

# Are You Reformed?

You might consider yourself “Reformed,” but does it show in your life? You might be a member of a Protestant Reformed church or some other Reformed denomination, and you might claim a Reformed heritage, but what does that mean for you? Perhaps you have sat under hours of Reformed preaching and catechism instruction, but does all that Reformed atmosphere and spiritual food make a difference in your life so that the decisions you make, the feelings you have, and the things you do or don’t do are different from someone who is not Reformed? Perhaps you don’t think much about it until you meet other people who are not Reformed and it may strike you that these are good Christian people with whom you seem to have much in common. Questions of being Reformed suddenly become pressing when your parents won’t let you date someone you like because they are not Reformed. What difference does it make if we both confess to be Christians, you might ask? Does it really matter if I am Reformed? It certainly does. It is essential for the preservation of the truth and the beginnings of our enjoyment of salvation here in this life that we be Reformed in doctrine and in life.

## **You Know You’re Reformed When ...**

...**You enjoy singing the Psalms.** God created us to sing his praises, and he gave his people a whole book of the Bible with lyrics that well up from the soul of believers and are inspired by God himself. The singing of Psalms had largely died out under the oppressive liturgical drones and chants of the Roman Catholic Church. Martin Luther loved to sing and worked hard to put the singing back into the voice of the congregation. John Calvin recognized the great value of the Psalms for singing and wrote in the preface to the Genevan Psalter, “Wherefore, although we look far and wide and search on every hand, we shall not find better songs nor songs better suited to that end than the Psalms of David which the Holy Spirit made and uttered through him. And for this reason, when we sing them we may be certain that God puts the words in our mouths as if he himself sang in us to exalt his glory.” The Reformed believer does not grow tired of the Psalter and yearn for something new to sing and listen to.

...**You go to God’s word for the final authority.** Most people are willing to go to God’s word for some guidance in life and tidbits of truth, but if they feel that something is too archaic, too strict, or simply not for them, then their feelings or personal “wisdom” becomes the final authority. The pope saw power and wealth in a biblical principle and seized it for that end. It is the principle that God uses the church to develop truths and expound his word through the preaching of ordained ministers. When the plain truth of God’s word did not suit his purposes, the pope decreed that

God had ordained him to be the final authority. It is our nature to twist, manipulate, and selectively ignore God's word when it doesn't quite fit our agenda for life. Luther recognized this danger and the terrible abuse by the Roman Church, and restored the principle of *sola scriptura*. So when you really want to buy this particular car, and you can afford it with your current income and other expenses, but you will need to cut back on church collections, the Reformed believer opens God's word and submits to the principles clearly laid out in Scripture concerning the money God entrusts us with. Feelings, dreams, financial juggling acts, etc. do not make the final call. When God gives a woman work in her home to care for her husband and children, and she is pulled away from this work with the lure of more money, prestige, fulfillment in employment, the Reformed woman goes to God's word for the final authority for her calling.

**...You find yourself often going to the Reformed creeds.** The Reformed believer understands the fact that God uses the church to develop the truths of Scripture and appreciates the great value of creeds that clearly state what the church has learned. Many today despise creeds and claim to have no creed but Christ. By nature we like to imagine that we don't need any help understanding God's word or that the truths developed in the creeds are irrelevant for today. But more often than not, the issues and false doctrines are only dressed up in new clothes, and we find that many of the questions and issues we face today were already faced by our fathers. What a great help it is for our spiritual growth when we can continue to build upon what they have established. Not only is a well-worn copy of the church confessions a sign of a healthy Reformed believer, we demonstrate wisdom, humility, and a love for the church when we turn often to the confessions.

**...Your wedding plans have God and his glory as the focus, and not the bride.** So many Christians today seem to have fallen for the worldly concept that the wedding day is all about the bride. It is her day to have all the attention. Proud parents are willing to borrow lots of money if needs be to make the day everything she dreamed of. John Calvin and Martin Luther held marriage in high esteem, but beneath all their teaching and doctrine was the theme, "to God alone be the glory." This fundamental theme is seen in a Reformed wedding. A Reformed young couple planning their marriage will ask how they can best give glory to God alone on the wonderful day of marriage. Their plans and ceremony will reflect their desire to give glory to God, their love for the familiar Psalter numbers, and their desire to bring fellow saints together to witness their vows. You know you're Reformed when attention is given to the manifestation of God's glory in all the celebrations you plan—graduation, birthdays, etc.

**...You are glad to write a large check for Christian school tuition.** The Reformed believers are liberal and generous in giving because they are able and desire to give

out of thankfulness and not out of obligation, merit, or necessity. The Roman Catholic always has merit in the back of his mind. Many Christians today think their money is God's reward to them. Many will give if they see some benefit for themselves or they believe their contribution will make the world a better place and usher in a reign of Christ on this earth. But at the heart of the Reformed believer's giving is his thankfulness to God for his sovereign and gracious work of salvation. He understands that God entrusts money to him as a steward to be used in the kingdom of God. And when God provides a Christian school where his covenant children can be trained, he is delighted to have the opportunity to use that money for the books, building, and financial support of godly teachers.

**...You are truly happy.** Of all people, the Reformed believer has more reason for peace and joy of soul than anyone. Those who flirt with arminian doctrines are lured by Satan away from the assurance of salvation in Christ alone by grace alone. They are led astray by the old lie that we can do something of our own strength to please God. The satisfaction that I have done some good in my own strength and can even cooperate with God gives a false sense of joy and peace that quickly melts away under fiery trials. The Roman Catholic lives a life of fear, always wondering if his sins are covered and if he has done enough. The Reformed believer alone, however, when he receives by faith the gospel—the good news that Jesus has covered the whole debt, made us righteous, and irresistibly grafts us into Christ—experiences the peace that passes all understanding. He does not worry about sins that need to be paid for. She does not worry about straying from the flock to the point where she is beyond the power of God to bring her back. Peace and joy is diminished only in so far as the Reformed believer foolishly forgets his life of thankful obedience and begins to serve himself. But when living humbly, and in thankful obedience to Christ, trusting wholly in God, the Reformed believer alone finds true joy and peace.

**...You are weary from fighting hard in the spiritual battles.** While the Reformed believer tastes the joy of salvation, his life on this earth is not a life of ease. When the ugly head of sin appears in his life, it does not strike terror, but neither is it dealt with flippantly, rather the Reformed believer knows exactly where to go: the cross of Christ. Being assured that the victory has already been won, he seeks the power of God's grace to fight against sin in his own life, as well as false doctrines by which Satan would draw him away from the cross. As a Reformed believer, he has an advantage because he is able to study past battles and gain instruction from the creeds about how God's word was used before to fight the same errors.

What a precious heritage we have. There are many believers throughout the world who are not familiar with John Calvin or Martin Luther, though they have been brought by the grace of God to a knowledge of the same precious truths. Even so, when they search Scripture and the development of the truths of God throughout

history, they too rejoice to see how the thread of the truth of sovereign grace was preserved and sharpened by these men of God in the Reformation. They gladly adopt the name “Reformed.” The life of a Reformed believer is nothing more than the life of a Christian who drinks deeply of the rich heritage of truth that God’s people have been blessed with throughout history. Reforming, returning to Christ, is a daily and familiar activity for the Reformed believer.