

MP552 Worship in the Reformed Tradition

Course Developer: Rev. Dr. Richard Gibbons

Contacts

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Please email the professor to request a phone or Zoom video appointment.

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Course Description

Worship is a vital and essential part of the Christian life. In the Reformed tradition, a great deal of prayerful preparation and thought have gone into cultivating and nourishing worship that is both biblical and reformed in its practice, while being intentional in its focus, accessible in its style, and engaging in its content.

This class will look at creating a community of worshipers through developing the fundamental nature and role of congregational worship. This will include consideration of the essential elements within each worship service, while highlighting the importance of Word and Sacrament. It will also explore a variety of worship styles ranging from traditional to contemporary. We will also review what we are seeking to achieve when preparing, crafting, and conducting services for Easter and Advent, baptisms and funerals, weddings and other services. Each class will equip participants with skills for developing a strong, diverse, relational community of worshipers.

Definition of Worship

Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of the mind with his truth; the purifying of the imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to his love; the surrender of the will to his purpose—all this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable. (*Nature, Man and God*, by William Temple, the Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Glasgow in the academic years 1932-1933 and 1933-1934.)

Distinctives of Reformed Worship

Reformed Worship is first and foremost theocentric. It is Trinitarian in its content and focus as it empowers worshipers to participate in adoration and thanksgiving to: God the Father for His sovereign love and initiative in saving grace; Christ the Son for His redemptive accomplishments through His birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension; the Holy Spirit for His life-transforming application of God's grace to our lives and His sustaining, equipping, and enabling power through His indwelling presence in our lives. This results in worship that involves a deep and intimate encounter with God, leading the worshipers to be lost in the immensity of His love, refreshed and renewed in the concentrated brilliance of His unsurpassed glory, and relishing in His redemption, while worshiping at the wonder of His love, overwhelmed by His mercy and moved to



adoration of the One who is “eternal, infinite, immeasurable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, invisible” (*Scots Confession*, chapter 1), “unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth” (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q4).

Course Objectives

1. What is the purpose of this course?

The purpose of this course is to develop within each student an appreciation and affection for consistently developing worship that is biblical and reformed in practice, intentional in focus, accessible in style, and engaging in content, while highlighting the nature and significance of Word and Sacrament at a congregational level.

2. What is the main point of the course?

The main point of this course is to equip and enable each student to develop the necessary critical and analytical skills to carefully consider and craft congregational worship that is Triune in nature, engaging in content, and designed for congregational participation in a 21st century cultural context.

3. Why/how is this course important for the student’s understanding of faith and practice of ministry?

This course will encourage and expand the student’s understanding of biblical and reformed worship by exploring the biblical importance of worship and the historical practices of the Church. This course will also ask how these biblical and historical principles apply in a 21st century cultural context where purpose, meaning, and significance appear to be determined by how connected congregants are to social media platforms and a digital playground.

4. How will the student be different after taking the course?

Student’s thinking and analytical approach will be different as a result of carefully considering the significance, meaning, and purpose of theocentric worship and its critical importance in developing an intergenerational community of worshippers.

Learning Objectives

Each lecture will highlight how that class contributes to the main course objectives by enabling students by the end of the course to:

1. Focus on the critical importance of congregational interaction with the presence of God by demonstrating excellence in all aspects of worship through creating a community of worshippers.
2. Inspire and nurture a culture of expectation in worship which stimulates congregations to encounter the Spirit of God through the conducting of biblical based worship that emphasizes the relevance and refreshing nature of intercessory prayer, interactive praise, and the indispensable study and application of scriptures for congregational discipleship, growth, and maturity.



3. Model and demonstrate worship which will intentionally equip and enable congregants to value adoration and praise that focuses on the life transforming character and nature of God encountered in Christ, while incorporating the importance and centrality in congregational life of Word and Sacrament as a primary means of discipleship.
4. Craft and structure worship which equips and enables the congregation to intentionally live out their faith amidst the challenges, messiness, and distractions of a 21st century cultural context while being consistently focused on and delighting in "Him who first loved you."
5. Cultivate a variety of worship styles within a biblical and reformed framework that nurtures unity, clarity, purpose, focus, and direction within the life of the congregation.
6. Seek excellence in the conducting of all aspects of congregational worship which is purposefully configured by:
 - a. the selection, exegesis and contemporary application of scripture,
 - b. the inclusion of congregational praise that is participatory, warm, and accessible,
 - c. focusing on prayer that reflects a profound dependency on God while being insightful to the needs of the congregation, engaging in content, and intercessory in nature,
 - d. musical accompaniment which models excellence in quality and enables congregations to participate in heart felt praise that is God-honoring, Christ-exalting, Spirit-led.
7. Develop skills that enable the critical and constructive assessment of "best practices" in congregational worship options and styles.

Course Measures

Students will demonstrate proficiency in:

- Understanding the relevance and indispensable nature of biblical and reformed worship for the growth, maturing, and development of congregational life, discipleship, and service.
- Prayerfully, analytically, critically, and constructively designing a variety of worship services that include biblical principles and reformed practices which are intentional in focus, accessible in style, and engaging in content.
- Completing all reading, writing assignments, and course participation through interacting with online lectures, peer discussions, and interactive case studies.

Course Schedule

The course is organized into twelve content weeks called "Lessons," one holiday week, and one additional week focused on completing major summative assignments. Weeks begin on a Tuesday and end on a Monday.

Week(s)	Lesson Title
1	Introduction to Worship
2	Historical Distinctives of Reformed Worship



3	Developing and Designing Reformed Worship for Today
4	Traditional Worship
5	Contemporary Worship
6	Preaching in the Context of Worship
7	The Sacraments
8	The Importance of Advent
9	The Significance of Easter
10	Planning and Preparing for a Funeral
11	Planning and Preparing for a Wedding
12	Developing a Worshiping Community
13	Final Coursework

Learning Tasks

I. Lectures

Students are required to watch weekly lecture videos. These videos are available on the course site. Students are required to watch all the lecture videos to pass the course and will submit a course report at the end of the course attesting that they have completed this requirement (and others).

II. Course Meetings with Professor

All students will meet a few times with the Course Professor as an entire class to discuss course content, insights, questions, and concerns. Dates and times are on the course site. Information on how to connect to these Course Meetings will be available on the course site.

III. Small Group Meetings and Summaries

All students taking the course for credit will be required to participate in a small group of 3-5 individuals. Groups will be formed at the beginning of the course. Each small group will be required to find a mutually agreeable time to meet weekly via Zoom to discuss course content in response to questions composed by the Course Developer. After the group meeting each week, each student will prepare and submit a one-page written response to the questions that reflects both the group discussion and their own conclusions in response to each question. These will be graded by the Course Professor.



IV. Assignments

Students will complete assignments associated with the content of the Lessons. Instructions and due dates for all assignments can be found within the course site.

Learning Resources

Students are required to read the following books:

- Carson, D. A., ed. *Worship by the Book*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002. ISBN-13: 978-0310216254
- Chapell, Bryan. *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0801036408
- Frame, John M. *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1997. ISBN-13: 978-0875522128
- Old, Hughes Oliphant. *Worship: Reformed according to Scripture*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. ISBN-13: 978-1611644517
- Old, Hughes Oliphant. *Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Worship*. Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995. ISBN-13: 978-0802808219
- Quill, Timothy, Ligon Duncan, Dan Wilt, Michael Lawrence, Mark Dever, and Dan Kimball. *Perspectives on Christian Worship: Five Views*. Edited by J. Matthew Pinson. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009 (368 pages). ISBN-13: 978-0805440997
- Ryken, Philip G., J. Ligon Duncan, and Derek Thomas, eds. *Give Praise to God*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2011 (536 pages). ISBN-13: 978-1596383920.

The following books are recommended by the Course Developer, but are not required for purchase:

- Dawn, Marva J. *How Shall We Worship? Biblical Guidelines for the Worship Wars*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003. ISBN-13: 978-0842356367
- Merker, Matt. *Corporate Worship: How the Church Gathers as God's People*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2021. ISBN-13: 9781433569821
- Rice, Howard L., and James C. Huffstutler. *Reformed Worship*. Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0664501471
- Rice, Howard L., and Lamar Williamson Jr. *A Book of Reformed Prayers*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998. ISBN-13: 978-0664257019
- Various. *The Worship of God: Reformed Concepts of Biblical Worship*. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2005. ISBN-13: 978-1845500559
- Zahl Paul, Harold Best, Joe Horness, Don Williams, Robert Webber, Sally Morgenhaler. *Six Views on Exploring the Worship Spectrum*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004. ISBN-13: 978-0310247593



Course Assignments and Weighting

Assignment	Weighting
Small Group Summaries and Attendance	20%
Weekly Writing Assignments	80%
Course Report (pass/fail) includes:	
Reading	Must complete to pass course
Lecture Viewing	Must complete to pass course
Course Meetings	Must attend to pass course
Small Group Meetings	Must attend to pass course
TOTAL	100%

Assignment Formatting

FIT uses The SBL Handbook of Style, 2nd Edition. This style guide is used by scholars in the field of Biblical Studies and by many publishers in that field. It is itself based on the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) and aligns with Kate Turabian's Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations (7th ed.).

All of these works are available to reference on FIT's DTL2 library. A quick-start guide for formatting term papers is available at this link: <https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/pubs/sblhssupp2015-02.pdf>

You will find that there are standards for everything—formatting a paper, how to reference the Bible, how to cite other authors with long quotations, how to make a bibliography, and more.

If all of this seems confusing, please reach out to FIT's Tutorial Services via studentadvisor@flourishinstitute.online. A FIT tutor will be able to coach you through formatting a paper, proper citations, crafting a bibliography, and more. Tutorial sessions are an additional cost.

Mutual Commitments

What I, as your Course Instructor, expect from you as an emerging leader in service of Christ:

- I expect you to be diligent in preparing for each session.
- I expect you to submit work on time (or if this is not possible, to request an extension adequately ahead of the deadline).



- I expect you to participate fully and constructively in all course activities and discussions.
- I expect you to show respect towards other students, being sensitive to national, cultural, political, gender, and other individual differences, and listening courteously when others speak in class.
- I expect you to provide accurate and constructive feedback on the course content and methodology that will help me as I teach this course and when I teach this material again in the future.

My commitments to you as a Course Instructor are:

- I will make myself available to you regularly by taking part in our Course Web-Meetings
- I will encourage reciprocity and cooperation among you as a class of emerging leaders inside and outside those meetings
- I will make myself available to meet with you individually throughout our course
- I will provide prompt feedback on all your work in ways intended to affirm your learning and encourage and extend your learning
- I will promote active learning, respecting diverse talents and learning styles to the best of my ability

Attendance Policies

Course Meeting Attendance

Each course will meet as an entire class 4-6 times (with the exception of Mentored Ministry Lab which meets every week). All students are required to attend all course meetings. Meeting dates are posted on the syllabi when course registration opens for the trimester. Exceptions can be made for personal and family emergencies. If an emergency arises, a student must reach out to the professor to let them know they will be missing the meeting. Students' participation scores will be penalized if they miss a meeting without notifying the professor.

Small Group Meeting Attendance

Each course will have small group meetings. These meeting times are set by the group of students, not the professor or FIT Registrar. A student is expected to attend all small group meetings for their course(s). Exceptions can be made for personal and family emergencies. A summary of the meeting is required at the end of the lesson when the small group meets. Therefore, if a student does not attend (for personal reasons, and not an emergency) their small group attendance score will be penalized.

Academic Integrity

"Neither by wanting to be better than others, nor by empty pride, but in humility think of others as better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).



In order to be properly equipped as a public theologian—as all ministry leaders are—students must learn to respect the work of others. Research, writing, publishing, editing, and all other works of art, are the fruit of someone’s labor. We seek to “honor everyone” (1 Peter 2:17), and so lift up the contributions that have gone ahead of us and have directly or indirectly informed our own ways of thinking.

This respect is made manifest by making fair use of the works of others. This involves properly citing ideas, indirect quotes, direct quotes, and other works, according to standard forms. FIT uses the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) format, which is based on Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS).

Students are sometimes tempted to plagiarize the work of others, to pass off the ideas or work of others as their own. This kind of intellectual theft is not respectful, it is not conducive to a student’s best learning potential, nor does it reveal the goodness of the kingdom of God to a dark world. Rather than spelling out a legal formulation of exactly what plagiarism entails, consider the principle of respecting the work of others, and the goal of your own intellectual formation. If your professors discover evidence of plagiarism, he or she will call you to account and recommend you to enroll in FIT’s Tutorial Program’s “Academic Research” section. Because there is a wide variety of access to intellectual material today, plagiarism would include the use of phrasing, outlines and ideas in print or online, in journals or audio, in other student’s papers, etc. without completely citing the original authors.

Any future evidence of plagiarism after completion of the Tutorial Program will result in those works receiving a zero grade.

Accommodations, Couse Drops, and Extensions

Accommodations

The Flourish Institute of Theology understands that God has gifted individuals in various ways and that different individuals thrive better in different environments. If you have a diagnosed disability that will impact your ability to engage with our programs effectively, we aim to offer reasonable accommodations to support your discipleship and learning here.

In order to receive accommodations, FIT requires that students provide documentation from a qualified professional that:

- Diagnoses your condition
- Defines how this condition limits your learning in the following environments:
 - Viewing lectures
 - Engaging in Zoom-based live discussions
 - Participating in mentored ministry experiences
 - Attending and participating in in-person gatherings



- Reading paper-based books and ebooks
- Writing academic papers
- Provides suggestions for reasonable accommodations

The registrar will work with you and the student advisor to develop a learning plan based on this information and will communicate these accommodations to course professors.

Course Drops

In the realm of discipleship, quality is far more important than quantity. Maintaining a suitable course load is an important component in equipping you for the work of ministry. In order to thrive in every course, it is vital that you are not overworked and so unable to engage in a course completely. We encourage you to talk with your professors and student advisor as soon as possible if you are considering dropping a course.

If you would like to drop the course, you are able to do so. The deadlines and refund amounts are listed in the Student Handbook. Once the 13th Friday of the course passes, and you have not completed the coursework, you will receive an “incomplete” for the course.

When you request to drop a course, you will be asked to fill out a form for our records with the name of the course, the reason you are dropping the course, and confirmation that you have notified your professor.

Extensions

Arrangements for submission of late work during the trimester are made between the student and the professor. Extensions must be requested before the assignment is due, and extensions are only granted for extenuating circumstances. If an extension is not granted, and an assignment is submitted late, grading of that assignment will be affected based on how late the assignment is submitted. Additional paperwork is not needed by the FIT Registrar to grant an extension during the trimester.

All extension requests for after the end date of the trimester need to be submitted to the FIT Registrar. An Extension Petition must be submitted to registrar@flourishinstitute.online no later than the last Friday of the trimester. A student can request an Extension Petition from the FIT Registrar at registrar@flourishinstitute.online. The petition will ask for the agreed upon extension date set by the student and the professor. Extensions are only granted for extenuating circumstances. There will be a fee for extensions of \$40 (per week) that will need to be paid when the student submits their Extension Petition. An extension of one day to seven days is \$40, eight days to fourteen days is \$80, and so on.

Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the end date for the trimester are made between the student and Instructor. However, course work to be submitted after the publicized end date for the trimester or term must be approved by the FIT Registrar. An Extension



Petition must be submitted to registrar@flourishinstitute.online no later than the Friday before the last day of the course. Extensions are only available for those with exigent and unforeseen circumstances and are generally not granted for work, ministry, or educational overload. There will be a fee for extensions of \$40 that will need to be paid when the student submits their Extension Petition. To request an Extension Petition, please email the FIT Registrar at registrar@flourishinstitute.online with the name of the course and the deadline you and your instructor agreed upon.

