Ten Ways

MY REFORMED IDENTITY SHAPES MY LIFE

You may have asked yourself, "What difference does being Reformed really make"? Our Reformed identity is much more than a set of theological principles. It's a biblically-based framework for building a life that is deep and rich and shaped by the knowledge that "I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ."

On this journey of faith, here are ten ways that our Reformed identity shapes our daily living and our Christian calling.

1. I CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT I LIVE BY GRACE ALONE.

I am saved by grace, a love far too vast for me to comprehend. In mercy, God reached out to me, and he holds me fast. My wobbly heart continually tries to live by false powers—my achievements, my reasoning, my relationships— but deep down I know that only grace will lead me home. "I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,and to know this love that surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:17-19).

2. I RECOGNIZE THAT JESUS IS LORD.

Sometimes our world feels chaotic, and it doesn't look like Jesus is Lord. But "there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, 'Mine!'" (Abraham Kuyper). Jesus has begun his glorious and gentle reign and will one day rule all creation perfectly. As I pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, "I'm committing myself to "seek first the kingdom" in all that I am and do. But it's a struggle, so I have to remind myself daily that "though the wrong seems great and strong, God is the ruler yet."

3. GOD'S STORY SHAPES THE STORY OF MY LIFE.

God's faithfulness is revealed to us through a story spanning from creation to new creation, centered on Jesus. His death and resurrection stand at the center; my life is shaped by dying and rising with him. Thus, I am part of this story; my immersion in God's story shapes the story of my life. I try to live out the biblical patterns of God's grace and truth in my daily tasks, my relationships, my hopes and dreams, my life calling. "Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105).

4. I SEE GOD IN CREATION.

God also reveals himself through Scripture and through the beauty, power, and orderliness of creation. Every molecule declares it! "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" (Rev. 5:13). As my voice joins that song, I receive God's creation with wonder, gratitude, and respect, guided by its wise design and called to be its caretaker. I am called to use God's two great books of Scripture and creation to engage wholeheartedly in learning and scientific endeavor.

5. I AM CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE.

I share image-bearing with all humankind. A frightened voice inside me tries to divide people into "us and them," but as I recognize God's image in others, I come to see my fear more clearly and God's heart more fully and deeply. Together we are servant-rulers, inviting God's glory to be more fully revealed in all he has made. "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands. . . " (Ps. 8:4-6).

6. I UNDERSTAND THE DEVASTATION SIN CREATES.

As I child, I understood sin to be "doing bad things." Now I see how deceptive my heart is, and how lies and power games are present everywhere: relationships, churches, theologies, social and economic systems. Even "the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Rom. 8:22). This devastation throws me on my knees before the throne of grace and compels me to trust and follow as Jesus leads me in and through the brokenness.

7. I CAN TRUST GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

God is a provider. My heart likes to tell me that I'm not being taken care of, and that I have a great deal to be anxious about. But Jesus declares, "Do not worry about your life. . . . Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:25-33). As I trust God's provision, I receive comfort, hope, and courage to follow where he leads.

8. I BELONG TO A WORSHIPING COMMUNITY.

To worship is to acknowledge God's worthiness, and I'm called to do this 24/7 in all that I am and do. Jesus welcomes me into a community of hands and feet, eyes and ears (1 Cor. 12), and calls this community to gather to sing, pray, and be nourished by the Word and Spirit. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing. . . . And whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, doit all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:16-17).

9. I AM SET FREE TO LIVE HONESTLY.

Reformed people love the psalms because the psalms have nothing to hide; in them, believers praise with abandon, complain bitterly, cry out longingly, ponder quietly, and hope with trembling hearts. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs in the kingdom of heaven," declares Jesus (Matt. 5:3), and he sets me free to stop pretending and to walk with him just as I am, trusting as he says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

10. I AM GOD'S PARTNER IN MAKING ALL THINGS NEW.

Jesus gathers his community of farmers and professors, nurses and engineers, retirees and teens, the seemingly successful and the bruised and broken, and declares, "You are ambassadors in my renewal mission." "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. . . . We are therefore Christ's ambassadors" (2 Cor. 5:17-20).

This resource has been developed by Thrive. If you have questions or would like support in ministry, please email thrive@crcna.org.