

Marks #2-3: Sacraments & Discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 11:17-34; Matthew 28:16-20)

I. **Mark #2:** The Pure Administration of the Sacraments (**Mt. 28:18-20**)

1. Baptism (Gen. 17:12-13; Acts 2:39; 1 Cor. 7:14; Mt. 19:14)

2. The Lord's Supper (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 10:16; **11:27-30**)

II. **Mark #3:** The Practice of Church Discipline (Mt. 18:15; CO 52-53)

III. Four Reasons Church Discipline Is Essential

1. It Takes God's Judgment Seriously (1 Thess. 4:6; Rom. 2:8)
2. It Protects the Church from Infection (1 Co 5:6; Hb 12:15f; 1 Ti 5:20)
3. It Protects the Reputation of Christ (Lv 11:44; Ez 36:21; **1 Co 5:1**)
4. It Provides for Restoration (**1 Co 5:5**; Lk. 15:7; 2 Co 2:7-8; Hb 12:11)

IV. Conclusion (Mt. 16:18)

Belgic Confession Art. 29a: We believe that we ought to discern diligently and very carefully, by the Word of God, what is the true church—for all sects in the world today claim for themselves the name of “the church.”

We are not speaking here of the company of hypocrites who are mixed among the good in the church and who nonetheless are not part of it, even though they are physically there.

But we are speaking of distinguishing the body and fellowship of the true church from all sects that call themselves “the church.”

The true church can be recognized if it has the following marks: The church engages in the pure preaching of the gospel; it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them; it practices church discipline for correcting faults.

In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and holding Jesus Christ as the only Head. By these marks one can be assured of recognizing the true church—and no one ought to be separated from it.

Questions for Family Discussion

- Why does properly administering the sacraments matter? How can a church's sacramental practice help you determine whether it is a true church? How should we determine how serious a particular sacramental error is?
- How do you think the widespread neglect of church discipline has affected American Christianity? What is church discipline all about? Is it intended ultimately to “condemn you” or “get rid of you”? **Why** must it be practiced?
- Why is it so important to follow Matthew 18:15 **before** you tell the Consistory about someone's sin?
- How should you **use** the three marks of a true church: (i) for finding a new church? (ii) in your current church?
- How are the three marks of the true church (incl. sacraments & discipline) related to the centrality of the gospel?