

COMMITMENT #14

A STRONG CHURCH IS “ALWAYS BEING REFORMED” IN PURSUIT OF GREATER FAITHFULNESS AND FRUITFULNESS.

Now as to the love of the brothers and sisters, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you practice it toward all the brothers and sisters who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers and sisters, to excel even more.
—1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 NASB

DEFINITION

“The church is reformed and always [in need of] being reformed according to the Word of God” (Van Lodenstein). The passive verb phrase “always being reformed” speaks to the Spirit’s work through the Word of God to bring about greater faithfulness and fruitfulness. We are always on the receiving end of God’s self-revelation, and because we see through a glass dimly, we need help from the Scriptures, the Spirit, our contemporaries, and other saints throughout church history to help us get it right. We aim to have the humility to admit when we have gotten it wrong and to turn. Practically, this looks like taking time as elders to evaluate our Family of Churches, learn from others, and make adjustments as necessary. When sin is involved, this could look like the elders and leaders repenting publicly of ways we haven’t trusted God or loved well.

QUOTES TO PONDER

The church is reformed and always being reformed according to the Word of God.... [It] keeps us from making tradition infallible but equally from imbibing the radical Protestant obsession with starting from scratch in every generation. — Michael Horton

The backward and forward reference of reform invites us on the one hand to attend respectfully to the wisdom and Scriptural interpretations of those who have gone before us with humility. On the other hand, it pushes us to do more than simply reiterate what fathers and mothers in the faith have said. Rather, we must do in our day what they did in theirs, worship and serve the living God. Therefore, while we honor the forms of faith and life that have been bequeathed to us, we honor them best in a spirit of openness to the Word and the Spirit that formed and continue to re-form the church. The church, because of who God is, a living God, remains open to always being reformed. —Anna Case-Winters

One great need of the church today is the experience of the dynamic leadership of Christ as its Head.... The Scriptures promise us that Christ’s Spirit will be with us, will guide us, and will lead us into all truth. This is the most striking implication of one’s belief in the resurrected Lord. If Christ is alive, he desires to lead his church. If Christ desires to lead his church, his will should be sought. If his will can be sought, it can be discerned; and if it can be discerned, it deserves to be obeyed. —Paul Anderson

Effective leaders strike the right balance between doing (making things happen) and being (observing and reflecting). —Michael Watkins



Get hopeless about what's not going to work. —Henry Cloud

We commonly assume that we can assemble a group of undiscerning individuals and expect them to be discerning leaders. Leaders of churches and Christian organizations are often successful in the secular marketplace, or even church ministry, but have had little instruction in or preparation for the process of discernment. —Ruth Haley Barton

The Japanese believe building a great organization is like growing a tree; it takes twenty-five to fifty years. —Peter M. Senge

BIBLE STUDY

Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-18.

As you consider the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church as described in this passage, where are we passive and where are we active?

What do we learn about what the Holy Spirit is actively working in us? How is the gospel related to this work?

How does a church ensure that it is “beholding the glory of the LORD?”

What is the end result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the church?

QUESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Does your church have a culture of listening to the Holy Spirit for encouragement, correction, or guidance?



How are your elders and leadership core modeling the “learner” gospel identity?

How often do your elders/staff take a spiritual pulse of the church? What does that look like, and what do you do with new insights about the current state of the church?

Describe the last time the elders shifted/repented in light of new learning from the Word and Spirit? How did you communicate that?

What people from different traditions are you learning from? How are you applying those learnings? Do you have a sense of who you should be learning from next?

Do you have a review process in place for elders, deacons, missional community leaders, and all discipleship environments (Sunday Gatherings, Missional Communities, DNA)? Describe the process and identify ways it could be more faithful and effective.

What other insights would be helpful to better understand this area in your church?

COMMITTED TO ACTION

What’s one thing you or your team could do this week to strengthen this area?

What would it take to see this commitment strengthened over the next year?

