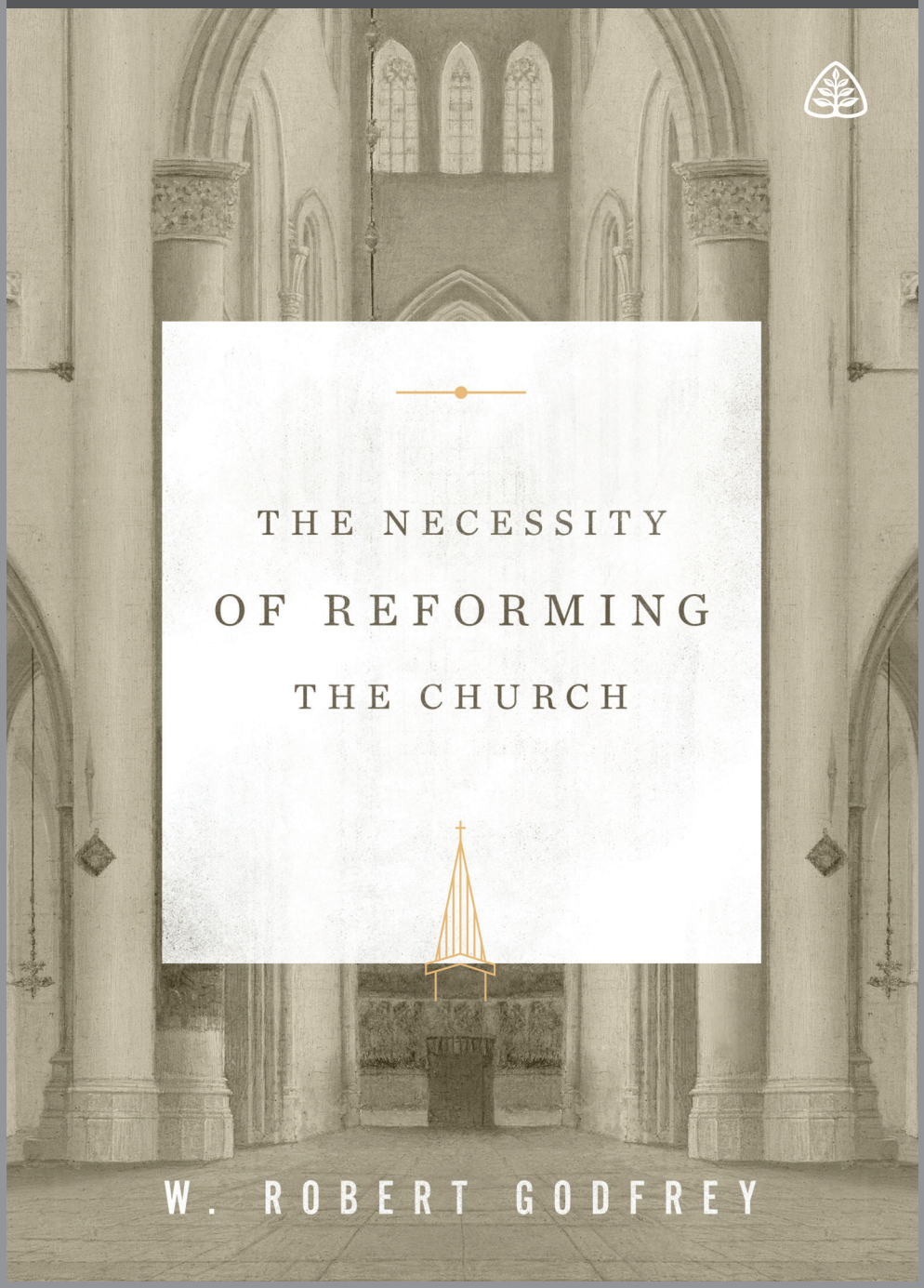
STUDY GUIDE



THE NECESSITY OF REFORMING THE CHURCH

W. ROBERT GODFREY

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W. Robert Godfrey

LIGONIER MINISTRIES
Renew your Mind.
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Introduction

The church isn't perfect. It stands in need of continual reform—reform to bring it closer to God's ideal for His church. In this teaching series, Dr. W. Robert Godfrey gathers together the history and insights of John Calvin's treatise *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* to help us look at the church in our own day. Reform was needed then, and it's needed now.

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	The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson. **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 yourself of what you have already covered and where you are headed.
LEARNING GOALS	The learning goals are the knowledge and skills that the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content. **How to use:** Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging 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.
KEY IDEAS	The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture. **How to use:** Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge that each lecture is communicating.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that is intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning. **How to use:** 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.
PRAYER	The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture. **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 *Does Prayer Change Things?* This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at Ligonier.org.
REVIEW QUIZ	The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appears at the end of each lesson. **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.
ANSWER KEY	The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz. **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.

Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* 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 8-Week Plan	**Standard 6-Week Plan**	**Abbreviated 4-Week Plan**	**Intensive 3-Week Plan**
Week	**Lesson**			
1	*	1	1	1 & 2
2	1	2	2 & 3	3 & 4
3	2	3	4 & 5	5 & 6
4	3	4	6	
5	4	5		
6	5	6		
7	6			
8	*			

* 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).

1

The Necessity Then

INTRODUCTION

The church of Jesus Christ is composed of sinners saved by grace, so by its very nature it is in constant need of reform. John Calvin's *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, written in 1544, can help us think about what was needed for the church then and what is needed for the church now. In this lesson, Dr. Godfrey introduces the rich historical context of Calvin's treatise and outlines its structure and major themes.

LEARNING GOALS

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

- Understand why reform is constantly necessary for the church
- Provide historical facts about the political climate of Europe in 1544
- Sketch the basic structure and focus of Calvin's *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*

KEY IDEAS

- There are times in the history of the church when the deformation of the church became so problematic that its reform could not wait.
- Calvin's *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* was a treatise delivered at the Diet of Speyer in 1544.
- Calvin addresses four main topics in his treatise that are "the soul and body of the church."

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.

- Are you convinced that there is a present necessity for reform in the church?

- What four topics should be constantly evaluated for the health of the church?

Scripture Reading

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved! O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

—Psalm 80:3–4

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.

—2 Chronicles 7:14–15

- What do these passages teach us about the attitude we should embrace for reformation?

During the Video

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

Introduction *0:00–6:20*

- Why shouldn't the idea that the church stands in constant need of reform be a surprise?

- Why will Calvin's *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* help us evaluate ourselves and the church today more clearly?

The History of Calvin's Treatise *6:20–16:20*

- When did Calvin live in relation to the Reformation and Martin Luther?

- What movement was growing significantly that troubled Charles V? Why?

- What prompted the Diet of Speyer in 1544?

- Where did the name *Protestants* originate?

The Substance of Calvin's Treatise *16:20–23:42*

- Who was Calvin's intended audience in *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*?

- What are the three parts of *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*?

After the Video

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

- What was the political situation around the time of Calvin's treatise?

  If you are in a group, have the members discuss the relationship between theology and culture. Can theology be done apart from the influence of our cultural setting? When should culture not influence theology?

- What are the four main topics focused on in *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*?

  If you are in a group, have the members consider why these four topics are important. Which of the four is the church today most in need of reforming?

- Why does Calvin call the four topics of his treatise the "soul and body of the church"?

  If you are in a group, have the members follow Dr. Godfrey's instruction to pause and consider what Calvin does not include as a major topic of his treatise. What other topics do you consider vital to the church?

- What are some contemporary issues in the church related to the four central topics of Calvin's treatise?

  If you are in a group, have the members discuss the answers to their questions and consider how reform in these areas might be possible.

PRAYER

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

- Praise God as the One who does not change and is never in need of reform.
- Confess any self-righteous presumption you have that might resist reform.
- Thank God for promising in Christ to build His church such that the gates of hell can never prevail against it.
- Ask God to awaken your mind to the necessity of reform throughout this series.

REVIEW QUIZ

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

1. Calvin wrote *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* as a first-time pastor in Geneva.
   a. True
   b. False

2. What generation of Reformers did Calvin belong to?
   a. First
   b. Second
   c. Third
   d. Fourth

3. Who was dismayed about the growth of Lutheranism in Europe?
   a. Suleiman the Magnificent
   b. Martin Bucer
   c. Charles V
   d. Francis I

4. Who called on Calvin to write *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*?
   a. Martin Luther
   b. Theodore Beza
   c. Martin Bucer
   d. Huldrych Zwingli

5. What part of *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* gets 45 percent of Calvin's attention?
   a. The present evils of the church
   b. The remedies for the church
   c. The necessity of immediate reform
   d. The priority of the sacraments

6. Which of the following is *not* addressed as a major topic in Calvin's treatise?
   a. Worship
   b. Sacraments
   c. Salvation
   d. Scripture

Answer Key—The Necessity Then

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 do these passages teach us about the attitude we should embrace for reformation?

  Psalm 80 gives us a window into the reality that the people of the old covenant at times experienced alienation from the Lord and needed to pray to be restored. The very nature of prayer places us in a position of dependence on God. This is the attitude of humility necessary for reformation, as seen in 2 Chronicles 7—we are to humble ourselves, seek God's face, and turn from our sins.

During the Video

Introduction

- Why shouldn't the idea that the church stands in constant need of reform be a surprise?

  The idea that the church stands in need of constant reform should not be a surprise because the church is composed of sinners who are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ but who are sinners nonetheless. For this reason, the church will be imperfect until His return.

- Why will Calvin's *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* help us evaluate ourselves and the church today more clearly?

  Calvin's The Necessity of Reforming the Church *was written in a day very different from our own. For this reason, it may be difficult to acclimate to Calvin's context and to understand the arguments he is making in his treatise. However, it is precisely because this treatise is from another time that it will help us see ourselves more clearly, giving us another perspective.*

The History of Calvin's Treatise

- When did Calvin live in relation to the Reformation and Martin Luther?

  Calvin can be considered a second-generation Reformer. In 1544, the year The Necessity of Reforming the Church *was written, he was thirty-five and had*

already established himself as a theologian. Luther was still alive and a prominent Reformer, but he would die in 1546, so he was nearing the end of his career.

- What movement was growing significantly that troubled Charles V? Why?

  In 1544, Lutheranism was growing significantly in Europe, especially in Germany. Charles V was troubled by this because he was a Roman Catholic. He was convinced that the Roman Catholic Church was the true church and that the Lutheran Church was heretical and needed to be opposed.

- What prompted the Diet of Speyer in 1544?

  Charles V needed the Diet of Speyer to meet because it approved taxation and the levying of troops that he needed to maintain his war efforts. Because Charles V was desperate for money and troops, the Lutheran princes in Germany had leverage to raise Protestant concerns.

- Where did the name *Protestants* originate?

  The name Protestants *originated because of the Diet of Speyer in 1526, when a protestation was brought before Charles V in demand of toleration. This protestation gained a measure of toleration that led to the spread of Protestantism.*

The Substance of Calvin's Treatise

- Who was Calvin's intended audience in *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*?

  Calvin wrote The Necessity of Reforming the Church *for the Diet of Speyer in 1544, and this means that he needed to write his treatise with laypeople in mind to lay out the case for why the church needed immediate reform. Also, because of the polarization between Protestants and Roman Catholics, Calvin directed his treatise at moderates, those who had not yet made up their minds on the issue.*

- What are the three parts of *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*?

  There are three main parts in The Necessity of Reforming the Church. *The first looks at the evils present in the church in Calvin's time. The second looks at the remedies that the Protestants had introduced to these evils. The third looks at the reasons why the Protestants needed to enact reform right away.*

After the Video

- What was the political situation around the time of Calvin's treatise?

  The political climate in Europe in 1544 was complicated. Most closely related to Calvin's treatise is the political relations between Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and King Frances I of France. Charles ruled over Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and a significant portion of Italy. This left France feeling surrounded and threatened. After a war had broken out between them, France formed an alliance with the Turkish sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. In order to maintain war efforts along this front, Charles V needed taxes and troops, which required the

assembly of the Diet of Speyer. All this occurred amid the rise of Lutheranism, setting the stage for a Protestant appeal at the Diet of Speyer for further toleration.

- What are the four main topics focused on in *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*?

  The four main topics that are found in each of the three sections of The Necessity of Reforming the Church *are worship, salvation, the sacraments, and church government. For each of these topics, Calvin addresses what was wrong, what has been done, and why it needed to be done immediately.*

- Why does Calvin call the four topics of his treatise the "soul and body of the church"?

  Calvin called worship and salvation the "soul of the church" because when the soul leaves the body, the body becomes a corpse. The life-giving element is then its worship and doctrine of salvation. Calvin called the sacraments and church government the "body of the church" because they are the instrument through which the soul of worship and salvation work.

- What are some contemporary issues in the church related to the four central topics of Calvin's treatise?

  The answer to this question relates to your own knowledge and experience but should deal with the four central topics of Calvin's treatise: worship, salvation, the sacraments, and church government. Many traditions have formed over differences related to these topics, differences that still remain today.

REVIEW QUIZ

Lesson 1

1. **B.**
   Calvin had already served in Geneva as a pastor without success before writing The Necessity of Reforming the Church. *He was actually expelled from Geneva during his first pastorate in attempting reform in the city.*

2. **B.**
   The key to answering this question is to remember Calvin's life relative to Luther's life. Calvin had established himself as a young theologian by the time he wrote The Necessity of Reforming the Church *in 1544. Luther, a first-generation Reformer, was near the end of his life and died in 1546. Huldrych Zwingli was another first-generation Reformer.*

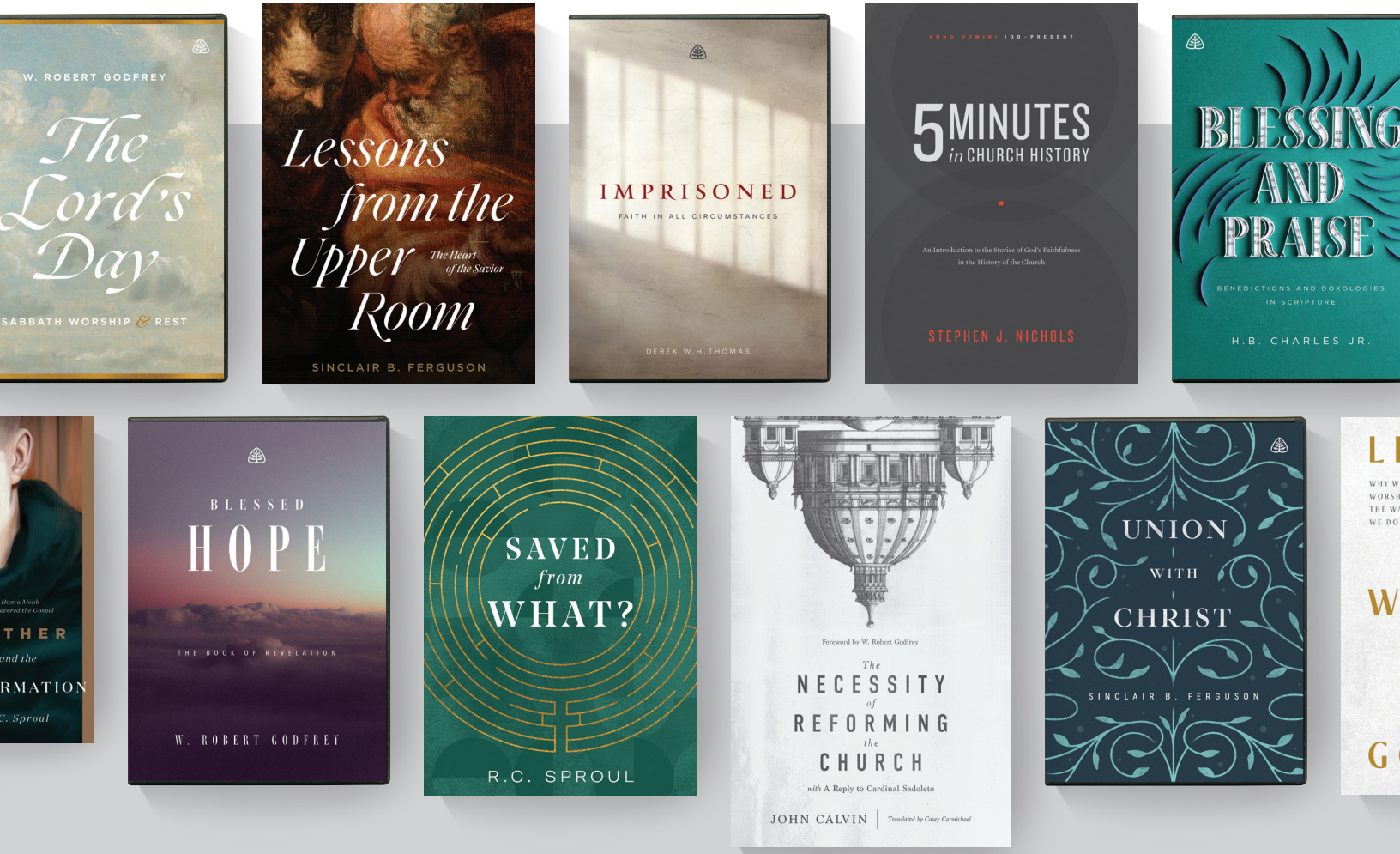
3. **C.**
   War against King Francis I of France and Suleiman the Magnificent of the Ottoman Empire was the reason that Holy Roman Emperor Charles V needed taxes and troops and called the Diet of Speyer. It was Charles V who was dismayed by the rise of Lutheranism in his own countries, particularly in Germany.

4. **C.**
   Martin Bucer was one of the highly influential early Reformers. He was from Strasbourg, where Calvin took refuge after being expelled from Geneva. Bucer thought of Calvin as the ideal person to write The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, a treatise that Theodore Beza considered brilliant.*

5. **C.**
   The necessity of reform without delay receives 45 percent of Calvin's attention. It may be surprising to us that this much of the treatise is devoted to the immediate need of reform as opposed to calling out the problems of the church.

6. **D.**
   The four topics addressed in the treatise are worship, salvation, the sacraments, and church government. The place of Scripture or the importance of biblical authority is a part of Calvin's treatise but is not a main feature compared to these four topics.

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