would be to run this course as an elective alongside the regular classes, giving people the choice to choose which class to take for the quarter.

LESSON 1

BIRTH AND BACKGROUND

LESSON AIM

To trace the story of the church from its inception at Pentecost to the events that led to the baptism of adult believers on January 21, 1525

MAJOR ISSUES

- ◆ The story of the church
- ◆ Relationship of church and state
- ◆ The perils of apostasy

SCRIPTURES TO CONSIDER

- ◆ Acts 2. Story of the birth of the church
- ◆ 1 Peter 2. Peter's description of the church, our relationship to governing authorities, and our response to suffering
- ◆ Romans 13. The role of the state

NOTES

This lesson covers a significant amount of church history. Looking at the church's story from a bird's-eye view, it is important to think in terms of major themes. But in doing so, we must also beware of making sweeping statements that falsely characterize eras or major events. Consider the following themes:

- ◆ The church as described in Acts was characterized by regular fellowship, rich teaching, and mutual love. It also faced huge questions, such as how to integrate Gentile believers and how to counteract the inroads of Gnosticism.
- ◆ Over the first three centuries, the church spread throughout the Roman Empire, especially among the poorer classes. Along with sporadic and sometimes severe persecution, they

faced challenges such as how to deal with false teachers (see Galatians, 1 John 4, and Revelation 2 and 3) and what to do with members who recanted under persecution and then wanted to be received back into the church.

- ◆ Under the emperor Constantine, the church experienced significant and welcome relief from persecution. But this eventually led to the church and state working together and to the church enforcing its will on society.
- ◆ During this time, church leaders drafted the Nicene Creed and clarified the canon of Scripture, both of which very helpful for stabilizing the church. Simultaneously, the “desert fathers” developed a monastic approach to following Christ.
- ◆ Unhappy issues like the Crusades, the division between Rome and Constantinople, and growing corruption in the church have caused many historians to refer to the years between Constantine and the Reformation as the “Dark Ages.”

A significant point to ponder (and discuss) in this lesson is Jesus’ declaration to His disciples: “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Despite all the challenges, the opposition from without, and the huge failures from within, Jesus is still building His church and gathering to Himself those who believe.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- ◆ *Mennonites in Europe*, by John Horsch – Chapter 1: “The Decadence of Christianity”
- ◆ *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, by Leonard Verduin – Chapter 1: “Donatisten”
- ◆ *An Introduction to Mennonite History*, by Cornelius Dyck – Chapter 1: “The Church Before the Reformation”
- ◆ “The Apostles Creed.” Dating back in its earliest form to approximately A.D. 150, this creed offers a concise statement of faith and was especially helpful for illiterate believers.
- ◆ *The Didache*. Literally translated “The Teachings,” this early writing is attributed to the apostles, although like the Apostles Creed, its teachings are more likely handed down than actually written by the apostles. Still, it is helpful to hear how early Christians understood the traditions.

- ◆ Writings of the Ante-Nicene church fathers. Much has been preserved from the writings of early church leaders up to the time of the Nicene Council: men like Ignatius and Clement. The writings of these very early leaders help us to understand how they addressed issues and understood the writings of the apostles.
- ◆ Augustine. The most learned and articulate theologian of his time, Augustine was hugely influential both during his life and in the centuries since. In *Confessions*, Augustine describes his journey to faith. In *City of God*, he laid the groundwork for the “just war theory” and the Christian use of force, setting the church on a trajectory away from nonresistance and suffering love.
- ◆ The “Great Schism” of 1054. Despite a significant decline in true discipleship, the church strongly emphasized *catholicity*, or the oneness of the universal church, and worked hard at defining the one true faith. But a significant divide came, nonetheless, and ostensibly over a quite minor phrase added to the Nicene Creed. “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. . . .” The last three words “and the Son” split Roman Catholics from Constantinople Orthodox. Although many would agree that the division had more to do with power than doctrine, there never has been a full coming together of the two groups.

NOTES FOR LESSON 1

LESSON 2

REFORMATION OR RADICAL OBEDIENCE

Lesson Aim

To summarize the issues that led to the Reformation and then to the decision of the Anabaptists to follow Christ at any cost

Major Issues

- ◆ The authority of Scripture and the authority of the church
- ◆ Justification by faith and how to define faith
- ◆ The nature of the church and voluntary church membership

Scriptures to Consider

- ◆ Matthew 5-7. The Sermon on the Mount was the charter of the Anabaptists. They took literally Jesus' teachings that His followers were to love their enemies.
- ◆ Romans 4. We are justified by faith, not by doing the works of the Law. Paul's argument is based on God counting Abraham's faith as righteousness before the Law was given.
- ◆ James 2:14-26. We are justified by works, or more clearly stated, by a working faith. Faith that has no action is dead and neither justifies nor saves. (Note the difference between the works of the Law and the works produced by faith.)

Notes

Identifying systemic errors is difficult, especially when they are long established and widely held. But it is even more difficult to build new systems. For the Reformers as well as for the Anabaptists, the challenge was not to start over—the church already had its start at Pentecost—but to discern what parts of established thought and

practice were validated by the New Testament, what needed to be reshaped, and what needed to be abandoned. This lesson reviews how the Anabaptists sought to restore biblical church concepts.

For many years, Anabaptists were dismissed by historians and mainline denominations as fanatics who were completely in error. And there were reasons why this caricature made sense, as we will see in Lesson 4. But in the last century, many scholars have come to recognize and affirm the contributions of the Anabaptists. These contributions include

- ◆ Baptism upon confession of faith (though some mainline Protestant churches still practice infant baptism)
- ◆ Separation of church and state: the state should not enforce Christianity
- ◆ Voluntary church membership
- ◆ A disciplined church: members involved in gross sin should be removed from membership
- ◆ Church discipline should involve no physical force or harm but be limited to loss of membership, privileges, or responsibilities.

At the time of the Reformation, neither Catholics nor Protestants followed these lines of thought or practice. They did excommunicate, but only when a person defied the church. Many members, including members of clergy, indulged in sinful living with impunity.

This lesson also addresses the foundational doctrines of salvation by faith apart from the works of the Law and the authority of Scripture as our guide for living.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- ◆ *Mennonites in Europe*, by John Horsch – Chapter 5: “The Protestant Reformation”
- ◆ *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, by Leonard Verduin – Chapter 2: “Stäbler”
- ◆ *The Theology of Anabaptism*, by Robert Friedmann – Introduction: “Anabaptism and Protestantism”
- ◆ Desiderius Erasmus. This Dutch Reformer never left the Catholic Church, but he had a significant influence on others. As the illegitimate son of a priest, he likely had the opportunity for a good education. His most enduring contribution was his work in putting together a standard Greek New Testament.

Erasmus led the way in pointing to believer's baptism, but unfortunately, neither he nor other Reformers were willing to follow through. Information about Erasmus can easily be found online.

- ◆ Ulrich Zwingli. The lesson text gives some information about Zwingli, but it does not convey the immensity of his influence on the early Anabaptists. He participated in and encouraged the Bible studies that led Grebel, Manz, Stumpf, Brotli, and others to finally take the step of adult baptism. His close friendship with them and initial agreement on baptism made their rift the more painful.
 - Zwingli died on the front lines of battle when Catholic forces made a surprise attack on Zurich. We have two differing accounts of his death: https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1928/two-accounts-of-zwinglis-death/#google_vignette.
 - Zwingli and Luther agreed on most doctrines, but they differed sharply on the mass. Both rejected the mass as a sacrifice of Christ's body. Luther, however, understood "This is my body" to mean that the real presence of Christ was with the bread and His blood with the wine. Zwingli, on the other hand, thought the statement carried the sense of "This signifies My body" and maintained that Christ was present in spirit. See <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Huldrych-Zwingli>.
- ◆ John Calvin. Calvin joined the Reformation after it was underway, but through his writings he has had more lasting theological impact than any other Reformer. Unfortunately, Calvinists who followed have been "more Calvinistic than Calvin," taking his teaching about election and predestination beyond what he taught. Like other Reformers, Calvin readily used the arm of the state to fight enemies (Catholics) and to persecute and kill those who did not adhere to his views.