

S T U D Y   G U I D E



MICHAEL REEVES



# Reformation Truths

GOSPEL CLARITY *for* OUR TIME

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# Reformation Truths

Michael Reeves



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

*Renew your Mind.*

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# Introduction

Many people today dismiss the Reformation as a peculiar chapter of history with little relevance to contemporary life. However, nothing could be further from the truth. In this eight-part teaching series, Dr. Michael Reeves examines the ideas that lay at the heart of the Reformation. Surveying the writings of the brightest Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars of the era, Dr. Reeves reveals the stark contrast between the traditions' very different interpretations of the gospel. By studying the central truths of the Reformation, Christians today can better understand, rejoice in, and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

This study guide is a companion to the video teaching series. Whether you are using the DVDs, streaming the videos on Ligonier.org, or going through the course in Ligonier Connect, this resource is designed to help you make the most of the learning experience. For each message in the series, there is a corresponding lesson in this guide. Here is what you will find in each lesson:

INTRODUCTION	<p>The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use the introduction to each lesson to get a sense of the big picture before watching the video. Refer to these statements as you work through the study guide to remind you of what you have already covered and where you are headed.</p>
LEARNING GOALS	<p>The learning goals are the knowledge and skills the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging with its contents. Keeping the overall purpose in mind as you watch each video and reflect on or discuss the questions will help you get the most out of each lesson.</p>
KEY IDEAS	<p>The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge each lecture is communicating.</p>

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that are intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Reflect on individually or discuss in a group the questions in the order in which they appear in the lesson. The timestamps in the right margin indicate where the answers to questions during the video can be found.</p>
PRAYER	<p>The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Consider using each lesson's prayer section as a guide to personal or group prayer. These sections follow the ACTS prayer model, which you can learn more about in R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet <i>Does Prayer Change Things?</i> This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at <a href="http://Ligonier.org">Ligonier.org</a>.</p>
REVIEW QUIZ	<p>The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appears at the end of each lesson.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use each quiz to check your comprehension and memory of the major points covered in each lecture. It will be most beneficial to your learning if you take a lesson's quiz either sometime between lessons or just before you begin the next lesson in the study guide.</p>
ANSWER KEY	<p>The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use the answer key to check your own answers or when you do not know the answer. Note: Do not give in too quickly; struggling for a few moments to recall an answer reinforces it in your mind.</p>

# Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through the *Reformation Truths* video teaching series and this companion study guide. Whether you are going through this series on your own or with a group, these schedules should help you plan your study path.

	Extended 10-Week Plan	Standard 8-Week Plan	Abbreviated 6-Week Plan	Intensive 4-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
1	*	1	1	1 & 2
2	1	2	2 & 3	3 & 4
3	2	3	4	5 & 6
4	3	4	5	7 & 8
5	4	5	6 & 7	
6	5	6	8	
7	6	7		
8	7	8		
9	8			
10	*			

\* For these weeks, rather than completing lessons, spend your time discussing and praying about your learning goals for the study (the first week) and the most valuable takeaways from the study (the last week).

# Do Words Matter?

## INTRODUCTION

Doctrinal clarity and precision are important, but many people today think that the issues of the Reformation were trivial debates over words. In this lecture, Dr. Reeves breaks through common misconceptions about the Reformation to reveal that what was at stake was the gospel itself. By studying the central issues of the Reformation, we will discover that words matter, because theological precision has eternal significance.

## LEARNING GOALS

When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Appreciate the clarity of Reformers' articulation of the gospel
- Explain why doctrinal clarity matters

## KEY IDEAS

- The Reformers articulated precise meanings of key doctrines that are central to the Christian gospel.
- A lack of clarity about these essential truths of the faith creates problems in the Christian life.
- Doctrinal clarity can help Christians grow in confidence and Christlikeness.

## REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

*What Do You Think?*

Take a moment to answer the following questions. They will prepare you for the lecture.

- Why are you undertaking this study?
- What comes to your mind when you think of the Protestant Reformation? In your own words, what was the Reformation mainly about?

### *Scripture Reading*

*And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”*

—Isaiah 29:13–14

- According to this passage, having the right words does not guarantee a right relationship with God. What deeper problems may lurk beneath the veneer of piety?

### During the Video

Answer the following questions while you watch the video. They will guide you through the lecture.

### *Wars over Words?*

0:00–9:28

- What is Dr. Reeves’ hope for this teaching series?
- What were the effects of Erasmus’ indifference to doctrine?

### *The Need for Clarity*

9:28–20:47

- How did the answers of evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics compare in the poll taken of believers in the United States and Canada? What problem with the poll does this reveal?
- How did Martin Luther’s teaching on assurance of salvation differ from the joint declaration on justification between Roman Catholics and Lutherans in 1999?



### After the Video

Answer the following questions after you have finished the lecture. They will help you identify and summarize the major points.

- What is the subtle assumption that may lurk beneath our culture's dismissal of theological issues?

If you are in a group, have the members identify beliefs for which they would and would not be willing to die.

- In the poll referenced in this lesson, what four statements were used to measure the influence of evangelicalism in Canada and the United States?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss which of these statements they think most people in our culture would agree with and which they think most people would disagree with. Explain your answers.

- In this lesson, Dr. Reeves said, "As long as doctrine is ignored, we must remain captives of the ruling system or the spirit of the age." Explain this statement.

If you are in a group, have the members share a specific way that "the spirit of the age" has attempted to hold them captive.

### PRAYER

Commit what you have learned from God's Word in this lesson to prayer.

- Praise God for providing a detailed record of His saving work in the Bible.
- Confess areas of carelessness or apathy in your pursuit of biblical truth.
- Thank God for His perfect work as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in saving you.
- Ask God to give you a greater sense of confidence in and assurance of His saving work in your life.

### REVIEW QUIZ

Use these multiple-choice questions to measure what you learned from this lesson.

1. Which of the following scholars said, "The sum of our religion is peace and unanimity"?
  - a. Desiderius Erasmus
  - b. John Calvin
  - c. Mark Noll
  - d. Martin Luther

- 
2. Which of the following statements did *not* appear in the poll designed to measure the prominence of evangelicalism in North America?
    - a. “I have committed my life to Christ and consider myself to be a converted Christian.”
    - b. “It is important to encourage non-Christians to become Christians.”
    - c. “The Bible is the inspired Word of God.”
    - d. “Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God provided a way for me to be justified by faith alone.”
  3. On which date was a joint declaration on justification signed between Lutheran and Catholic leaders?
    - a. October 31, 1517
    - b. October 31, 1999
    - c. October 31, 2000
    - d. October 31, 2017
  4. The joint declaration of justification upholds the doctrine of assurance as an unassailable article of the Christian faith.
    - a. True
    - b. False
  5. Martin Luther conceded that the issue of ongoing sin calls a believer’s assurance of salvation into question.
    - a. True
    - b. False
  6. Which of the following scholars suggested that the Reformation is now over?
    - a. Desiderius Erasmus
    - b. John Calvin
    - c. Mark Noll
    - d. Martin Luther

# Answer Key—Do Words Matter?

## REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Before the Video

#### *What Do You Think?*

*These are personal questions. The answers should be based on your own knowledge and experience.*

#### *Scripture Reading*

- According to this passage, having the right words does not guarantee a right relationship with God. What deeper problems may lurk beneath the veneer of piety?

*This passage reveals the tragic disconnect that can exist between a person's outward confession and the state of that person's heart. Although an individual may say all the right words about God, that person's heart may be distant from God. Moreover, outward displays of piety may be the result of human rules and traditions rather than a genuine knowledge of and love for God.*

### During the Video

#### *Wars over Words?*

- What is Dr. Reeves' hope for this teaching series?

*The hope is that all who participate in this teaching series will come to appreciate that with the Reformers' clarity on the precise meaning of Reformation truths comes a heightened sense of joy, resolution, and God's power through the gospel.*

- What were the effects of Erasmus' indifference to doctrine?

*The kind of doctrinal indifference embodied by the humanist scholar Erasmus exercised an imprisoning, corrosive effect. Erasmus' unwillingness to engage with the deep doctrinal issues of his day meant that he could at best achieve merely cosmetic changes to the medieval Roman Catholic Church. Those who remain indifferent to doctrine have no means of resisting or escaping the prevailing spirit of the age.*

#### *The Need for Clarity*

- How did the answers of evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics compare in the poll taken of believers in the United States and Canada? What problem with the poll does this reveal?

*In the poll referenced in this lesson, the answers of evangelicals and Roman Catholics were very similar. One-quarter of all respondents who were labeled*

*“evangelical” based on their answers were in fact Roman Catholics. These results indicate that the poll failed to raise any of the issues that were the subject of debate during the Reformation.*

- How did Martin Luther’s teaching on assurance of salvation differ from the joint declaration on justification between Roman Catholics and Lutherans in 1999?

*This joint declaration takes an ambiguous approach to the topic of assurance. It affirms God’s mercy and Christ’s merit but also suggests that the assurance of Christians ultimately rests on their own moral discipline. In contrast, Martin Luther insisted that Christians could rest in the unshakable certainty that Christ has taken their sins from them and has imputed His own righteousness to them.*

#### After the Video

- What is the subtle assumption that may lurk beneath our culture’s dismissal of theological issues?

*Our culture is quick to dismiss theological issues because of the underlying assumption that the doctrines in question are not actually true. The questions raised in the Reformation concerned significant questions such as, “What will happen to me when I die?” and “How can I know?” An unwillingness to ask important questions like these reveals an underlying attitude of unbelief.*

- In the poll referenced in this lesson, what four statements were used to measure the influence of evangelicalism in Canada and the United States?

*The four statements used to determine the presence of evangelical belief in this poll were (1) the Bible is the inspired Word of God; (2) I have committed my life to Christ and consider myself to be a converted Christian; (3) it is important to encourage non-Christians to become Christians; and (4) through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God provided a way for the forgiveness of my sins.*

- In this lecture, Dr. Reeves said, “As long as doctrine is ignored, we must remain captives of the ruling system or the spirit of the age.” Explain this statement.

*This argument is rooted in the discussion of Erasmus’ indifference to deeper doctrinal engagement. Although Erasmus wanted to reform many of the errors and abuses of the medieval Roman Catholic Church, he lacked the theological resources to effect the changes he desired. Problematic religious practice is normally the result of problematic theology. Problematic theology can be dismantled only through a process of rigorous theological reflection and reform. If we are unwilling to engage in this kind of theological enterprise, we will remain trapped in the prevailing errors of our age.*

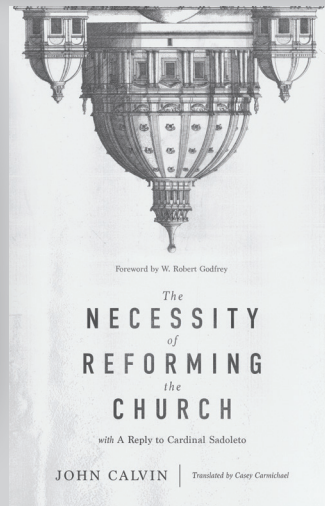
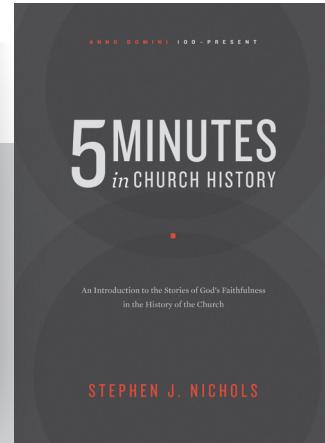
## REVIEW QUIZ

### Lesson 1

1. **A.**  
*The sixteenth-century scholar Desiderius Erasmus wrote, “The sum of our religion is peace and unanimity. This can only be when we define as little as possible.” In other words, Erasmus considered doctrinal precision an obstacle to peace and unity.*
2. **D.**  
*The four statements used in this poll were (1) the Bible is the inspired Word of God; (2) I have committed my life to Christ and consider myself to be a converted Christian; (3) it is important to encourage non-Christians to become Christians; and (4) through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God provided a way for the forgiveness of my sins. The poll did not bring up the topic of justification or any other contested doctrines of the Reformation.*
3. **B.**  
*Representatives from the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation signed a joint declaration on the doctrine of justification on October 31 (Reformation Day), 1999. This declaration led many observers to conclude that the fundamental theological differences of the Reformation had been resolved.*
4. **B.**  
*The joint declaration on justification takes an ambiguous stance on the doctrine of assurance, ultimately suggesting that the assurance of Christians rests on their own commitment to Jesus Christ.*
5. **B.**  
*Ongoing sin does not call a believer’s assurance of salvation into question. Luther wrote that the believer can have full assurance of salvation, noting that “her sins cannot destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by Him.”*
6. **C.**  
*In response to the joint declaration between Lutherans and Roman Catholics on the doctrine of justification, the historian Mark Noll wrote, “If it is true, as once was repeated by Protestants conscious of their anchorage in Martin Luther or John Calvin, that justification is the article on which the church stands or falls, then the Reformation is over.” Though premature, this conclusion is easy to reach if one accepts the wording of the joint declaration at face value, without considering the different and incompatible ways that Roman Catholics and Protestants interpret the words of the declaration.*



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