

REFORMED THEOLOGY

LEADERSHIP
TRAINING

“If Reformed Theology has simply given us new words but no wonder, then we aren’t really reformed, we’re just informed.” Scotty Smith

INTRODUCTION

The Westminster Assembly convened in Westminster Abbey in London on July 1643. This body engaged in honest and thoughtful activity for five years, six months, and twenty-two days. Thoroughness is conspicuous in all of its work. Church historians agree that this was one of the most learned bodies ever assembled on this earth for the formulation and promulgation of Christian truth. The personnel of this body were composed of the intellectual cream of the British Isles. Every member was carefully selected on the basis of learning and intellectual gifts.

This group of divines was characterized also by deep and genuine spirituality. These men were spiritual giants. For the full period of their labors it was their custom to set aside one entire day of each month for prayer and fasting. The men who composed this assembly were, therefore, prepared intellectually and spiritually for their task.

In our day of renewed interest in Biblical theology it is well to remember that the primary rule these servants of Christ laid down for themselves, to guide in all their discussions, was: "What any man undertakes to prove as necessary, he shall make good out of Scripture." Every member was required to take the following vow, and it was read to all of the members every Monday morning: "I do seriously promise and vow in the presence of Almighty God, that in this Assembly whereof I am a member, I will maintain nothing in point of doctrine but what I believe to be most agreeable to the Word of God; nor in point of discipline, but what may make most for God's glory and the peace and good of His church."

Present in this body of men were some of the most brilliant of contemporary philosophers, but they permitted not one iota of human philosophy to influence their creedal statements. Their sole objective was to think Biblically and to express the mind of Scripture. The success of this undertaking is evidenced in the fact that although better than three centuries have passed since the publication of this work, the Confession of Faith has needed no significant change during all this time.

Richard Baxter, a contemporary of the Westminster divines, wrote in his autobiography an evaluation of this assembly. He affirmed: "The Divines there congregated were men of eminent learning, godliness, ministerial abilities, and fidelity; and being not worthy to be one of them myself, I may the more speak the truth, even in the face of malice and envy, that, as far as I am able to judge by the information of all history of that time, and by any other evidence left us, the Christian world, since the days of the apostles, had never a Synod of more excellent divines (taking one thing with another), than this and the Synod of Dort." Dean Stanley of the Anglican Church declared that of all Protestant Confessions the Westminster Confession exhibits "far more depth of theological insight than any other."

Fair-minded scholars must concede that the goal that the Westminster Assembly kept before it of giving "to the accepted Bible system of truth a complete, impregnable statement, to serve as a bulwark against error, as a basis of ecclesiastical fellowship and cooperation, and as a safe and effectual instrument for the religious instruction of the people of God and their children," has been

attained in a marvelous way. Judged by any sensible standard the Westminster Assembly ranks among the greatest of the ecclesiastical assemblies or councils in the entire history of Christianity.

CLASS READING ASSIGNMENT TABLE

WEEK 1 – LEADERS FOR CHRIST’S CHURCH

Additional reading assignments will be Essential Truths of the Christian Faith by R.C. Sproul and the Westminster Confession of Faith

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith (Sproul), sections 1-9

WEEK 2 - THE TRINITY & THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith (Sproul), sections 10-18
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 1 & 2

WEEK 3 – THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD & GOD THE CREATOR

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith (Sproul), sections 19-20, 44-45
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 3-6

WEEK 4 – THE GOD OF GRACE

1. Read the Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, (Sproul) sections 25-36; 56-64.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapters 9-10.

WEEK 5 – THE ORDO SALUTIS

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, (Sproul), sections 65-71.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapters 11-18.

WEEK 6 – COVENANT THEOLOGY & SACRAMENTS

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, (Sproul), sections 5; 21-24, and 75-83.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 7 & 8, and 27-29.

WEEK 7 – THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS CONDUCT & CHURCH DISCIPLINE

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, (Sproul), sections 37-43 and 84-96.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 19-24 & 30 (chapter 24 - first one only).

WEEK 8 – THE FINAL THINGS

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, (Sproul), Sections 72-74; 97-102.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapters 32 & 33.

Reformed Theology – Class 1

LEADERS FOR CHRIST'S CHURCH

Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Schedule

Resource materials

Assignments and tests

Officer training aspects

Format

Rationale for the Course

Knowing God (and His purpose for us) is crucially important for the living of our lives. As it would be cruel to an Amazonian tribesman to fly him to London, put him down without explanation in Trafalgar Square and leave him, as one who knew nothing of English or England, to fend for himself, so we are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is and who runs it. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know about God. Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul. J.I. Packer, Knowing God

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WHY DOES CHRIST'S CHURCH NEED STRONG LEADERS?

The Church is called to disciple others to lead the Church for future generations.

The Church is the hope of the world.

“I’ve become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular aid workers, government projects, and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people’s hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good... The Christians were always different. Far from having cowed or confined its converts, their faith appears to have liberated and relaxed them. There was a liveliness, a curiosity, and engagement with the world—a directness in their dealings with others—that seemed to be missing in traditional African life. They stood tall. *As an atheist, I truly believe Africa needs God.*” - Matthew Parris

“Areas where Protestant missionaries had a significant presence in the past are on average more economically developed today, with comparatively better health, lower infant mortality, lower corruption, greater literacy, higher educational attainment (especially for women), and more robust membership in nongovernmental associations.” —J. Dudley Woodberry, professor Islamic studies and dean emeritus Fuller Theological Seminary.

Church Leadership matters

THE OFFICE OF THE ELDER

The task of the elder is to provide spiritual oversight and governance for the body of Christ (Acts 20:17, 28-31).

This office has its roots in the Old Testament with the division of work by Moses (Exodus 18:21, 22).

When the apostles planted new churches in the post-pentecost age they also appointed elders in every church (Titus 1:5, Acts 14:21-23).

The word for elder in the Greek is Presbuteros and refers to the character required of the office holder.

The New Testament Church was connectional. (1 Timothy 4:14, Acts 15:1-2).

The PCA distinguishes between *teaching elders* and *ruling elders*. (1 Timothy 5:17, Ephesians 4:11).

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THE OFFICE OF THE DEACON

The roots of this office are also in the Old Testament.

Deacons were present in the New Testament Church, which is made clear by their mention in Philippians 1:1, and the list of qualifications for the office found in 1 Timothy 3.

The term diakonia means to serve. (Acts 6)

The role of the deacon is to lead the church in ministries of mercy and to be administrative assistants to the elders.

All office holders are to be chosen by the people (Acts 6:3).

THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHURCH OFFICERS

The scriptures make it very clear that all church office holders are to be men. (*Galatians 3:28*) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave[a] nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (*1 Timothy 3:12-13*) Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Q. Were Paul's views merely an expression of the customs and culture of the time?

1. Adam was formed first.
2. Eve was taken out of Adam (I Corinthians 11:8).
3. Eve was made for Adam's sake, not vice versa.
4. Eve was deceived by Satan.
5. Adam was cursed for being led by his wife.

Jesus' life and ministry: Not one of his apostles was female. Feminists are quick to point out that he was adapting to his culture. But now they are doing the same thing to Jesus that they did with Paul. What really is the standard, now, by which we judge Jesus? If women's ordination is a real justice issue, can we excuse our Lord on the basis of cultural pressure? Was he the type of person to succumb to popular opinion? Tim and Kathy Keller, *Women and Ministry*

Q. Doesn't this theological view show Christianity to have a low view or an oppressive view of women?

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Q. WHY? If Christianity has elevated women in every way, then why doesn't the bible allow them to be officers in the church? (And why a similar role in marriage?)

"But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." I Corinthians 11:3

- TRINITY
- THE FALL
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- PRACTICAL
- A VOTE AND VOICE

"So, church leaders, men, do you respect the women of the Church? Do you see that there are women in your church who could do your job better than you do? Yes, we have gender roles in the Church. But as far as I can see - as it is with my wife, so it is in the Church – women are often more competent, mature, and courageous than I or other men are. In fact, I have concluded that had not God established gender roles, the Church would at times be better served by women being elders and pastors." Mark Lauterbach

An officer must be a man of good character.

1. He must be above reproach, respectable, and have a good reputation, even with those outside the church (1 Timothy 3:2, 7).
2. He must be devout and prudent (Titus 1:8, 1 Timothy 3:2).

An officer must have his family life in order.

1. He is to be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2).
2. He must manage his household well, including controlling his children (1 Timothy 3:4, 5, 12).
3. He must have a wife who is not a gossip (1 Timothy 3:11).

An officer must be self-controlled.

1. He must not be addicted to wine (1 Timothy 3:3, 8).
2. He must not be pugnacious or contentious, but gentle (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7).

3. He must not be a lover of money (1 Timothy 3:3, 8).
4. He must not be a “double-talker” (1 Timothy 3:8).
5. An officer must be useful.
 - He should be hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2).
 - He should be able to teach, exhort, and refute (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9).
6. An officer must not be a new convert, lest he fall victim to his pride and be unable to resist the sure attacks of the devil (1 Timothy 3:6).
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Officers and leaders of SRPC are to lead in repentance.

The new community is a place where Jesus dwells—by His Spirit. If He is there, it is a place where people are made new—where spiritual life is formed in them. We are broken and we need fixing. Church is a place where God is at work and we move on the journey toward wholeness. Church is not just a place where we conform our thinking to right beliefs, not just a place where we learn to profess the right things—it is a place where we get the gospel deeply or better put—the gospel gets us. We don’t just learn what justification by faith means—but we are reconciled to our Father by the work of Jesus for us and it transforms us. Once barren hearts begin to produce lovely fruit—love, joy, and peace. In fact, if there is no transformation, then there is no salvation—for if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.

Leadership will not simply be defined as those who are the best Bible scholars, or managers in our midst. Small group leaders, church officers and staff must be experiencing gospel transformation in their own hearts, minds, marriages and families to be truly leading. Leaders at SRPC are not simply those who sin the least but they are the ones who repent the most.

RECEPTIVE GRACE AND HANDLING THE DIFFERENCES

How do Christians interact and see others from different theological camps?

- A Story

Receptive Grace

In Romans 14:1, Paul tells those who know the grace of God to *“receive the one who is weak with respect to faith, without passing judgment on disputable matters.”*

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Where do we get the power to love, engage, and receive those with whom we strongly disagree?

“The gospel of graces moves us to say: ‘I am loved because when I was believing all the wrong things, Jesus came and entered into my reality, took on the weakness of my human nature, radically re-adjusted His life for me, and died for me.’ A Christian’s self worth is based on the one who was excluded for us—Jesus was socially and spiritually cast out. Now we are free to disagree even sharply with people and yet do so without any ill will, without the need to withdraw or exercise power in the relationships with them. You have the power (the secure position) to disagree with love, respect, deference and humility, with no inner need to win the argument.” —Tim Keller

ASSIGNMENT

1. Additional reading assignments will be Essential Truths of the Christian Faith by R.C. Sproul and The Westminster Confession of Faith
2. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith (Sproul), sections 1-9

Jesus Changed Everything for Women
MARCH 22, 2021 | REBECCA MCLAUGHLIN

Historian Tom Holland stopped believing in the Bible as a boy. He was far more attracted to Greek and Roman gods than to the crucified hero of the Christian faith. But after years of research, Holland has concluded in his book *Dominion* that even secular Westerners are deeply shaped by Christianity. In particular, he argues, people on all sides of today's debates about gender and sexuality depend on Christian ideas:

That every human being possessed an equal dignity was not remotely a self-evident truth. A Roman would have laughed at it. To campaign against discrimination on the grounds of gender or sexuality, however, was to depend on large numbers of people sharing in a common assumption: that everyone possessed an inherent worth. The origins of this principle . . . lay not in the French Revolution, nor in the Declaration of Independence, nor in the Enlightenment, but in the Bible.

In Greco-Roman thinking, men were superior to women and sex was a way to prove it. "As captured cities were to the swords of the legions, so the bodies of those used sexually were to the Roman man," Holland wrote. "To be penetrated, male or female, was to be branded as inferior."

In Rome, "men no more hesitated to use slaves and prostitutes to relieve themselves of their sexual needs than they did to use the side of a road as a toilet." The idea that every woman had the right to choose what happened to her body was laughable.

Christianity threw out this model. Rather than being seen as inferior to men, women were equally made in God's image. Rather than being free to use slaves and prostitutes (of either sex), men were expected to be faithful to one wife, or to live in celibate singleness.

The scenario described in *The Handmaid's Tale*—a man sleeping with an enslaved woman—is one of the exact things Christianity outlawed. The Christian husband was to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). The relative weakness of her body was not a license for domination, but a reason to show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7).

While Roman families often married off their prepubescent daughters, Christian women could marry later. A woman whose husband had died was affirmed in remaining single, but also free to marry any man she wished, so long as he belonged to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:39–40).

No wonder Christianity was so attractive to women. Jesus had changed everything.

Jesus's Shocking Relationships with Women

If we could read the Gospels through first-century eyes, Jesus's treatment of women would knock us to our knees. His longest recorded conversation with any individual was with a Samaritan woman of ill repute (John 4:7–30), and this wasn't an isolated incident. Jesus repeatedly welcomed women his contemporaries despised.

One time, he was dining at a Pharisee's house when a "sinful woman" gatecrashed. She wept on

Jesus's feet, wiped them with her hair, and kissed them. The Pharisee was appalled: "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). But Jesus turned the tables on his host and affirmed this woman as an example of love (Luke 7:36–50). He welcomed women despised as sexual sinners. He also welcomed women deemed unclean.

One day, Jesus was on his way to heal a 12-year-old girl when a woman who had suffered 12 years of menstrual bleeding figured that if she could just touch the fringe of his clothes she'd be made well. She was right. But Jesus didn't just move on. He had her come forward from the crowd and commended her faith (Luke 8:43–48).

When Jesus finally reached the sick 12 year old, she was dead. But it wasn't too late. Speaking Aramaic, their shared mother tongue, Jesus said, "Little girl, I say to you, arise," and she got up (Mark 5:41). Whether little girls or prostitutes, whether despised foreigners or women made unclean by menstrual blood. Whether they were married or single, sick (Matt. 8:14–16) or disabled (Luke 13:10–16), Jesus made time for women and treated them with care and respect.

In Luke's Gospel, women are often compared with men, and where there is a contrast, the women come out looking better. In all four Gospels, women witness Jesus's resurrection first—although the testimony of women wouldn't have been seen as convincing at that time.

Jesus made time for women and treated them with care and respect.

We gain an intimate glimpse of Jesus's relationships with women in his friendship with two sisters. We first meet Mary and Martha in Luke, when Jesus is at their house. Martha is busy serving. Mary is sitting at Jesus's feet, learning with the disciples. Martha complains and asks Jesus to tell Mary she should be serving, too.

But Jesus responds: "Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42). In a culture in which women were expected to serve, not to learn, Jesus affirms Mary's learning from him. But far from dismissing Martha, John tells another story in which Jesus has a stunning conversation with her after her brother Lazarus has died.

In fact, it seems that Jesus let Lazarus die partly so that he could have this conversation with Martha—whom he loved (John 11:5)—in which he uttered world-changing words: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25–26).

Martha did. So have countless women since.

AUGUSTINE ON HANDLING DIFFERENCES

CLASS QUESTION AS ANSWERED BY REV. PAUL MANUEL

Q: “How do Christians interact and see others from different theological camps?”

A: I think a quote that has been attributed to Augustine is helpful in answering this question: *“In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”*

Unity in essentials. There are things that all Christians have agreed upon throughout church history. They are essential to the Christian faith. Without assenting to these core doctrines, one cannot rightly call himself/herself a Christian. Essential doctrines are based upon Scripture and can be found in the ecumenical creeds of the church (e.g., the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed). These are doctrines like the Trinity; the authority of Scripture; the Incarnation; the divinity and humanity of Jesus; the death, burial and resurrection of Christ; the necessity of the new birth; justification by grace through faith; the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit; the return of Christ and the Last Judgment. In these foundational teachings, Christians throughout history and throughout the world stand united in Christ.

Liberty in non-essentials. Liberty of conscience has been an important part of Christian fellowship. A host of issues were hotly contested in the first century church much as they are today such as dietary laws, circumcision, feast days, food offered to idols, use of spiritual gifts, etc. In Romans 14, the apostle Paul gives guidelines for dealing with non-essential (though often important) beliefs and behaviors. “Do not quarrel over opinions” (14:1). If “God has welcomed” a brother or sister, don’t despise them (14:3). Don’t pass judgment on “someone else’s servant” (14:4). “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind” (14:6). We are the Lord’s. “Each of us will give an account of himself to God” (14:12). We should “pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (14:19). “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (14:23). In other words, we should abide by our Scripture-informed and Spirit-directed conscience. The gospel gives us the freedom to love and obey God as we ought.

Charity in all things. Love is the visible witness of God’s grace in the world. Jesus said that the world would know that we are his followers if we love one another (John 13:35). This does not mean there will never be conflicts between believers or heated confrontation. Paul confronted Peter about his prejudicial cowardice (Galatians 2:11-14). Jesus cast out the money changers in the temple because of their greed and fraud and disregard for prayer (Matthew 21:12-13). But the truth must always be spoken in love (Ephesians 4:15). Our positions on issues are important, but so is our posture. Holding Christian convictions about things like oppression, sexuality, the environment must always be coupled with Christ-like humility and love.