

S T U D Y G U I D E



What Is Reformed Theology?

by R.C. Sproul



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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Introduction

The roots of evangelical Christianity are found in the soil of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. The Reformers protested the corrupt teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, and evangelicalism today must likewise assert the teachings of Scripture. In *What Is Reformed Theology?*, Dr. R.C. Sproul offers a comprehensive introduction to Reformed theology. As C.H. Spurgeon once said, Reformed theology is nothing other than biblical Christianity.

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>How to use: 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>How to use: 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>How to use: 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>How to use: 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>How to use: 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 Ligonier.org.</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>How to use: 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>How to use: 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 *What Is Reformed Theology?* 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 14-Week Plan	Standard 12-Week Plan	Abbreviated 6-Week Plan	Intensive 4-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
1	*	1	1	1-3
2	1	2	2 & 3	4-6
3	2	3	4 & 5	7-9
4	3	4	6 & 7	10-12
5	4	5	8 & 9	
6	5	6	10 & 11	
7	6	7	12	
8	7	8		
9	8	9		
10	9	10		
11	10	11		
12	11	12		
13	12			
14	*			

* 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).

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

There is a critical difference between the study of religion and the study of theology. One is man-centered, while the other is God-centered. In this introductory lesson, Dr. Sproul introduces Reformed theology as a theology and shows why this distinction is important.

LEARNING GOALS

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

- Contrast the study of religion and the study of theology
- Understand why theology is important for every area of life

KEY IDEAS

- There is a significant difference between religion and theology.
- Theology is the study of God.
- The most basic sin that all humans commit is idolatry.
- The primary focus of Reformed theology is on the knowledge of the true God.

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 of Reformed theology?

- How familiar are you with Reformed theology? Can you define it? What words come to mind when you think about Reformed theology?

Scripture Reading

And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’”

—Exodus 32:7–8

- What does this passage reveal about idolatry?

During the Video

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

Reformed Theology is a Theology

0:00–10:07

- What are the two major approaches to questions of faith?
- What is basic to the study of religion?
- What is basic to the study of theology?

A Belief System Centered on God

10:07–21:46

- What is the most basic sin that all humans commit?
- Out of all that humans could know, what is the most important knowledge to have?

After the Video

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

- Compare and contrast the study of religion with the study of theology. Why is this an important distinction to make?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss which students—students of religion or students of theology—can have more confidence about the serious questions of faith. Why?

- Dr. Sproul states that Reformed theology “is a belief system that is indeed an entire life and world view with God at the center.” How does the study of God impact the whole of one’s life?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss Dr. Sproul’s statement that the idea that “it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere” is on a “collision course with biblical Christianity.” How does the golden calf incident described in Exodus 32 illustrate Dr. Sproul’s statement?

- What is idolatry? How is the study of Reformed theology an antidote to idolatry?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss Dr. Sproul’s statement that “there is no more important knowledge that exists to inform our lives than the knowledge of God. This is what the Protestant Reformation was all about.” What should be the response to someone who refuses to study theology on the grounds that “all that counts is feeling good” or that “theology is something that only stirs up controversy”?

PRAYER

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

- Praise God for revealing Himself to you in the Bible.
- Confess your idolatry, that you, at times, replace the worship of God with something else.
- Thank God for His perfect work as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in saving you.
- Ask God to help you to know Him more through the study of theology.

REVIEW QUIZ

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

1. What is the relation of theology to anthropology in a God-centered approach to faith?
 - a. Theology is subsumed under anthropology.
 - b. Theology and anthropology are side by side.
 - c. Anthropology is subsumed under theology.
 - d. Theology and anthropology are unrelated.

2. What is the study of religion primarily concerned with studying?
 - a. Human behavior
 - b. Theology
 - c. Different religious texts
 - d. The attributes of God

3. Reformed theology is primarily about the study of what?
 - a. Church history
 - b. God
 - c. Predestination
 - d. Baptism

4. Exodus 32 and the golden calf incident teach us what about humanity?
 - a. Humans are moral by nature.
 - b. Humans are celebratory by nature.
 - c. Humans are idolatrous by nature.
 - d. Humans are truthful by nature.

5. Knowledge of God is the most important knowledge anyone can know.
 - a. True
 - b. False

6. What was the Protestant Reformation primarily about?
 - a. The sacraments
 - b. Bible translation
 - c. Church corruption
 - d. A God-centered view of life

Answer Key—Introduction

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

- What does this passage reveal about idolatry?

This passage reveals that God's people, even soon after God rescued them from Egypt, easily fell into idolatry. The temptation to idolatry is very real. This passage also reveals God's hatred of idolatry.

During the Video

Reformed Theology Is a Theology

- What are the two major approaches to questions of faith?

The two major approaches to questions of faith are a God-centered approach and a man-centered approach.

- What is basic to the study of religion?

The study of religion is a man-centered approach to questions of faith that examines how people with certain beliefs about the supernatural behave in their personal and cultic lives. The study of religion aims to know how people act based on their varying beliefs.

- What is basic to the study of theology?

Theology is a God-centered approach to questions of faith that studies God first and foremost. The study of theology aims to know what God has revealed about Himself in the Bible.

A Belief System Centered on God

- What is the most basic sin that all humans commit?

The basic sin that all humans, Christians or not, commit is the sin of idolatry. We see this truth illustrated in the golden calf narrative in Exodus 32. Idolatry is when people place at the center of their worship something other than the true God.

- Out of all that humans could know, what is the most important knowledge to have?

The most important knowledge for any human to have is a knowledge of the true God. This is the purpose of the study of theology: to arrive at a true knowledge of God. Because a true knowledge of God is the most important knowledge to have, it is also the key to all of life.

After the Video

- Compare and contrast the study of religion with the study of theology. Why is this an important distinction to make?

The study of religion is focused on how people with varying beliefs behave in their personal and cultic lives. It is man-centered and cannot arrive at an accurate view of God because it starts with the study of man and only then considers the study of God. The study of theology is focused on the study of the true God and how He has revealed Himself in the Bible. It is God-centered, and because of this, it gives an accurate view of God, man, and all of life. This distinction is important because the study of theology alone can give humans what they truly need—an accurate knowledge of the true God.

- Dr. Sproul states that Reformed theology is “a belief system that is indeed an entire life-and-world-view with God at the center.” How does the study of God affect the whole of someone’s life?

People sometimes say, “We don’t need doctrine; we need life.” As Dr. Sproul says in this lecture, “At the heart of Reformed theology is the affirmation that theology is life, because theology is the knowledge of God.” Theology is not just the academic study of God, and it cannot be relegated to one compartment of one’s life. Who God is, and especially who Christ is, reveals to us who we are and how God intends us to live to His glory.

- What is idolatry? How is the study of Reformed theology an antidote to idolatry?

Idolatry is whenever someone places at the center of his worship something other than God. Reformed theology begins centered on God and proclaims that God is worthy of the absolute and complete worship of all His creatures. In this way, Reformed theology, with its focus on God, shows all idols to be paltry and sinful substitutes for the true and glorious God.

REVIEW QUIZ

Lesson 1

1. C.

In a God-centered approach to faith, anthropology is subsumed under theology. The student considers the study of man only after first considering the study of God. This is the position of Reformed theology and is the main difference between the study of theology and the study of religion.

2. **A.**
The study of religion is primarily concerned with studying human behavior. Because the study of religion does not start with a study of God, it must instead study humans with varying beliefs about the supernatural and how those beliefs influence their personal and cultic behavior.
3. **B.**
Reformed theology is primarily about the study of God. This was the major goal of the Protestant Reformation and the only starting point for a student to come to a right understanding of the true God.
4. **C.**
Exodus 32 teaches us that humans are idolatrous by nature. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul called humanity homo religiosus, the religious man. Humans are naturally religious; they naturally worship idols rather than the true God.
5. **A.**
Because we were made by God to know God and live for God, the knowledge of God is the most important knowledge that anyone can have and is the starting point for all theology.
6. **D.**
The Protestant Reformation attempted to address many problems. But the Protestant Reformation was primarily about recovering a God-centered view of life.

We want to see men and women around the world connect
the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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