

The Fundamentals of our Faith
Understanding the Church: What Marks the Church?
(How do I know it's a church or if it's a healthy church?)

1. What forms the church? (Review)
 - a. The Word of Christ.

 - b. Spirit-enlivened, God-gifted _____ in the Word of Christ (i.e. regeneration).

2. What forms a local church?
 - a. Believers uniting together in gospel-shaped, formally recognized covenant _____.
 - i. They intend to regularly gather around the preaching of the Word of Christ.
 - ii. They intend to regularly share in the sacraments/ordinances of Christ.
 - iii. They intend to bind themselves together as a local body of Christ.
 - iv. They intend to submit to properly appointed leaders.
 - v. They intend to participate together in the shared mission of Christ.

 - b. Believers uniting together in shared _____.
 - i. Shared doctrinal statement.
 - ii. Shared confessional practice (i.e. worship liturgy).
 - iii. Shared confessional convictions around secondary issues (e.g. credo vs. paedo baptism, practice of sign gifts, doctrines of grace, etc.).

3. What marks the church or what is essential for a group to identify themselves as a church (i.e. How do I know that this is a church?)
 - a. Common _____:
 - i. Where two or more are gathered, you have a church (cf. Matthew 18:20).

 - ii. Where believers are worshipping together, you have a church.

 - b. If the Word of Christ forms the church, the Word of Christ must mark the church (i.e. there must be gospel preaching).
 - i. John 17:20

 - ii. Romans 10:13-15 (cf. John 17:18, "As You sent Me...I also have sent them").

 - c. If local churches are covenant communities, the covenantal _____ must mark the church (i.e. baptism and communion must be rightly practiced).
 - i. Matthew 28:19
 - ii. Luke 22:17-20
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 11:26

 - d. If gospel preaching and the faithful practice of Christ's ordinances are necessary, _____ preachers of the gospel must mark the church (i.e. there must be elders).
 - i. Titus 1:5-9 (cf. esp. v 9)
 - ii. 1 Timothy 3:1-7
 - iii. [1 Timothy 5:17-18; 2 Timothy 4:1-2; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Hebrews 13:17, etc.]

4. What is the difference between what marks a church and what marks a _____ church?
- a. A church *must* have gospel preaching; a *healthy* church will have _____ gospel preaching (cf. 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15, and 4:2; Acts 20:27, etc.).
 - b. A church *must* participate in the sacraments/ordinances; a *healthy* church will form covenant community around the sacraments and with shared _____.
 - i. They will baptize according to common confession (i.e. gospel profession).
[In the name of Father, Son, and Spirit or in the name of Christ]
 - ii. They will baptize in conjunction with church membership (i.e. as the mark of covenant _____, cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13).
 - iii. They will participate in the Lord's Supper around shared confessions (as a mark of unity in the one faith, cf. 1 Corinthians 11:23f; see also 15:1-5).

[Note 1 Timothy 3:14-16, "so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God...by common confession..."]

- c. A church *must* share in the Lord's Supper; a *healthy* church will practice _____ church discipline.
- d. A church *must* have appointed leaders (i.e. elder(s); a *healthy* church will have a _____ of equipped elders and a healthy process for appointment (cf. Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23).