

[Michelle Lesley](#) ~ Discipleship for Christian Women

THE FIVE SOLAS OF THE PROTESTANT DEFORMATION

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This year marks the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the [Protestant Reformation](#). October 31, 2017 will commemorate the date in 1517 when Martin Luther famously nailed his 95 theses – a list of grievances against the Catholic church for unbiblical doctrines and practices – to the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

Luther's calls for reform spread quickly throughout Europe, inspiring the likes of church fathers Ulrich Zwingli (Zurich), John Calvin (Geneva), and [John Knox](#) (Scotland) to join the effort in their own locales. As they worked to address the issues raised in Luther's document, these men codified what we know today as the "Five Solas of the Reformation," the basis of Protestant church doctrine. The five solas are:

1. ***Sola Scriptura***– *Scripture alone* is the basis for all church doctrine, belief, and practice. ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#))
2. ***Sola Gratia***– Salvation is by *grace alone*. It is an unmerited gift of God based solely on His goodness, not our own (because we don't have any). ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#))
3. ***Sola Fide***– Salvation is through *faith alone*. Faith is a gift bestowed by God. We are saved only by placing that faith in Christ's finished work on the cross, not by doing good works or by any other attempts to earn salvation. ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#))
4. ***Solus Christus***– Salvation is found in *Christ alone*. As Acts 4:12 says, "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."
5. ***Soli Deo Gloria***– God saves man for *God's glory alone*, and Believers are to live our lives to glorify Him alone. ([Romans 11:36](#))

The five solas should be the foundation of the church's orthodoxy (beliefs or doctrine) and our orthopraxy (church practices). But over the past five centuries there's been a declension. A downgrade. The church has become deformed from the beautiful [biblical](#) portrait of a bride "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" because we've functionally replaced the Five Solas of the Reformation with pragmatic, and often idolatrous, solas of our own making...



No longer is Christian doctrine and practice governed strictly by *sola Scriptura*, especially among Christian women. Now it's all about what our own personal feelings, opinions, and life experiences. Won't go to a church that preaches sin and repentance because it offends your sensibilities? You've become accepting of homosexual "marriage" because someone you love dearly has adopted that lifestyle? Believe God is in the habit of talking to people because you've "heard His voice"? Then you're basing your doctrine and practices on your own feelings and experiences rather than on what the [Bible](#) says.

The Christian's instructions for life and godliness are found in only one place: [the Bible](#). We do not squish Christianity into the mold of what makes us happy, what we agree with, our relationships with others, or the things we've experienced. We start with the Bible and we bring everything else in our lives – **everything** we think, feel, believe, say, and do – into submission to it. If a personal feeling, opinion, or experience conflicts with Scripture, it is **wrong**. We don't change Scripture to fit our perspective, we change our perspective to fit Scripture.



If you want to know what road the modern church is headed down simply pick up your Bible and turn to... the Old Testament. Especially the [verses](#) that say "everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Jesus [said](#) the way to greatness was humility, servanthood, and anonymity. We want glory, recognition, and applause. God says, "walk in **My** ways." We say, "I'll consider that if it fits in with **my** plans, is agreeable to **me**, and makes **me** look good to others." We "[welcome](#)" the Holy Spirit into His own church as though we own the place. We are so used to being on the throne of our own lives that we use [words](#) like "letting" or "allowing" God to do something without even realizing it. We don't ask, "Is it pleasing to God?", we say, "If it's pleasing to me, it must be pleasing to God." Goodbye *solī Deo gloria*. Hello *solī ego gloria*.

Solus Prurientes Auribus

Itching Ears Alone

More and more, “Christians” are driven by the selfish greed of “What can God do for **me**?” rather than the pursuit of holiness. So-called Christian teachers who will scratch [itching ears](#) are sought out, and an abundance of hucksters are at the ready, eager to “give the people what they want” in order to make a [fast buck](#).

These people who claim the name of Christ care nothing about following in His footsteps – or even knowing what those footsteps are – craving instead the temporal creature comforts of wealth, success, popularity, health, self esteem, and influence. They want to be told what their flesh wants to hear, and they want to believe that’s Christianity. Share in Christ’s sufferings? Never. Away with the *Via Dolorosa*. Lead us down the primrose path.

Soli Christiano Celeberrimi

Christian Celebrity Alone

Spotlights. Merch. Audiences of thousands. Agents. Entourages. Sometimes it’s hard to tell the Christian celebrities from the secular. The star-struck church has created its own caste system in which biblical fidelity is measured by how many books you’ve sold, the number of attendees at your megachurch or conferences, and the size of your audience on social media. That many followers? That number of bestsellers at the Christian retail chain? She must know what she’s talking about. We’ll use her books for our women’s “Bible” study – no vetting necessary! But that 85 year old pastor who’s been faithfully expositing the Word to his rural congregation of twenty for the better part of his life? No kudos. No esteem for honorable servants of the Lord such as he. We want glitz and glam and hype and bling. We want to be cutting edge, relevant, and attractional. Because maybe – just maybe – some of that glory will rub off on us. And so it goes – we follow the latest and greatest Christian authors, bands and personalities, attracted more to their pretty faces, stylish clothes, and charisma than to sound doctrine, while Christ’s sheep, relegated to a dark corner of the sanctuary, bleat to simply be fed the Bread of Life and the Living Water.

Solus Popularis

Popularity Alone

What's hot rightthisminute? What's the current style, the latest trend, the fad du jour? The Church of What's Happening Now wants to know. Whether it's today's Christian bestseller that simply *every* small group is using now, dahling, or caving to whichever way the wind is blowing today when it comes to the world's sexual morality, if we can just ride the viral wave of the immediate we can get people in the doors, money in the offering plate, and souls into Heaven. Maybe.

Vox populi, vox Dei? Have we forgotten how uncool it was to be the only one building an ark before rain was invented? That idol worship was the latest thing going in Jeremiah's day? That it was the crowds who cried "Crucify Him!"?

The God of the Bible is not hip and groovy. He's seen as hopelessly out of touch with current morals and values. A doddering old fool who just can't seem to get with the times. His holy ways are antiquated and obsolete. We're modern and educated and wise to the ways of the world. **We** know better how His church and our lives should run.

Just what is it we're building our Christian doctrine and practices on these days? 'Cause it sure isn't the unadulterated written Word of God and the original five solas. Maybe it's time we took a good hard look at how far we've slidden in the last five hundred years. How far we've strayed from the purity of Scripture and doctrine the Reformers worked so hard for, were imprisoned and persecuted for, were martyred for.

Maybe it's time for another Reformation.