

# Discussion Board Check List

## **COMPOSE YOUR ORIGINAL POST IN MS WORD:**

- **P**roofread carefully for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.
- **R**eview your post for content, sentence clarity, and conciseness.
- **O**rganize the main points of your posting to follow a clear outline.
- **V**erify the source material, the citations, and the final word count.
- **E**valuate if you have satisfactorily met all the required guidelines.

## **FOLLOW THIS CHECKLIST AS YOU COMPOSE IT:**

- Proofread what you wrote by reading it out loud. Take a breath before you begin reading each sentence. If you cannot get to the end of any of your sentences before you run out of breath, there is a good chance that the sentence is too long.
- When you read out loud, do so in a monotone. If your sentence does not make complete sense without personal voice inflections, then there is a good chance that your reader—who isn't there to hear you read it—will have trouble understanding it.
- Except in a response post written directly back to another student, do not use any 2<sup>nd</sup> person in academic writing. Thus, none of your sentences should contain “you” or “your” or commands to the reader, such as “Remember: always read the bible.”
- As a rule of thumb, 80% of your writing will be 3<sup>rd</sup> person, and 20% will be 1<sup>st</sup> person. This latter 20% is usually reserved for reflexive reports in which you are asked to give your opinion of a source or what you got out of the material.
- Avoid using contractions in academic writing. Thus, use “cannot” instead of “can't.” Do not use abbreviations or terms unless you have defined them for your reader.
- Use source material to adequately support your points. Whenever you make a statement that someone might dispute, use sources to back up your argument.
- Use quotations as needed, but keep them short. Long quotes can imply that you have less to say and are trying to fill up your word count. Thus, use the shortest possible quotes that prove your point. You can reference a source without quoting it.
- Be as clear and concise as possible. If you can make a point effectively in 8 words, do not use 18 words instead. This will insure that your writing is clear and strong.
- Be sure to address all parts of the question. Write your post based on the class sources—not just your opinion. Your professor wants proof you know the material.
- Response posts are in lieu of class discussion. Thus, they should be more than just agreeing with other students—they should encouragingly point out the strengths and respectfully point out the weaknesses of the arguments.

# Discussion Board Sample Post

*In 300-350 words, answer the following questions: How was penance understood theologically in the sixth century? What was its primary purpose? What is the pastoral issue at stake in the rise of penance? How was penance meant to deal with the issue? What can our current churches learn from this? As always, support your posting with sources.*

*Question: In 300-350 words, answer the following questions . . . with sources.*

In the Church of the sixth century, a person refusing to confess their sins to a priest was considered guilty of “perjury.” Such a person was “to be cast out of the Church, or from the communion and society of the faithful, so that no one shall either eat or drink or pray with him, or receive him into his house” (Theodulf of Orleans, “Capitullaries,” xxvi, col. 199; based on 1 Corinthians 5:5). Similar to the systematic construct of the Benedictine Rule, the process of penance was understood as a methodical, carefully-tracked process of helping sinners achieve the remission of sins.

In “The Penitential of Cummean,” penance was metaphorically referred to as “medicine for the salvation of souls” (Introduction), which was based on the “medicine of the Holy Scripture” (sec. 1). When a person had been “cured,” the fruits of repentance were expected: a passion to evangelize, give alms, forgive others, and even have a passion for martyrdom. First and foremost, the repentant were expected to be able to articulate an understanding of forgiveness and the implications of the penance (sec. 14).

As opposed to the casual, almost careless confrontation with sin in many modern churches, priests were depicted then as being passionately concerned about helping their flocks remain free from the power of sin. The priests were the “doctors” responsible for administering the “prescriptions” of penance to their congregations (James 5:14-16). According to Theodulf of Orleans, “The measure of penance, to be sure, depends on the decision of the priest” as the prescription of a sick person depends on the judgment and wisdom of a doctor (“Capitullaries,” sec. 36, col. 211). Once the man had made his confession, “the priest himself shall prostrate himself before the altar with him, and confessing they shall repeat the psalms with groaning and if possible with weeping” (Fleury, para. 2).

The contemporary Church will become stronger as pastors foster a judgment-free environment, encourage the confession of sins, and walk through the process of repentance with their flocks—valuable lessons learned from the Church of the Early Middle Ages.

This question has 7 parts:

1. From 300 to 350 words.
2. Penance in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.
3. The purpose of penance.
4. Pastoral issue at stake.
5. How penance fixed this.
6. Impact on churches today.
7. Use sources for support.

**If you have a choice of questions, then identify which one you chose.**

**This sentence makes a statement that gives background to the 6<sup>th</sup> century view of penance (part 2).**

**This sentence uses an academic quotation to support the previous sentence (part 2) and address the need for sources (part 7).**

**This sentence addresses three things: the purpose of penance (part 3), how it was viewed (part 2), and the need it addressed (part 4).**

**This sentence describes penance (part 2 & 3), identifies its uses (part 3 & 4), and gives support (part 7).**

**This sentence describes what is expected to follow once penance has been completed (parts 2 – 5).**

**This sentence uses a reference to a source without a quotation to identify expectations of the person who has done penance (part 4 & 5).**

**This sentence compares penance in the 6<sup>th</sup> century with the way sin is approached today (part 4 – 6).**

**This sentence provides a scriptural reference for penance (parts 3 – 7).**

**This sentence uses a quotation to connect the previous scripture and the 6<sup>th</sup> century view of penance described at the beginning of this paragraph (parts 5 – 7).**

**This sentence uses an academic quotation to give more background to the way penance was handled in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the way it was administered by leadership in the church (parts 2 & 7).**

**This sentence refers to the effect that an understanding of penance in the sixth century can have on current churches (parts 4 – 6).**

**This entire posting (excluding the question) is 345 words. Stay within the upper range of the word count.**