

Winter 2020 Theology Exam

Section I: Reformed Confessional Heritage

You are the pastor of Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church. You and several members of the congregation are meeting with representatives of different Protestant denominations to plan a joint mission project. The meeting begins with worship, including communion. When worship is over, you and the members of Good Shepherd have the following discussion:

Ethan:	I love being part of the Body of Christ. Christ is definitely present in this gathering.
Journey:	I especially loved sharing Christ's body during communion just now.
Jaylen:	Yeah, that was a great way to start this cooperative effort to be the Body of Christ in the world.

REQUIRED RESPONSES: (*Total responses in this Section not to exceed 1,200 words.*)

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of the **Body of Christ**. In the essay, identify and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*. Include at least one (1) citation for each of the three (3) understandings of the Body of Christ presented by Ethan, Journey, and Jaylen.
2. Building on the essay in Required Response 1, write a newsletter article for Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church about what it means to participate in the Body of Christ. In the article, be sure to address the different understandings presented by Ethan, Journey, and Jaylen.

Section II: Constructive Statement of Christian Doctrine

You serve as pastor of St. Paul Presbyterian Church, where you are leading a young adult Bible study on the subject of vocation. The class reads from Mark 1:16-18 (NRSV): “As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him." This discussion ensues:

Marcos:	I've always wondered if the disciples really left their jobs right then and there when Jesus called them. Couldn't they have followed Jesus and continued working as fishermen?
Tito:	No way; a calling is serious stuff. It's renouncing the mundane way of life to become a minister or missionary. Regular work isn't holy; it is the sad result of our disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Isn't that what the Bible says?
Sara:	I don't think so. I know many people think ordained ministers are the only Christians with a calling, but any work can be a calling from God. But how do we know what God is calling us to do?

REQUIRED RESPONSES: *(Total responses in this Section not to exceed 1,200 words.)*

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of **vocation**. In the essay, use at least two (2) of the following resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology. If Mark 1:16-18 is used in the essay, it will not count as a required resource.
2. Building on the essay in Required Response 1, describe how you would respond to Marcos, Tito, and Sara.

Section III: Application to Ministry

You are pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church. On Sunday, you preach on Matthew 6:14-15 (NRSV): “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

On Monday, Teresa, a member of the congregation whose husband recently left her and their children, comes to talk with you. She says,

Your sermon yesterday hit home with me. I’m struggling with what it means to forgive my husband. I’m so angry I am not sure I can forgive him. I’m not even sure I *should* forgive him. Where does justice come into the picture? Is Jesus saying that my husband just gets away with this, while I’m guilty for not forgiving him? Should he not feel some remorse and ask for forgiveness before I am obligated to give it? I feel like the Bible and the church are laying an additional burden on me, the victim! Please help me understand why Jesus says, “If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

REQUIRED RESPONSES: (*Total responses in this Section not to exceed 1,200 words.*)

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of **forgiveness**. In the essay, use at least two (2) of these resources: the Scriptures, classical theology, contemporary theology. If Matthew 6:14-15 is used, it does not count as one of the required resources.
2. Building on the essay in Required Response 1, respond theologically to Teresa, with appropriate pastoral sensitivity. Be sure to address at least two (2) of the concerns about forgiveness she raises.