

What is a Reformed Baptist Church?

by Reagan Marsh

Churches use many different terms to identify themselves. They may call themselves Methodist or missional, Episcopal or evangelistic, Congregational or community, but they're all saying something about their identity and convictions as a professing body of believers.

And it's the same way for us in Reformed Baptist circles, whether we're serving in the SBC or another fellowship.

We're a *Reformed* (theologically) *Baptist* (in practice/ecclesiology) *church* (a constituted worshiping body) in the local community.

So what exactly does it mean to be a Reformed Baptist church?

1. We are a *Christ-centered* body. All of Scripture centers on the person and work of Jesus—who he is and what he's done for his sinful people in his life, death, resurrection, and exaltation (Luke 24:25-27,44-47; John 5:39,46). Our preaching, singing, praying, communing, shepherding, giving, counseling, evangelizing, and sending is all to be centered on the glory and worthiness of "the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5).
2. We are a *carefully Biblical* body. Our faith is as wide and deep as the Scriptures will lead us, but we take great pains not "go beyond what is written" (1 Cor 4:6). We want to worship, teach, believe, and live under the authority of the written Word of God as fully, openly, and demonstrably as possible.
3. We are a *confessional* body. Confessions, creeds, and catechisms are simply faithful summaries of what Scripture says. Ours is a robustly doctrinal and richly biblical faith, not a lowest-common-denominator approach. We consciously aim to walk in the "old paths" of our Baptist forefathers, as demonstrated in the 1689 Baptist Confession and 1693 Baptist Catechism.
4. We are a *Calvinistic* body. That is to say, we believe and teach the Reformation convictions of God's utter sovereignty in salvation and providence, often nicknamed the doctrines of grace. The Bible's vision of God is a King who majestically orchestrates all of history for his glory and our good, "working all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph 1:11), and we love to see this great God's beauty exalted on every page of Scripture.
5. We are a *credobaptist* body. *Credo*—Latin for "I believe"—means that, in keeping with Christ's command in the Great Commission (Matt 28:19), we practice the baptism of disciples alone. The visible church is to be a regenerate body, consisting of those who profess saving faith in Jesus alone; and its members come to his ordinances clinging to his Cross.
6. We are a *corporately-focused* body, lovingly shepherded by a plurality of godly men who are mature in the Lord and "mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24). This congregational emphasis means the elders care for souls by teaching, counseling, and applying "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) to help our members know the whole Christ and grow into whole Christians, in the context of God's household.
7. We are a *consciously obedient* body, earnestly desiring to live holy lives—not to become Christians, but because God in his grace has made us Christians. We want our lives to be a testimony to the truth and power of the Cross. United to Christ, we're freed to pursue holiness before the Father in Christ's strength, depending on the Spirit's grace, for God's glory.
8. We are a *committed* body, meaning that we have covenanted to walk together biblically under the oversight of faithful elders. We've vowed to love to one another, to support and submit to our shepherds, and to obey the Lord. To that end, we've promised to encourage each other, bear one another's burdens, correct each other when necessary, and pray for one another diligently, while daily and weekly practicing the ordinary means of grace as families within the family of God.
9. We are a *calling* body, firmly believing in our responsibility to share the gospel with everyone we can, as often as we can, as faithfully as we can. The Bible teaches that Jesus, by his death, bought a people from everywhere in the world (Rev 5:9), and we joyfully embrace our role in evangelism and missions.

Our central aim is to glorify God by faithfully worshiping, teaching, and living in light of his revealed truth in his word. That's the core of what it means to be a Reformed Baptist church. We invite you to join us in knowing, enjoying, and sharing the love of Christ! "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!" (Psa 34:3)

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