
REFORMED FORUM

Presenting Every Person Mature in Christ

OUR ORGANIZATION

Reformed Forum is an organization committed to providing Reformed Christian theological resources to pastors, scholars, and anyone who desires to grow in their understanding of Scripture and the theology that faithfully summarizes its teachings. We are committed to the principles of the Reformation and a redemptive-historical approach to Scripture. We believe these faithfully represent the teachings of the Bible, which is our only standard for faith and practice.

Reformed Forum began in January 2008 as a means of providing free access to informed theological conversation. Our cornerstone resource is our audio program, *Christ the Center*, which features weekly discussions on a host of biblical and theological subjects. We also host educational events, publish books, and engage in activities that facilitate a lifetime education for God's people.

While we offer theological resources, theology must be more than an intellectual exercise. God's Word and its good and necessary consequences have everything to do with our day to day lives. Proper theology is intensely practical. And given the theological climate of our age, we believe Reformed theology is perhaps even more significant today than it was in the sixteenth century when the Reformation began.

Reformed Forum is incorporated as a non-profit organization in Pennsylvania and recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization (EIN: 27-2306841). Members of our Board of Directors subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as adopted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:16–20)

Christ entrusted his Church with this commission. It is not the purview of parachurch organizations to engage in this activity. We seek to *support* the church in this mission.

In the original language, there is one imperative in the Great Commission: “make disciples.” It is one Greek word: μαθητεύσατε. Everything else qualifies what it means to make disciples. Initially, it involves “going” into the world. This activity is therefore global, and the Church must not discriminate among ethnic or socio-economic groups. God has chosen his people from among all nations, and the Church must take the message of Christ crucified to the ends of the earth.

This “making” of disciples is further qualified by the activity of baptizing and teaching. Jesus commands the Church to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism signifies entrance into the covenant community by virtue of union with Christ. Yet disciples must not only be brought into the covenant community, they must also be taught. The content of this instruction is all that Christ has commanded the Church. We may say with Paul that it is the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). In this manner, the Church is entrusted with the activity of caring for God’s people from grace to glory. It is a lifetime work of discipleship.

The Great Commission is the mission statement of the Church. It is what we are about as Christians, and until all of Christ’s sheep are brought into his fold this work must continue. Nevertheless, the Church does not engage in this activity on her own. Christ has promised always to be with his people. Indeed, he has sent to them a Helper, the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit, we are confident that God will complete his work on the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

While the Church is entrusted with this singular focus, the ministry of the Great Commission takes different forms in different contexts. If there is an established denomination, presbyteries, and local churches, the Great Commission will typically function in the form of Christian Education. If presbyteries and regional church networks exist, but not local churches, Great Commission tasks will function in the form of Home Missions. If there is no denomination, it will function as Foreign Missions.

It is important to see that Christian Education, Home Missions, and Foreign Missions are working on the exact same mission. Fundamentally, they are doing the same work: making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them all that Christ has commanded. But different contexts require different particular emphases until the Church grows in that context. These differences are a matter of maturity, which is precisely how Reformed Forum seeks to serve.

OUR MISSION

Reformed Forum exists to present every person mature in Christ (Col. 1:28).

When Paul spoke of maturity in Colossians 1:28, he used a word (τέλειον) that parallels the emphasis of the Great Commission (discipleship through baptizing and teaching) by indicating initiation into Christ as well as growth (see also Phil. 3:15). Paul likely was using a technical term often used for initiates into Colossian mystery religions, but he certainly had in mind much more than entrance into Christ. Indeed, he sought to make the Word of God fully known (Col. 1:25).

Ultimately, this is the work of the Holy Spirit working in the Church through the means of grace (Word, sacraments, prayer). Reformed Forum is committed to assisting the Church in this maturation process. We support the Church specifically by encouraging a fidelity to the sufficiency of Scripture in all aspects of the Great Commission. The Reformed tradition generally, and Vos and Van Til specifically, are merely striving to be radically faithful and consistent to Scripture in its fullness.

During the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy of the early twentieth century, E. J. Young wrote to J. Gresham Machen, the founder of Westminster Theological Seminary and key figure in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which had yet to be formed:

Within the church there should be an organization, entirely independent of the formal church, which would act as leaven. This organization should be composed of ministers, elders and laymen of the new church alone, who not only believe the Westminster Confession but who are on fire with it. The purpose of this organization should be to propagate and to defend the Reformed faith, to point out the errors of modernism, sacerdotalism, premillennialism, Arminianism, Trichotomy, and so much of the anti-Scriptural evangelism of today. Furthermore, this group would seek to propagate Reformed literature, such as your book, *Christianity and Liberalism*, Boettner's book and works of that type. It would seek to propagate this literature not only among the clergy but also among the laity. In other words, it would be a missionary agency whose primary field is the church. Further, it would eventually seek to promote truly Reformed Bible Conferences and Evangelistic Campaigns, would seek to start Reformed Bible classes and prayer meetings and would seek to encourage Reformed radio broadcasts, etc.¹

Seventy-three years passed before Reformed Forum was founded and much has changed regarding technology, but providentially we have become this organization. There is a need today just as there was then, because the theological challenges persist. We are committed to be faithful to Scripture to the end that Christ would be glorified in the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

¹ E. J. Young, letter to J. Gresham Machen, October 2, 1935.

A THREE-PHASE PLAN

Reformed Forum have produced over 1,000 podcast episodes, hosted five conferences, and published one book in ten years. By God's grace, we have accomplished this without any employees. All of our theological contributors have served as volunteers with the exception of modest honoraria for conference lectures. While each of our contributors are happy to serve on behalf of the organization's mission, they also serve as full-time pastors or professors. In addition to family and other ecclesiastical commitments, there is not much time remaining for Reformed Forum, if any.

For many years, the growth of Reformed Forum has been hindered by this dynamic. To accelerate our programs and increase our donor base, we require an Executive Director whose full attention may be devoted to Reformed Forum's objectives. But to raise the necessary funds to support an Executive Director, we need a full-time employee. This presents a conundrum, and so we have developed a three-phase plan to launch Reformed Forum to its next stage of maturity.

PHASE 1: DEVELOPMENT OF INITIAL CURRICULUM [COMPLETE]

The first phase involves laying a foundation for producing educational resources. Our podcasts have been tremendously helpful to people around the world, but they do not offer any form of structured education. We desire to produce video Sunday school curriculum as well as study guides and books that will one day form a comprehensive lifetime theological curriculum.

To begin laying this foundation, we plan to execute two strategic tests in the next twelve months. The first involves publishing a book by Danny E. Olinger on Geerhardus Vos. Vos is the father of Reformed biblical theology, and his book *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* is the subject of our Vos Group podcast series.

Our second strategic test involves recording a 12-week Adult Sunday school course on an Introduction to Biblical Theology taught by Dr. Lane G. Tipton. The material of this course will complement our Vos Group resources as well as the book by Rev. Olinger. This is intentional, as we plan to develop a learning ecosystem in which multiple resources reinforce the concepts that are being taught and facilitate future learning.

Dr. Tipton's course will also serve as a strategic test for an innovative event format. We are planning to record the course in Wimberley, Texas while also renting an event space that accommodates several guests in cabins. Attendees to the event will be able to participate in the course during the day, but they will also be able to learn in an informal setting throughout the mornings and evenings as they fellowship with the Reformed Forum teaching faculty who will also be staying on site. We believe this will become a virtuous cycle for us in the future. As we host educational events, we will also record them, and then produce and distribute them as part of our lifetime theological curriculum to be accessed around the world.

~~*Need:* We are seeking \$20,000 for the purchase of additional professional recording equipment for the course and to cover the expense of our initial print run of Rev. Olinger's book.~~

PHASE 2: LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE [60% COMPLETE]

We have formulated a five-year plan that will allow us to hire a full-time Executive Director to expand and accelerate our programs and develop our donor base and institutional relationships. The financial forecasts for our expenses and income increase progressively through 2023. Our goal is to hire the Executive Director in 2019. We also plan to hire additional support staff over the next five years as well as provide stipends for our fellows, who research, teach, and otherwise produce our theological resources.

During this five-year period, we plan to produce eleven video courses and publish fifteen books. These resources will be integrated into an educational system similar to those provided by Duolingo and Khan Academy. This will allow students around the world to follow a structured course of study as they mature in their theological understanding. As additional resources are added to our lifetime curriculum, we forecast increased revenue that will eventually begin to cover our newly increased operating expenses.

Need: We have raised \$250,000 of support privately and now publicly seek individual donor support of \$150,000 in order to execute our five-year plan.

PHASE 3: A STUDY CENTER ENABLING GLOBAL EDUCATION

Our final phase involves developing a study center that would include a multimedia classroom for recording and livestreaming lectures, a library, and lodging for visiting students, scholars, pastors on study leave, and missionaries on furlough.

This center would serve as a base for international education. We desire to distribute and stream resources throughout the world, but we also plan to work in conjunction with organizations such as the Committee on Foreign Missions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Mobile Theological Training Corps to coordinate courses around the world and develop educational resources in foreign languages. We also would open our facilities to host events and classes for people able to make the trip.

We envision this phase beginning in the five to ten-year timeframe, though that could be sooner with the proper support. Before proceeding, we must engage the services of a consulting firm to determine our specific needs in light of various factors such as potential locations, available existing facilities, and development costs of a new facility.

Need: We are seeking any contributions to a long-term capital fund for such a study center and financial support in order to hire a consulting firm to assist in the development of a detailed plan.