Outline

An Overview of Martin Luther’s Life:

I. Childhood
   A) Born November 10, 1482 or 1483 in Eisleben to Hans and Margaret Ludder.
      1) Baptized the next day (St. Martin’s Day) at the parish church, Sts. Peter and Paul by Pastor Rennebecher
   B) Early in childhood, family moved to Mansfeld
   C) School
      1) Generally, Luther was a good student
      2) Enters University at Erfurt, earns his Bachelor’s degree in 1502. 2nd in his class
      3) Begins study in Law, encouraged by his father
   D) Has a conversion Experience on the Road near Stottelheim
      1) In fear, he prays to St. Anne, patron saint of miners, promising he will become a monk
      2) Causes a rift with his father, who wants him to become a lawyer
      3) Enters the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt that summer

II. Education
   A) Luther is encouraged to earn his an MA, which he completes in 1505
      1) He is ordained in May of 1507. Says his first mass. He sought to be a devoted, pious priest
      2) Lectures for one term in Wittenberg, on moral philosophy
      3) In 1509, earns a Bachelors of Bible and becomes a “Sententarius”
      4) In 1510, is sent to Rome on business for the Augustinian Order
   B) He is sent to the University in Wittenberg in 1511 to earn his doctorate and teach Bible.
      1) This university was founded by Elector Frederick the Wise in Wittenberg, which was considered a 
         “backwaters” place
      2) The University Chapel had the largest relic collection in Europe
      3) Frederick the Wise sponsors Luther’s Doctorate, in exchange for the promise that Luther will always 
         teach at Wittenberg

III. Spiritual Battles
   A) In the midst of his studies, Luther feels he has not done enough to please God. He is never able to free 
      himself from sin, despite daily confession
      1) Drives his confessor, Johannes von Staupitz, crazy. He tells Luther to study Christ crucified, to learn 
         the Bible’s truths

IV. The “Reformation Breakthrough”
   A) Was facilitated by at least 4 factors:
      1) Luther’s intensive study and teaching of scripture
         (a) Lectures on the Psalms (twice) Hebrews, Galatians and Romans from 1512-1518
      2) The influence of the humanists
         (a) Their concern for reform
         (b) Their motto, “Ad Fontes” – back to the sources
         (c) Study of texts in original languages
      3) The appearance of the indulgence seller, Tetzel
      4) Luther’s own personal struggles to understand “righteousness”
         (a) Luther felt that he could not, no matter how hard he tried, please God and meet God’s standards 
            of righteousness. The study of Scripture in its original languages led him to discover things not 
            readily apparent in the Latin “Vulgate”: 

Righteousness was an act, rather than a requirement, of God,
(i) People were not called to “do penance” but “to repentance”

B) Tetzel, a Dominican Priest, was selling indulgences in the area of Wittenberg
1) Half the proceeds were to go to the Vatican, and half to the new Archbishop, and Elector, Albrecht of Mainz. Tetzel was overly zealous in his promises:

C) Luther was concerned with this abuse of indulgences, and his dawning discoveries over justification, Luther writes 95 Theses for debate in Latin and posts them to his bishop.

D) Luther is soon challenged to defend his theses
1) Writes the “Explanations of the 95 Theses” in early 1518
2) He is given opportunity to discuss his “new” theology at the gathering of the Augustinian Friars in Heidelberg in May of 1518. This is his first major reformation “theological treatise.”
3) Luther then is called to Rome to defend himself before Cardinal Cajetan.
   (a) Refuses, remembering what happened to Hus. They finally agree to meet in Augsburg in October of 1518.
4) Issues are not resolved. In July of 1519, a debate is held Dr. Eck in Leipzig
   (a) In both debates, the issues are justification, and the Authority of the Pope
   (b) Eck decides Luther is a follower of John Hus, and thus a heretic
5) Luther feverishly “develops” the implications of his “new” theology

E) 1520 is a time of great productivity in writing. His major reformation treatises are penned:
1) Address to the Christian Nobility
   (a) He develops the idea of the “priesthood of all believers.”
2) Babylonian Captivity of the Church
   (a) Luther rejects all but two of the sacraments, while attacking the “walls” which the papacy had erected to protect and gratify itself at the expense of the gospel
3) On the Freedom of a Christian
   (a) Luther explains two apparently contradictory statements:
      (i) “The Christian is a perfectly free Lord of all, subject to none
      (ii) The Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all

F) Luther’s bold writings cause a stir among the Roman Catholic hierarchy.
1) Many consider a heretic like Jan Hus, who had been condemned for Heresy in 1415.

G) On June 15, 1520 the Papal Bull, “Exsurge Domine” is published, giving Luther 60 days to submit and recant his heresies. Luther refuses. He burns a copy of the papal bull in December, just outside the Wittenberg city gates

H) Meanwhile, Emperor Charles V takes over from Maximilian I. He summons Luther to an Imperial Diet in April of 1521 at the Imperial City of Worms.
1) Luther is asked to recant his writings
2) Makes his famous, “Here I Stand” speech:
3) “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand, may God help me. Amen.”

V. The Reformation Era
A) After the Diet of Worms, Luther heads back to Wittenberg. Is “kidnapped” and taken to the Wartburg Castle. He is now under the death sentence by the Empire and the Church
1) What keeps him alive?
   (a) The pope and the emperor are fighting with each other, so the emperor refuses to do the pope’s wishes
   (b) The emperor needs the elector Frederick’s support to fight the “Turks”
(c) The “reformation” of Germany was still a relatively small issue in the whole of the Roman Catholic Church
(d) Frederick the Wise uses Luther as a tool in getting more autonomy from the emperor

B) In his enforced stay at the Wartburg, Luther:
1) translates the New Testament into German
2) Writes commentaries on the Magnificat and the Sermon on the Mount
3) Writes sermons (Church Postils)
4) Wrestles with his “calling”

C) Luther returns to Wittenberg in early spring of 1522, when he hears of problems arising over implementing reforms
1) Destruction of icons in the churches
2) Marriage of priests
3) Communion in both kinds

D) He realizes that his place is with the people, not hidden in a tower amidst the “realm of the birds”

E) Luther attracts a large following.
1) Pamphlets are published. His writings appeal to those who feel marginalized. He is called the “German Hercules”

F) In May of 1525, Frederick the Wise dies, and John the Steadfast becomes elector
1) The same month, Thomas Müntzer leads a peasants’ revolt
2) Luther loses favour with the peasants; accused of not taking reforms far enough

G) He gets married to Katharina von Bora, a former nun, in June of 1525. He and Katarina von Bora, a former nun whom Luther and others had smuggled out of a convent, were given the Black Cloister (the now empty monastery in Wittenberg) as a wedding present by the New Elector, John the Steadfast

H) He writes new documents:
1) Defends his understanding of the Lord’s Supper against the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches
2) In 1525 he writes “The Unfree Will”, more often known as the “Bondage of the Will”, in response to Erasmus’ treatise, “The Free Will”.
   (a) He argues that a person does not have the ability to freely choose to do good toward God.
   (b) Luther considers it one of his best writings
3) On another front, Luther visit rural parishes in 1527-1528. He discovers that they need instructional books for pastors and people.
   (a) He writes the Large and Small Catechisms

I) Luther stays in Wittenberg when the plague hits in 1527-8. He says it is the pastor’s responsibility to stay with those in need
1) With Katie, raises his own family. Once quips, “One cannot be a good theologian until they have learned to change their child’s diapers”
2) As family grows, Luther comes to appreciate the importance, or ‘calling’ of the family

J) Other activities:
1) Besides writing theological treatises, Luther finds comfort in writing hymns
2) Fights to get the city to have a “community chest” to assist those in social and economic difficulties

K) Family Tragedy is no stranger. The Luthers adopt the children of their sisters who die from the plague
1) Their infant daughter Elizabeth dies in about 1528. Her death possibly reflected in the hymn, “A Mighty Fortress”
2) A second daughter, dies in 1542 at age 13

VI. The Diet of Augsburg
A) The Emperor, Charles V, has tried to settle the controversy at the imperial Diets of Speier in 1526 and again in 1529
1) Roman Catholics insist he uphold the “Edict of Worms”
2) Evangelical princes and those seeking more autonomy argue for a new deal
3) At the Diet of Speier in 1529, the evangelical princes and powers supportive of more autonomy are first given the name, “Protestants” because the protest the emperor’s agenda.
4) Charles V decides to “settle” the issue of the split in the empire at the Diet at Augsburg in 1530.
5) He invites the Lutherans to present their position, that it might be properly considered.

B) The Roman Catholics, Papal representatives, Lutheran Theologians and Evangelical Princes all come to the meeting with an agenda
1) Luther himself cannot attend because of concerns for his safety. Melanchthon becomes the primary spokesperson

C) The Roman Catholics prepare a response to the “Augsburg Confession”
1) Emperor rejects it and asks for shorter, less polemical response
2) Their response is known as the “Confutations”
3) Melanchthon responds to the “Confutations” with his “Apology to the Augsburg Confession” in 1531.

VII. Solidifying the Reformation
A) The “Protestant Princes form the Schmalkaldic League in 1532
   1) Luther insists they should trust God rather than form a military alliance.
   2) When the Pope calls for an Ecumenical Council to discuss the issues, the Protesting Princes do not know what to do.
   3) Luther is called to speak to the Schmalkaldic League in 1537
   4) Luther writes a position paper, called “The Schmalkald Articles,” as his “last will and testament”
B) After the Diet of Augsburg, Luther decides that the “evangelical groups” need to start forming their own church. He doesn't like the title, “Lutheran Church”
   1) He proposes that in emergencies, a prince could act as a bishop (Notsbischof)
   2) Thus, the beginning of the “state church,” a model that would continue for hundreds of years in Europe
      (a) Princes would act as bishops, and rule both church and state

VIII. Last Years
A) In 1542, Luther writes infamous tract, “On the Jews and their Lies”
B) Luther desairs of living in Wittenberg
   1) He faces many illnesses
      (a) Luther finally dies on February 18, 1546 in Eisleben (where he was born) while mediating between civil authorities.
      (b) Last words: “We are beggars, this is true.”
C) The long-awaited council, held finally at Trent, opens in 1545, just before Luther’s death
D) War erupts. Katharine escapes Wittenberg and goes to Denmark at the invitation of King Christian III. A few years later she returns. She dies in Wittenberg in 1552.