

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. If someone asked you, “What is a Reformed church,” how would you answer?
Have the class share what they wrote down before reading the text.
2. List some of the important details that caused the Protestant Reformation and what people were involved. [7-9]
Without spending a lot of time, have the class share answers from before they read the text, and then what they can add after their reading.
3. A Reformed church has six distinctives, the first of which is our belief that the Scripture is the very Word of God. Why do you think God gave us the Bible? [9]
You will probably get a variety of answers, such as so we can get saved, or so we know how to live. Be sure they understand the main reason God gave us His Word was so we would know Him personally.
4. We often refer to the Scriptures as God’s only infallible rule of faith and practice. What does this mean? [9]
There are three things to explain here: Infallibility (the Bible is without error in all it teaches), faith (understanding God and what He expects of us), and practice (Scripture teaches us, at least in principle, all we need to know about how to live our lives to His glory).
5. Reformed churches use creeds, like the Westminster and Heidelberg. What is a creed, and why is it helpful? [10]
First, emphasize that creeds are always subservient to the Scriptures. God wrote the Bible; dedicated men, who deeply loved the Lord, put together the creeds according to what they believed the Scripture taught.
6. The second emphasis of the Reformed church is the absolute sovereignty of God. But, if God is that sovereign, how can man be free to choose? [11-13]
*There are two answers to this. Any time the word “free” is used it must be defined, as no one, not even God is *absolutely* free (i.e., God is not free to sin). What exactly is man free to do? On his own – sin! The second answer is found in Deut.29:29. There are actualities like this that are both true, but the understanding of how they can both be true is understood by God alone. We must accept what He reveals to us as well as what He keeps to Himself, for God can do *only* that which is right and best.*
7. Another mark of a Reformed church is our emphasis that God is sovereign in our salvation. But, many ask, “is it fair for God to choose some and reject others?” [13-17]
This is a common objection deserving a good answer, but the answer is, it is the wrong question. The question should be, why does God bother to save any? Man’s sin deserves only hell, but God did not create us just to punish us. His election of some shows the world what God will do with those who are faithful to Him.
8. Non-Reformed churches tend to teach that God, in His *foreknowledge*, looked ahead and saw those who would believe in Him, and on that basis He elected them. Can you see the flaw in this thinking? [13-17]

If God had to look ahead to see what I would do, then two things are true: God did not know something ahead of time and had to find out what I would do – meaning He is not sovereign. Secondly, salvation is based in me – I chose, and I did it all without Him. Neither of these are what the Scripture, or reality, teach.

9. After your reading, how do you relate to Steve's wrestling with the issues of divine sovereignty?
10. A third distinctive of Reformed churches is our view that the Bible has one main theme running through it – the covenant. What do you understand by the concept of the covenant, and what makes it so important? [17-18]
In answering this, take them back to question three. If God gave us the Bible so we could get to know Him, then the theme of the Bible must be *Him* from cover to cover. In it God tells us about all His promises to us and how He will keep His promises. The Bible is not a mere history of people and events, but rather how God worked through them to do His will.
11. Our fourth characteristic is our understanding and approach to the Law of God. When you think of the word “law,” what comes to your mind? How does that differ from God’s Law? [18-21]
Above all else, try to get your class the think differently about God’s Law. Too often people think God sat around and decided what laws He could make up to keep us in line. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Law is a representation of the character of God. Therefore, it is personal to Him. Every time we sin we personally offend God, and why sin is so abhorrent to God - it hurts Him! The world in general ignores God and His Law (character), so He is offended. We find God when we come to realize (by the convicting work of His Spirit) how badly we have offended this holy God. And, as we come to know Him better (through the study of His Word), we seek to glorify His Name (character).
12. Our understanding of the church is point number five. What are some of the marks of the church that come to your mind? [21-27]
The points to emphasize here: begin with the church existing in the OT, the three different church government structures, and the differing views of the sacraments.
13. Our final mark is God’s Kingdom. Jesus prayed, “Your Kingdom come...” What did He mean by that, when the Kingdom was already here?
For this, you need to go back over world history – creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. God is King, and as such He always reigns. The world is His Kingdom, and His church is the special part of His Kingdom, which He equips to live and influence the part of the Kingdom who do not acknowledge His kingship.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

1. The only way to truly know any denomination is to know what it believes. Therefore, make it a point to get a copy of the *Westminster Confession* and the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. Not only read them, but check out all the Scripture texts used to support what is stated.
2. Read G.I. Williamson’s commentaries on the *Westminster Confession for Study Classes* and his *Westminster Shorter Catechism for Study Classes*. This is a great way to help deepen your understanding of the beliefs of a Reformed church, and to deepen your faith in the God we love.

For Further Study

On Being Presbyterian by Sean Michael Lucas. P&R, 2006.

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