

# What Does It Mean To Be Reformed?

We are all spiritual children of the Reformation. I often describe myself and our church as being reformed in theology. So, what does that actually mean?

Theology = thinking and reasoning about God.

Every person has thoughts about God.

Every person reasons about God.

∴ Every person is a theologian.

But – what is the *ground* of our thinking and reasoning?

The majority:

Human tradition, reason, religion, philosophy, values, principles.

E.g., Kim = utterly unique religion that is true for everyone else!

The minority:

Think and reason according to the Scriptures; 66 books of the Bible.

God cannot be discovered; He must reveal Himself.

2 Tim 3:16 is true:

**teaching** (that is, the *content* of truth)

**reproof** (identifying or diagnosing error)

**correction** (the antidote to error)

**training in righteousness** (application of the truth to life).

Biblical theology means

Positive: thinking and reasoning according to God's self-revelation.

Negative: not following our own ideas and ponderings.

Practicing biblical theology =

Being spiritually and personally **formed** by the Word alone.

If we drift from Scripture, we become **deformed**.

The answer is to be **reformed**.

Only Scripture can **form** and **re-form** us.

## Old Testament:

The Law **formed** Israel.

Israel drifted away from Scripture = they were **deformed**.

The prophets preached the Law anew to **reform** them.

## New Testament:

The Gospel **formed** Christians and churches.

Over time many drifted (Corinthians, Galatians).

Paul's letters *taught, reproved, corrected, and trained* them: **reformed**.

Romans 12:2 is a caution NOT to deform by being conformed.

## Christians:

**Trans-formed** from sinners to saints.

**Formed** by the Scriptures and the Gospel.

Danger = being **con-formed** to the world, de-formed from Christ.

Scripture **formed** us in the first place

Only Scripture can **re-form** us to what we were at first.

So - danger of being de-formed even in the apostolic age.

How much greater danger after?

Height of arrogance to assume that WE would NEVER de-form!

## RCC roots in 325 A.D.

Constantine legalized Christianity, AND

Organized the Roman church according to Roman empire structure.

590 Gregory I declared himself leader of the church on earth.

Over the next 900 years serious drift took place.

Scriptures set aside in favor of human opinion and philosophies.

As a result:

Scripture was demoted to one of several sources of truth, AND

The Gospel was corrupted into a works-based system; came to

Resemble OT sacrificial system more than NT church.

## Seeds of Reformation

John Wycliffe in England (1320-1384)

Jan Huss in Bohemia (1369-1415)

Catholic priests; educated and could read (unusual)

Came to view the Bible and not the church as the final authority

Criticized unbiblical practices and teachings of the church.

Called for Scriptures to be translated into common languages

Suffered persecution for their positions.

1440, Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press.

Bibles became affordable and available

Literate people could compare Scripture to church teachings, and did.

## Reformers

Martin Luther in Germany,

John Calvin in France,

Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland,

John Knox in Scotland

William Tyndale in England.

But truly Protestant Reformation was a popular movement.

It would have happened without these particular men.

Once people had the Word it was inevitable.

For the first time in 1,000 years, relied on Bible not church.

People could see for themselves.

They knew if preacher got it right or wrong.

Scripture **re-formed** Christians and the church.

Luther's intention was to **re-form** the church, not break with it.

They tried him for heresy.

His response:

“Unless I am refuted and convicted by testimonies of *the Scriptures* or by clear arguments [from the Scriptures], since I believe neither *the Pope* nor *the Councils alone* – it being obvious that they have often erred and contradicted themselves – I am conquered by *the Holy Scriptures* quoted by me, and my conscience is bound in *the Word of God*: I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against the conscience.” Schaff, P., & Schaff, D. S. (1910). [\*History of the Christian\*](#)

[\*church\*](#) (Vol. 7, pp. 304–305). Charles Scribner's Sons.

The heart of being reformed is the priority given to the Word of God.

It **forms** us in the first place.

If we remain dedicated to us we are unlikely to **de-form**.

When (not if) we do, it **re-forms** us, as long as it has our attention.

The Reformation is never truly over.

Major demoninations formed in the Reformation:

Lutheran Church

Anglican Church

Presbyterian Church

All have drifted over the years

Last year African Anglican church “disfellowshipped” Archb. Of Cant.  
for approving of homosexuality.

Missouri and Wisconsin Lutheran synods formed in 1800s  
because of liberal drift in existing Lutheran denoms.

PC-USA approves of homosexuality; PC-A is holding its ground for now.

Being Reformed = being **formed** and **reformed as necessary** by Scripture alone.

I study the Scriptures and not human tradition, theology, or philosophy.

I teach the Scriptures alone.

I tell you what book, chapter, and verse so you see for yourself and test me.

I am happy to be corrected **by Scripture alone**.

I know a husband and wife who have drifted.

Always more impacted by experience and emotion.

A few years ago faced a challenging time; spiritual lives suffered.

Today lived depressed, defeated lives, blaming everyone else.

No apparent interest in being **re-formed** by Scripture.

They aren't uncommon.

## Illustration

So imagine that you are driving on a mountain road in the middle of a moonless, cloudy night. Your headlights are the only source of light. Now, what would you trust more, your sense of direction and your memory of how the road twists and turns, or your headlights shining on the road ahead of you? Would you have such confidence in your own abilities that you would only turn your lights on occasionally? Or you would keep them on and turn on the high beams?

The Bible describes this world as being full of darkness.

- But the Bible is “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).
- It is “a lamp shining in a dark place” (Second Peter 1:19).
- Jesus Himself is the true Light, which coming into the world, gives light to every man (John 1:9).
- If Jesus gives light to every man, then why are people still in darkness?
- Jesus tells us that while “the Light has come into the world ... men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).
- Jesus promises, “He who follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life” (John 8:12).
- The key word there is “*follows*.” He who *follows* Christ will never walk in darkness.
- But those who refuse to *follow* Him, even though they may claim to *know* Him, will continue to live in the darkness.

We are a “reformed” church.

We will continue to be governed by the Word of God alone.

Our ability to understand it is limited; we can get things wrong.

But the Word can and will correct us.

**For myself, I promise to continue to study the Scriptures alone and teach them to you to the best of my ability. And I urge you to compare what I teach to the Scriptures. You are my safety net; if I get it wrong, I hope and trust that faithful saints will call my attention to the Scriptures.**

**And I urge you to open your heart and mind to the Scriptures as often as you can. Live in the Light of Scripture. Keep the pages of your Bible open so that you can follow Christ closely and well.**