

S T U D Y   G U I D E

AMERICAN



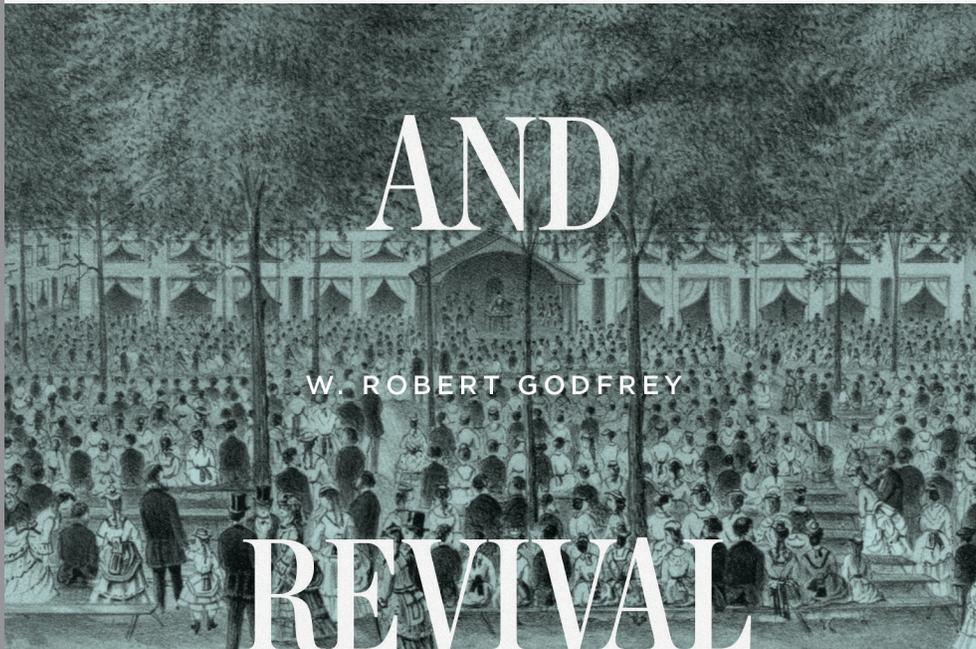
PRESBYTERIANS

LESSONS FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

AND

W. ROBERT GODFREY

REVIVAL



S T U D Y G U I D E

# American Presbyterians and Revival

Lessons from the  
Nineteenth Century

W. Robert Godfrey



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

*Renew your Mind.*

LIGONIER.ORG | 800-435-4343

Copyright © 2022 Ligonier Ministries

421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771

E-mail: [info@ligonier.org](mailto:info@ligonier.org)

All rights reserved.

No reproduction of this work without permission.

Printed in the United States of America.

# Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Study Schedules</i>	5
1 <i>Imperial Christianity</i>	6
2 <i>A New World</i>	14
3 <i>Presbyterian Beginnings</i>	21
4 <i>Intellectual Influence</i>	28
5 <i>Reactions against Doctrine</i>	35
6 <i>Old School &amp; New School</i>	42
7 <i>Conflicts at General Assembly</i>	50
8 <i>Slavery, War, Doctrine</i>	57
9 <i>Devotion</i>	64
10 <i>Discernment, Discipline, Decline</i>	71
11 <i>A Call to Remain Faithful</i>	80

# Introduction

Christianity is able to exist in every imaginable political and social climate. Through its history, it's been supported and opposed, yet it has always flourished. The nineteenth century was a period of vast and rapid change, and Christians in America had to navigate those changes, both inside and outside the church. In this teaching series, Dr. W. Robert Godfrey surveys Reformed and Presbyterian history in nineteenth-century America, all to help the church today better navigate the changing world around us and the challenges we face together.

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 yourself 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 time stamps 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 *American Presbyterians and Revival* 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.

	<b>Extended 13-Week Plan</b>	<b>Standard 11-Week Plan</b>	<b>Abbreviated 5-Week Plan</b>	<b>Intensive 3-Week Plan</b>
<b>Week</b>	<b>Lesson</b>			
<b>1</b>	*	1	1 & 2	1-4
<b>2</b>	1	2	3 & 4	5-8
<b>3</b>	2	3	5-7	9-11
<b>4</b>	3	4	8 & 9	
<b>5</b>	4	5	10 & 11	
<b>6</b>	5	6		
<b>7</b>	6	7		
<b>8</b>	7	8		
<b>9</b>	8	9		
<b>10</b>	9	10		
<b>11</b>	10	11		
<b>12</b>	11			
<b>13</b>	*			

\* 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).

# Imperial Christianity

## INTRODUCTION

When Reformed Christianity came to America, along with it came a long-held belief about the cooperation between Christianity and the civil magistrate. Puritans saw the New World as an opportunity not only for right worship but also for a proper political and social system that supported the church. In this lesson, Dr. Godfrey explains how, despite the Puritan ideal, early colonial life in America was the beginning of the end of “imperial Christianity.”

## LEARNING GOALS

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

- Define “imperial Christianity” and provide historical examples of it
- Trace Christianity’s history in America and the Reformed influence in colonial life
- Explain the Puritan ideal and the challenges it faced both within and without

## KEY IDEAS

- Christianity has flourished both with and without political support, even—perhaps especially—in times of political persecution.
- Puritans came to America with the ideal of an established church, but this ideal was confronted with inherent difficulties and with the changes of the seventeenth century.

## 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 study the history of Presbyterianism in nineteenth-century America?
- What are the virtues of the separation between church and state? Does it have any downfalls?

### *Scripture Reading*

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

—1 Timothy 2:1–6

- What does this passage require of the church in its relationship to the state? And what ought to be the church’s desired outcome from the performance of this duty?

### During the Video

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

#### *Imperial Christianity*

0:00–7:42

- What was the dominant expression of Reformed Christianity when it came to America?
- What is “imperial Christianity”?

#### *A Prevalent Attitude*

7:42–15:24

- How was the idea of “imperial Christianity” challenged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?
- What was the Puritan attitude toward imperial Christianity?

*The Puritan Ideal*

15:24–24:25

- What was a significant problem within the Puritan ideal?
- Along with the problems that were created by the Puritan ideal itself, what external factors began to work against the vision of imperial Christianity?

## 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 nature of Christianity, considered in its relationship to civil government?

If you are in a group, ask the members the following question: Why does Christianity, though it is not defined by its political support or lack of support, still have implications for political and cultural life?

- How did imperial Christianity shape Christian consciousness? How are things different today?

If you are in a group, ask the members the following questions: Would imperial Christianity even be possible today? If so, what would it look like?

- Do you consider the end of imperial Christianity to be a positive historical development? Why or why not?

If you are in a group, have the members openly discuss their answers to the question. Follow up the discussion by asking: Is the desire for an established religion necessarily wrong? Why or why not?

## PRAYER

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

- Praise God that nothing can prevail against Christ's church.
- Confess any ways that you fail to fully support the work of the church.
- Thank God for preserving the church in His sovereign providence.
- Ask God to enlarge your vision of the church through this teaching series.

## REVIEW QUIZ

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

1. When did imperial Christianity begin?
  - a. First century
  - b. Fourth century
  - c. Tenth century
  - d. Sixteenth century
2. What event created a dilemma for imperial Christianity?
  - a. The Edict of Milan
  - b. The Edict of Thessalonica
  - c. The Protestant Reformation
  - d. The Puritan colonization of New England
3. What was initially required for a right to vote in the New England colonies?
  - a. Allegiance to England
  - b. Church membership
  - c. Outward godliness
  - d. Land ownership
4. Despite the growing challenges to imperial Christianity, the Reformed in America had power and influence at the time of the American Revolution.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. Which of the following was *not* one of the internal challenges to imperial Christianity in the Puritan colonies of the New World?
  - a. The requirements of political involvement
  - b. The Puritan ideal for a regenerate church membership
  - c. The Puritans' history of religious persecution in England
  - d. The difficulties surrounding baptism and church membership
6. Which of the following was *not* one of the external challenges to imperial Christianity in the Puritan colonies of the New World?
  - a. The Massachusetts Charter of 1691
  - b. The church denominations of other colonies
  - c. The influence of Enlightenment philosophies
  - d. The increased focus on economic life in the colonies

# Answer Key—Imperial Christianity

## 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 require of the church in its relationship to the state? And what ought to be the church's desired outcome from the performance of this duty?

*Paul calls the church to pray “for kings and all who are in high positions.” This gives us a clear understanding of one of the ways that the church ought to relate to the state. Paul also clearly states why the church ought to be praying for government officials: “that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life.” Connected with this is the advance of the gospel.*

### During the Video

#### *Imperial Christianity*

- What was the dominant expression of Reformed Christianity when it came to America?

*Reformed Christianity initially came to America in the seventeenth century through the Puritan immigrants who came from England. Puritans were the prominent Reformed voice in this period of American history, though they were not the only Reformed influence. A small influx of Dutch Reformed immigrated to New York and New Jersey.*

- What is “imperial Christianity”?

*“Imperial Christianity” is the expression that Dr. Godfrey used to describe Christianity's support by various governments throughout history. In imperial Christianity, not only is Christianity supported, but it also receives a favored position even in opposition to non-Christian groups.*

#### *A Prevalent Attitude*

- How was the idea of “imperial Christianity” challenged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

*With the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, there was no longer a*

*“church” but “churches,” and this posed a dilemma for governments about which church to support. This created such a tension that war often broke out. The Puritans experienced this firsthand in England in the seventeenth century.*

- What was the Puritan attitude toward imperial Christianity?

*Experiencing political persecution personally, the Puritans came to the New World with a true desire for a new world, one in which Protestant-Reformed Christianity would be established. Puritans believed, in line with the original version of the Westminster Confession of Faith, that it was the duty of the civil magistrate to preserve and protect the church and its purity. The Puritans embraced imperial Christianity.*

### *The Puritan Ideal*

- What was a significant problem within the Puritan ideal?

*The Puritan ideal was for the church to be composed of a fully regenerate membership, and this ideal had insoluble tensions within it. People were becoming hesitant to claim to know for certain that they were regenerate. The church may have been excluding genuine Christians from its rolls, and being a member of the church was required to participate politically in colonial life.*

- Along with the problems that were created by the Puritan ideal itself, what external factors began to work against the vision of imperial Christianity?

*The Puritan ideal was beset with a difficulty: disqualifying all non-church members from the political life of the colony. In 1684, the king of England also revoked the charter of Massachusetts as a colony, which required church membership for political involvement. The new charter of 1691 based political participation on property ownership, undermining the Puritan foundation. Furthermore, the colonies were beginning to see themselves as economic colonies. They focused less on their religious identities, becoming more shaped by Enlightenment philosophies and the focus on natural law as the basis for human unity.*

### *After the Video*

- What is the nature of Christianity, considered in its relationship to civil government?

*Throughout history, Christianity has been, at times, supported by governing authorities and, at other times, persecuted by governing authorities. Jesus was crucified by the Romans. And like Jesus, early Christians faced persecution. Yet Christianity would not long be embraced in the Roman Empire. Christianity can flourish with or without political and cultural support. It does not need these things to be Christianity. They do not define the nature of Christianity and the way that human beings can have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.*

- How did imperial Christianity shape Christian consciousness? How are things different today?

*Imperial Christianity was a reality for hundreds of years, so it naturally shaped the Christian consciousness. Christians once lived in a world where they expected to occupy a favored position in which governments would favor true religion and oppose false religion. This began to change in the seventeenth century. Today, there is an expectation in America that no religion ought to be politically favored. And even culturally, Christianity does not seem to have a favored position in society.*

- Do you consider the end of imperial Christianity to be a positive historical development? Why or why not?

*Answers to this question may vary, but this lesson did uncover some of the tensions created by established religion, especially after the Reformation. A problem that someone may raise about imperial Christianity is that people may become nominally Christian—Christian in name only. The Puritans attempted to have a church full of regenerate members, but this proved very difficult to achieve, especially in the face of rapid societal change.*

## REVIEW QUIZ

1. **B.**

*It was not until the fourth century when Christianity was declared a legal religion and Emperor Constantine was converted that Christianity began to be politically favored. In the latter part of the fourth century, Emperor Theodosius declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.*

2. **C.**

*The Protestant Reformation posed a dilemma for governments' upholding imperial Christianity because there was no longer one church. The other answer choices support established religion. Though the Puritans had difficulty realizing an imperial Christianity, the Edict of Milan made Christianity a legal religion in the Roman Empire, and the Edict of Thessalonica made Christianity the official religion.*

3. **B.**

*A manifestation of the Puritan vision for an established religion was the requirement of church membership for people to be able to participate in the religious life of their colonies. It was not until later that property became the essential requirement for voting rights.*

4. **A.**

*It is staggering to think about the Reformed influence in early America. Dr. Godfrey said that 75 percent of the population in all the colonies had been influenced by Puritan Christianity. If Dutch and German immigrants are factored in, then the Reformed influence may have been experienced by 85 to 90 percent of the population.*

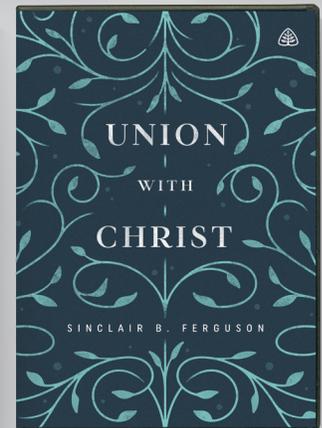
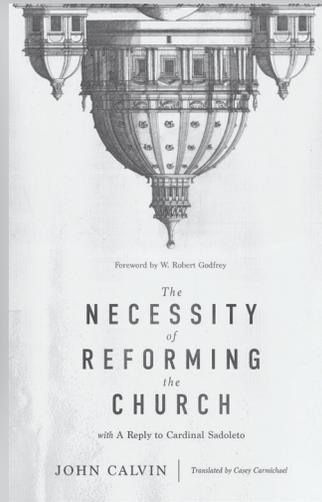
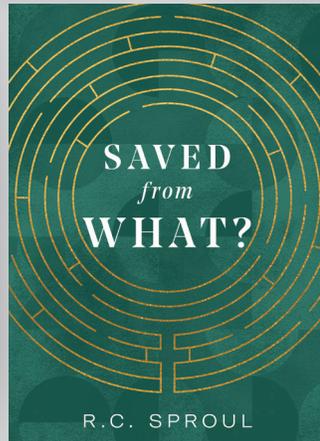
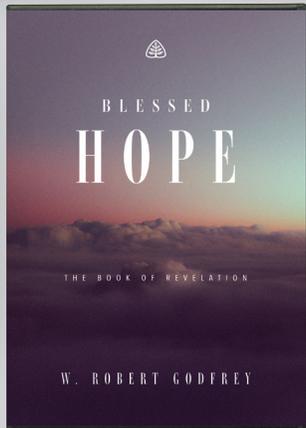
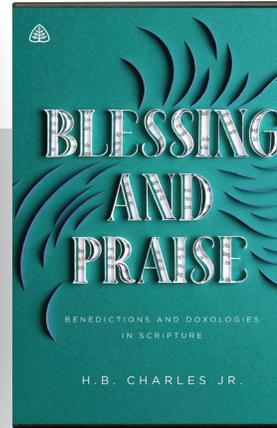
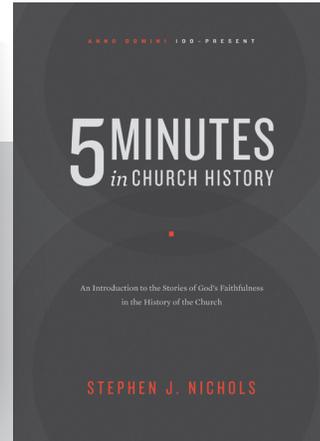
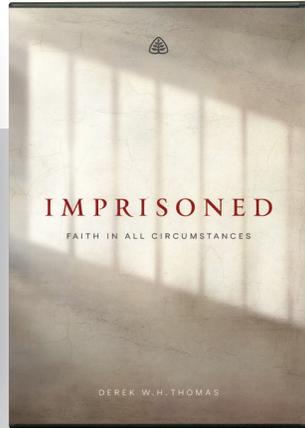
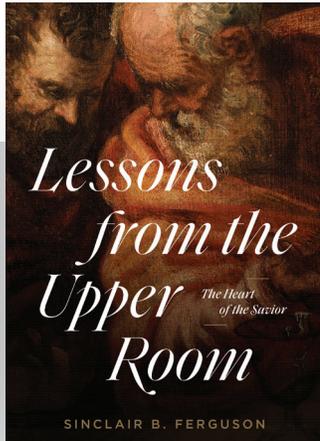
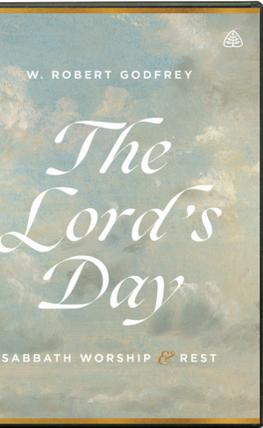
5. **C.**

*The Puritans' history of religious persecution in England was not a hindrance to their vision of an established religion in the New World. Rather, it invigorated their desire for a system of governance that would uphold their religious worship and practice.*

6. **B.**

*The existence of other Christian denominations in different colonies would certainly have created difficulties for an established religion if these colonies were to unify. But the ideal of an established religion in the Puritan colonies was not threatened by their existence. In the Puritan colonies, the other factors, especially the Massachusetts Charter of 1691, undermined the Puritans' attempt to have an established religion.*

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



Order your copy of this title, download the digital version,  
or browse thousands of resources at [Ligonier.org](http://Ligonier.org).



LIGONIER MINISTRIES