

RCA Doctrinal Standards Self-Led Study Module

Do this reading and watch these videos at your own pace. Use the exercises to help you think through the materials. When you're ready, contact me, and we will have a discussion about the RCA Doctrinal Standards

Required Reading:

Margit Ernst-Habib, *But Why Are You Called a Christian?* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) ISBN: 978- 3-525-58041-7

Eugene P. Heideman, *The Canons of Dort: God's Freedom, Justice, and Persistence* (Van Raalte Press) ISBN: 978-1956060027

Allan J. Janssen, *Confessing the Faith Today* (Wipf & Stock) ISBN 978-1-4982-8624-4

Piet Naude, *Neither Calendar nor Clock: Perspectives on the Belhar Confession* (Wm. B. Eerdmans) ISBN: 978-0-8028-6259-4.

Our Faith: Ecumenical Creeds, Reformed Confessions, and Other Sources (Faith Alive) ISBN 978- 1-59255725-7.

Unit 1

Read:

Belgic Confession Articles 1-11

Janssen, *Confessing the Faith*, Chapters 1–3

Naude, chapter 3

“Historic and Faithful Witnesses’: Reflecting on the Standards and How They have Been Used in the Forms of Declaration and the Church” Commission on History, 2018

Watch: [“Introduction to the Confessions,”](#) [“Historical Introduction to the Confessions,”](#) [“Belgic Confession: God,”](#) and [“Belgic Confession: Knowing God”](#)

Reflect:

- What is the purpose of confessions?
- What is the difference between having a confession and confessing?
- What does it mean that confessions are “historic and faithful witnesses to the Word of God”?
- How do the two books work together to help us to know God?

Unit 2

Read:

Belgic Confession Articles 12-26, 37
Janssen, *Confessing the Faith*, Chapters 4-6, 10
Canons of Dort
Heideman, Chapters 3-11

Watch: [“Belgic Confession: The Work of Salvation,”](#) [“Dort I,”](#) [“Dort II”](#)

Reflect:

- What role do we play in the salvific process?
- Do we have a will? If not, why? If so, how does it work?
- Do the Canons of Dort show a God that overrides our will?
- What is the good news that is taught in the Canons of Dort?

Unit 3

Read:

Belgic Confession Articles 27-36
Janssen, *Confessing the Faith*, Chapters 7-9

Watch: [“Belgic Confession—The Church,”](#) [“Belgic Confession—the Sacraments”](#)

Reflect:

- Is the church a work of God? A work of people? Both? How and why?
- In defining the marks of the church, is the Confession giving a broad place for many churches to fit, or a narrow place for fewer churches to fit?
- What does it look like for a church to not purely preach the Gospel, or not purely administer the sacraments, or to not practice church discipline?
- What are sacraments and why do we have them?
- What is the meaning underneath the text of Article 36?

Unit 4

Read:

Heidelberg Catechism
Ernst-Habib

Watch: [“Heidelberg Catechism-Introduction and Misery,”](#) [“Heidelberg Catechism-Deliverance,”](#) [“Heidelberg Catechism-The Sacraments,”](#) [“Heidelberg Catechism-Commandments and Prayer”](#)

Reflect:

- What is the significance of the first question and answer for the entire catechism?
- How does “misery” strike you differently than “sin” when thinking about the first section of the Catechism?
- While there is only one question and answer on “What do you believe concerning ‘the Holy Spirit,’” what are other places in which the Spirit’s action is clearly seen in the Catechism?
- Who has most of the verbs in the section on Deliverance? Why does that matter?
- Why is the Ten Commandments included in the Gratitude section?
- If Christ already did everything, then is gratitude required? Why or why not?

Unit 5

Read:

The Belhar Confession
Naude, pp. 1-20 and chapters, 1,2,7,8,9

Watch: [“The Belhar Confession”](#)

Reflect:

- Some say that the other confessions are theological documents, whereas the Belhar is a political document, how would you respond to that?
- Is the Belhar a confession only about race? Why or why not?
- Can you select one or two of the sections of the Belhar and only seek those? For instance, can you seek unity without reconciliation or justice, or can you seek reconciliation without justice?