

MASTER THE CONTENT

OF SCRIPTURE



DISCIPLESHIP 8

The Church and Sacraments

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Introduction

In a culture where many treat the church as optional and the sacraments as symbolic formalities, *Discipleship 8: The Church and Sacraments* brings believers back to the biblical foundations of ecclesiology. Like R.C. Sproul's *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, this workbook is clear, concise, and deeply theological—yet pastoral and practical in tone.

This volume explores the identity, authority, mission, and marks of the true church, alongside the meaning and significance of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Sabbath worship. It also addresses controversial doctrines with clarity, such as infant baptism, excommunication, and transubstantiation. Each chapter opens with an illustration, teaches key biblical truths, and ends with thoughtful discussion questions for individual or group study. Whether you're new to the faith or a seasoned leader, this workbook helps believers not only understand what the church is—but also how to love and serve it.

“To follow Christ is to belong to His Church and to submit to His visible, covenantal work in the world.”

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BOOK 8 – The Church and Sacraments

Chapter 1: The Apostles

“The Trusted Messengers”

When the CEO of a global company wants to expand into new territories, he doesn't just post flyers – he sends trusted ambassadors who speak in his name, carry his authority, and establish the company's presence. Imagine one of these representatives miscommunicating the core mission or inventing new policies – chaos would ensue.

In a similar but eternally weightier way, Christ entrusted the message of the gospel not to random voices, but to hand-selected men – His apostles. These weren't mere enthusiasts; they were divinely appointed emissaries, laying the foundation for the church.

Overarching Question

What was the unique role and authority of the apostles, and why does their office matter for the foundation and integrity of the Christian faith?

Major Points

1. What qualified someone to be an apostle of Christ?

To be an apostle, one had to be a **direct witness of the risen Christ** and commissioned by Him personally (Acts 1:21–22; 1 Corinthians 9:1). This disqualified anyone after the

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apostolic era. Paul, though not one of the original twelve, saw the risen Christ and was specially appointed (Acts 9:3–6).

Example: In Acts 1, when Judas needed replacing, Peter laid out strict criteria – no volunteers or vague spiritual experiences, just eyewitnesses and divine appointment.

2. What authority did the apostles carry?

The apostles spoke **with Christ's authority** and were guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13–14). Their teachings are the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20), and the New Testament is their enduring voice.

Example: When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he insisted his gospel did not come from man but "through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12).

3. What was the apostles' role in shaping the early church?

The apostles laid doctrinal and structural foundations, appointing elders (Titus 1:5), resolving theological controversies (Acts 15), and preaching Christ crucified and risen (1 Corinthians 15:3–8).

Example: The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) preserved the gospel from being hijacked by legalists. Apostolic authority safeguarded the truth.

4. Is the office of apostle still active today?

According to the Reformed understanding, **the apostolic office ceased** with the death of the last apostle. The foundation was laid once (Hebrews 1:1–2), and the canon is closed.

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Example: Modern claims of apostleship often blur the line between biblical authority and personal experience. Ephesians 2:20 confirms the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets."

Conclusion

The apostles were not creative visionaries improvising a message – they were faithful witnesses of a risen King. Their authority was unique, their role foundational, and their legacy eternal. We do not invent the gospel; we receive and proclaim what was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it essential that apostles were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ?
 2. How does apostolic authority give us confidence in the reliability of the New Testament?
 3. What dangers arise when modern leaders claim to have apostolic authority?
 4. How did the apostles protect the church from doctrinal error?
 5. How can we, as modern believers, remain faithful to the apostolic teaching?
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Scripture References

- Acts 1:21-22
 - Acts 9:3-6
 - Galatians 1:11-12
-

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- Ephesians 2:20
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-8
- John 16:13-14
- Jude 3
- Hebrews 1:1-2

Chapter 2: The Church

“The Lighthouse and the Storm”

A violent storm once pounded a coastal village. Boats were lost, and the sea was merciless. Yet, through the night, one structure stood firm – the old lighthouse. Its light never flickered, guiding ships to safety. The next day, people gathered at the base of the lighthouse, marveling not at its stones but at what it represented: hope, truth, and survival.

In a chaotic world of spiritual storms, Christ’s church is the lighthouse – unchanging in its foundation, unwavering in its purpose.

Overarching Question

What is the nature, mission, and authority of the church, and why is it essential for the life of the believer?

Major Points

1. What is the Church, and who belongs to it?

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The **Church** is the **body of Christ**—made up of all true believers across all times and places (Ephesians 1:22–23). It is both **visible** (local congregations) and **invisible** (true believers known only to God). Membership is based not on heritage or ritual but on regeneration and faith.

Example: In Acts 2:47, the Lord “added to their number day by day those who were being saved” —a reminder that it is God who builds His Church.

2. What is the mission of the Church?

The Church exists to **glorify God through worship, the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the making of disciples** (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:42). Its mission is not entertainment, social programs, or self-preservation—but gospel proclamation.

Example: The early church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship” (Acts 2:42), not clever branding strategies.

3. What authority does the Church possess?

Christ is the **head of the Church** (Colossians 1:18). Its leaders (elders, pastors, deacons) serve under His lordship. The Church is authorized to **preach the gospel, teach sound doctrine, exercise church discipline, and administer the sacraments** (Titus 1:5–9; Matthew 18:15–18).

Example: When Paul charged Timothy to “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2), it was a command grounded in the Church’s God-given authority—not personal ambition.

4. Why is the Church necessary for the Christian life?

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The Church is not optional. It is the **means through which believers grow**, are held accountable, and serve one another. Hebrews 10:25 warns against “neglecting to meet together.” Christianity is personal, but never private – it’s a **communal faith**.

Example: A coal removed from a fire soon grows cold. Likewise, a believer who separates from the body weakens spiritually.

Conclusion

The Church is not a human invention but a divine institution. It is Christ’s bride, His body, His building. Though imperfect on earth, it is the visible expression of the invisible kingdom. To love Christ is to love His Church.

Discussion Questions

1. What distinguishes the visible church from the invisible church?
 2. How should the mission of the church shape its priorities today?
 3. What are the consequences of ignoring church authority or discipline?
 4. Why do many believers today struggle with commitment to a local church?
 5. How can you actively contribute to the health of your local church?
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Scripture References

- Ephesians 1:22–23
 - Acts 2:42–47
 - Matthew 28:18–20
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BOOK 8 – The Church and Sacraments

- Colossians 1:18
- 2 Timothy 4:2
- Hebrews 10:25
- Titus 1:5–9
- Matthew 18:15–18

Chapter 3: The Marks of a True Church

“The Counterfeit Cathedral”

A group of tourists marveled at a majestic cathedral in the city center – its stained glass glimmered, and its organ sang. Yet a local whispered, “It’s not a real church – it’s a museum. No gospel, no preaching, no sacraments – just empty beauty.” The group left in silence, stunned by the truth: not every building that looks like a church *is* one.

Just as currency is tested by authenticity, the church is recognized not by size or beauty but by the marks Christ ordained.

Overarching Question

How can we distinguish a true church from a false one, and what biblical marks define its authenticity?

Major Points

1. What are the essential marks of a true church according to Scripture?

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Historically and biblically, the **three marks** of a true church are:

1. The **faithful preaching** of the Word,
2. The **right administration** of the sacraments, and
3. The **exercise of church discipline** (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; Matthew 18:15–17).

Example: The Reformers didn't start a new church – they sought to reform the church back to these biblical marks.

2. Why is faithful preaching of the Word central to a true church?

Because **faith comes by hearing** (Romans 10:17), and Christ builds His Church by His Word, not by entertainment or motivational speeches. Preaching must be **expositional**, **Christ-centered**, and **doctrinally sound** (2 Timothy 4:2–4).

Example: Paul didn't come with “lofty speech” but preached “Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

3. What is the importance of the right administration of the sacraments?

The **Lord's Supper** and **Baptism** are **means of grace**, not religious theatrics. They must be administered as Christ instituted them (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26). A church that neglects or distorts the sacraments fails to fulfill Christ's command.

Example: In Corinth, improper participation in the Lord's Supper brought judgment (1 Corinthians 11:29–30).

4. Why is church discipline a mark of authenticity?

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Though uncomfortable, **church discipline** guards holiness, protects the flock, and restores the sinner (1 Corinthians 5:1–13). A church that refuses to discipline sin undermines its own testimony and violates Scripture.

Example: Jesus Himself outlined the process for discipline (Matthew 18:15–17). Ignoring it isn't mercy – it's negligence.

Conclusion

The true church is not defined by a steeple, style, or size – but by Scripture. Where the Word is preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and church discipline practiced, there stands a true church – no matter how small or unpopular. These marks protect the bride of Christ from error, decay, and deception.

Discussion Questions

1. Why must a church be evaluated by biblical standards rather than appearance or popularity?
 2. How can a church drift from these marks without noticing?
 3. Why is doctrinal preaching more vital than emotional inspiration?
 4. What are some dangers of neglecting church discipline?
 5. How can individual believers help preserve the purity of the church?
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Scripture References

- Acts 2:42
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BOOK 8 – The Church and Sacraments

- 1 Corinthians 11:23–30
- Matthew 18:15–17
- Romans 10:17
- 2 Timothy 4:2–4
- Matthew 28:19
- 1 Corinthians 5:1–13
- 1 Corinthians 2:2

Chapter 4: Excommunication

“The Severed Branch”

A gardener noticed a diseased branch on a healthy tree. At first, he left it alone, hoping it would heal. But over time, the infection spread. Leaves wilted. Fruit spoiled. Eventually, he made the painful cut – and the tree flourished once more.

Church discipline, especially excommunication, feels severe. But in reality, it is spiritual pruning – intended not to destroy, but to heal and preserve life in the body of Christ.

Overarching Question

Why does the Church practice excommunication, and how does it reflect both the holiness and mercy of God?

Major Points

1. What is excommunication, and what is its biblical basis?

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Excommunication is the **formal removal of a professing believer from the fellowship of the church** due to persistent, unrepentant sin. It is grounded in Scripture as a final step in church discipline (Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5).

Example: Paul commands the Corinthian church to “deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh” (1 Corinthians 5:5) – not for revenge, but restoration.

2. What is the purpose of excommunication?

Its goal is **not punishment**, but **restoration and protection** – to awaken the sinner to their spiritual danger, to preserve the purity of the church, and to uphold the name of Christ (Galatians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 5:6–7).

Example: Just as yeast spreads through dough, unrepentant sin affects the entire church if left unchecked (1 Corinthians 5:6).

3. Who has the authority to excommunicate, and under what circumstances?

Elders and church leadership exercise this authority **under Christ’s lordship**, with great caution and biblical evidence (Titus 3:10–11; 1 Timothy 5:19–20). The process must be deliberate, just, and pastoral.

Example: Paul warned Titus to reject a divisive person after two warnings (Titus 3:10). The Church’s authority is not arbitrary – it is biblical and accountable.

4. What should be the church’s attitude toward the excommunicated?

The church is called to **mourn, pray, and plead for repentance**, treating the individual as an unbeliever in need of grace – not as an enemy (2 Thessalonians 3:14–15). The goal is not banishment but redemption.

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Example: Paul urged the church to forgive and comfort the one who had repented, “lest he be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow” (2 Corinthians 2:7).

Conclusion: Excommunication is one of the most solemn responsibilities entrusted to the Church. It reminds us that grace is not cheap, holiness is not optional, and love sometimes wounds to heal. A church that refuses to practice discipline compromises the gospel it claims to preach. A church that practices it rightly reflects the holiness and mercy of Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does the Bible treat unrepentant sin as a serious danger to the church?
 2. How can excommunication lead to a person’s repentance and restoration?
 3. What dangers arise when churches ignore the practice of discipline?
 4. How can excommunication be done with love, not legalism?
 5. What can individuals do to support both the purity and the unity of the church?
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Scripture References

- Matthew 18:15–17
 - 1 Corinthians 5:1–7
 - Galatians 6:1
 - Titus 3:10–11
 - 1 Timothy 5:19–20
 - 2 Corinthians 2:6–8
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- 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15
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Chapter 5: The Sacraments

“More Than a Symbol”

A boy once received a medal of honor from a soldier returning from war. The medal gleamed, but the soldier said, “Son, this isn’t just metal – it tells a story. It means something. It cost something.” The boy clutched it with reverence.

So it is with the sacraments. They are not magical trinkets or empty rituals. They carry meaning, declare promises, and mark us as God’s covenant people.

Overarching Question

What are the sacraments, and how do they serve as visible signs and seals of God’s invisible grace?

Major Points

1. What are the sacraments, and how many did Christ institute?

Sacraments are **holy ordinances instituted by Christ**, consisting of **visible signs and seals** of the gospel, confirming God’s promises and our faith. Christ instituted **two sacraments** for the church: **Baptism** and the **Lord’s Supper** (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

Example: Reformed theology rejects the Roman Catholic view of seven sacraments, focusing instead on those directly instituted by Christ.

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2. What is the purpose of the sacraments in the Christian life?

The sacraments **do not create grace**, but they **confirm and strengthen faith**. They visibly preach the gospel, deepen our communion with Christ, and identify us with His body (Romans 4:11; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17).

Example: Like a wedding ring does not create marriage but symbolizes and seals it, so the sacraments signify our union with Christ.

3. How is Baptism a sign and seal of God's covenant?

Baptism symbolizes **cleansing from sin, union with Christ, and initiation into the covenant community** (Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:27). It is not just an individual declaration but a divine ordinance marking the entrance into the visible church.

Example: Just as circumcision marked the old covenant, baptism marks the new – God's promise, not man's performance, is central.

4. How does the Lord's Supper nourish the believer spiritually?

The Lord's Supper is a **means of grace**, where believers remember Christ's sacrifice and partake in His benefits by faith (Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:26). Though Christ is not physically present, He is spiritually present to nourish and sustain.

Example: As bread and wine sustain the body, so Christ's body and blood sustain the soul through faith.

Conclusion: The sacraments are not optional accessories – they are **commanded ordinances**. They are not empty symbols – they are **God's gifts**. When rightly administered and received by faith, they point us to Christ, seal the promises of the

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gospel, and build up His Church. As visible words of God, they remind us that the faith we believe is tangible, historical, and glorious.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Christ institute only two sacraments for the New Covenant Church?
 2. How do the sacraments differ from mere religious rituals?
 3. What does baptism declare about God's work in salvation?
 4. How should we prepare our hearts before receiving the Lord's Supper?
 5. In what ways do the sacraments build up the unity of the Church?
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Scripture References

- Matthew 28:19
 - 1 Corinthians 11:23–26
 - Romans 4:11
 - Romans 6:3–4
 - Galatians 3:27
 - 1 Corinthians 10:16–17
 - Luke 22:19–20
 - 1 Corinthians 11:26
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Chapter 6: Baptism

“The Mark of Belonging”

In ancient times, a king marked his soldiers with a visible seal to show they belonged to his army. The seal didn’t make them warriors – but it did signify their identity, loyalty, and mission. It was their banner and badge of honor.

In the same way, **baptism is the visible sign of our identity in Christ**. It doesn’t save, but it marks those who have been saved. It declares: *This one belongs to the King*.

Overarching Question

What is the meaning of baptism, and how does it serve as a sign and seal of God's covenant of grace?

Major Points

1. What is baptism, and what does it signify?

Baptism is a **sacrament instituted by Christ** that signifies our **union with Him**, **cleansing from sin**, and **entrance into the covenant community** (Romans 6:3–4; Titus 3:5). It is a visible word – God’s promise made manifest.

Example: Paul says we are “baptized into His death” (Romans 6:3), showing how baptism symbolizes our death to sin and new life in Christ.

2. Who should be baptized, and why?

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All those who **profess faith in Christ** should be baptized (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:12). In Reformed tradition, baptism is also administered to **the children of believers** as a sign of covenant inclusion (Acts 2:39; Genesis 17:7; Colossians 2:11–12).

Example: Just as circumcision marked the children of the covenant in the Old Testament, baptism marks them in the New Testament.

3. Does baptism regenerate the soul or remove sin?

No. Baptism does not **cause regeneration** – it **signifies it**. It is not the water but the **Spirit of God who regenerates** (John 3:5–6). Baptism is a **means of grace**, not a magical ritual.

Example: Simon the magician was baptized, yet his heart was not right before God (Acts 8:13, 20–23). His water baptism did not regenerate him.

4. How should baptism be administered?

The mode of baptism (immersion, pouring, sprinkling) is **less important** than its meaning and proper administration. In Reformed theology, baptism is valid when **done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit** and **according to Christ's institution** (Matthew 28:19).

Example: The thief on the cross was never baptized with water, yet he was saved (Luke 23:43). The sign points to the substance, not the reverse.

Conclusion: Baptism is not merely a personal statement – it is a **divine sign**. It points beyond the one being baptized to the One who saves. Whether we are baptized as children or adults, it calls us to faith and reminds us of God's covenant promise: "*I will*

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be your God, and you will be My people." (Jeremiah 31:33). Baptism is God's banner of ownership, His visible pledge to those set apart for Him.

Discussion Questions

1. What does baptism teach us about the nature of salvation?
 2. How does baptism connect to the Old Testament sign of circumcision?
 3. Why is it important to distinguish the sign from the thing signified?
 4. What dangers arise when baptism is treated superstitiously or emotionally?
 5. How should a baptized person reflect on their baptism in daily life?
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Scripture References

- Romans 6:3–4
- Titus 3:5
- Acts 2:38–39
- Acts 8:12–13
- Genesis 17:7
- Colossians 2:11–12
- John 3:5–6
- Matthew 28:19
- Luke 23:43
- Jeremiah 31:33

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Chapter 7: The Lord's Supper

"A Meal With the King"

A poor traveler was invited to dine at the king's table. Nervous and unworthy, he approached the banquet hall. But there, to his shock, was a place reserved for him – a plate, a cup, a name. "You belong here," said the King, "because I've made it so."

The Lord's Supper is that royal meal – **not earned, but granted** – where the King feeds His people with grace, nourishes them with truth, and assures them of their place at His table.

Overarching Question

What is the Lord's Supper, and how does it serve as a means of grace, spiritual nourishment, and covenant renewal for believers?

Major Points

1. What is the Lord's Supper, and what does it signify?

The Lord's Supper is a **sacrament instituted by Christ** that signifies His atoning death and **ongoing spiritual presence** with His people (Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26). It proclaims the gospel visibly: Christ's body broken and His blood shed for our sins.

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Example: Paul says, “As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

2. How is Christ present in the Lord’s Supper?

Christ is not physically present in the elements, nor are they transformed into His literal body and blood. Instead, Reformed theology teaches that He is **spiritually present by faith**, truly feeding and nourishing believers through the Holy Spirit (John 6:53–58, understood sacramentally).

Example: The meal is not a bare memorial—it is a spiritual feast. The bread and wine are signs, but what they signify is real and present.

3. Who should partake of the Lord’s Supper, and how should they approach it?

Only **believers who are repentant and trusting in Christ** should partake (1 Corinthians 11:27–29). It is to be received in **faith**, with **self-examination**, not as a ritual, but as a holy encounter with Christ.

Example: Paul warns against eating and drinking “in an unworthy manner,” which brings judgment, not blessing (1 Corinthians 11:29–30).

4. What does the Lord’s Supper do for the believer?

The Lord’s Supper is a **means of grace**—it **strengthens faith**, **nourishes the soul**, **deepens unity**, and **reaffirms God’s covenant** (1 Corinthians 10:16–17). It renews our commitment to Christ and to His body, the Church.

Example: Paul writes that “we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17). The Supper binds us together.

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Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is more than bread and wine – it is a holy encounter with the risen Christ, given to remind, refresh, and revive the people of God. At the Table, the gospel is not just heard – it is tasted. In a world of fleeting promises, it is a divine assurance that we are His, and He is ours.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the Lord's Supper proclaim the gospel in a visible form?
 2. What is the difference between a memorialist view and the Reformed view of Christ's presence?
 3. Why must the Lord's Supper be approached with reverence and self-examination?
 4. In what ways does the Lord's Supper strengthen the unity of the Church?
 5. How does participating regularly in the Supper shape your walk with Christ?
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Scripture References

- Luke 22:19–20
 - 1 Corinthians 11:23–30
 - 1 Corinthians 10:16–17
 - John 6:53–58 (interpreted spiritually)
 - 2 Corinthians 13:5
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Chapter 8: Transubstantiation

“Looks Can Be Deceiving?”

A magician pulls a rabbit from a hat, and the crowd gasps – yet they know it’s an illusion. But what if someone told them the hat had *literally* become a rabbit, though it still looked like felt and fabric? Confusion would follow.

In the doctrine of **transubstantiation**, the Roman Catholic Church teaches something similar: that bread and wine **become the literal body and blood of Christ**, even though they appear unchanged. Reformed theology sees this claim not as miraculous faith – but as theological confusion.

Overarching Question

What is the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, and how does the Reformed view differ in affirming a real spiritual presence rather than a physical transformation?

Major Points

1. What is transubstantiation, and where did the idea come from?

Transubstantiation teaches that in the **Eucharist**, the **substance** of bread and wine becomes the **literal body and blood of Christ**, while the **accidents** (taste, appearance, etc.) remain unchanged. This doctrine was formalized at the **Fourth Lateran Council (1215)** and reaffirmed at **Trent (1545–1563)**.

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Example: Though the bread looks, smells, and tastes like bread, Catholic doctrine insists its essence has changed. Reformed theology rejects this metaphysical claim as **unbiblical** and rooted more in Aristotelian philosophy than Scripture.

2. What are the theological problems with transubstantiation?

Transubstantiation **undermines the finality of Christ's sacrifice, confuses signs with what they signify**, and implies a **re-sacrificing of Christ** at each Mass. Hebrews 10:10–14 clearly teaches that Christ's one sacrifice was "**once for all**" and cannot be repeated.

Example: The Roman Mass is seen as a re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice. But Scripture says, "By one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

3. How does the Reformed view differ?

The Reformed view affirms a **real spiritual presence of Christ** in the Lord's Supper, **not physical**. Christ's human body remains in heaven (Acts 1:11), and He is present by the Holy Spirit. The **bread and wine are signs**, not literal flesh and blood, but they truly **communicate grace to the believer by faith** (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Example: Calvin said believers are "lifted by the Spirit to partake of Christ," rather than Christ being brought down bodily to the elements.

4. What is the danger of misunderstanding the nature of the Supper?

When the Supper becomes a **magical ritual** instead of a **means of grace**, it leads to **superstition, idolatry**, and the erosion of biblical worship. The Lord's Table becomes a spectacle rather than a covenant meal of faith and remembrance.

Example: Paul warned against partaking "in an unworthy manner" (1 Corinthians 11:27–29) – not because the elements had changed, but because hearts had not.

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Conclusion

Transubstantiation replaces **mystery with metaphysics** and **faith with philosophy**. While intending to honor Christ, it ultimately obscures the gospel. The Reformed view protects both the **dignity of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice** and the **beauty of His spiritual presence**. The Lord's Supper is not about what happens to the bread – but what happens in the heart of the believer, through the Spirit of Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the main differences between transubstantiation and the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper?
 2. Why does the Reformed tradition reject the idea that Christ's body is physically present in the elements?
 3. How does Hebrews 10 challenge the idea of Christ being sacrificed again in the Mass?
 4. What role does the Holy Spirit play in the Reformed understanding of the Supper?
 5. Why is it important to guard against superstition in our approach to the sacraments?
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Scripture References

- Hebrews 10:10-14
 - 1 Corinthians 10:16
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- 1 Corinthians 11:27–29
 - Acts 1:11
 - John 6:63
 - Matthew 26:26–28 (understood figuratively)
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Chapter 9: The Sabbath

“A Sacred Pause”

A man worked tirelessly, seven days a week, proud of his hustle. But slowly, his soul shriveled, his joy faded, and his relationships suffered. Then one day, an older friend asked, “Do you think you’re stronger than God? Even He rested.”

That question struck deep. The Sabbath wasn’t a burden to escape — but a **gift to recover** what work and worry had stolen.

Overarching Question

What is the meaning and purpose of the Sabbath, and how does it remain relevant for Christians today as a day of rest and worship?

Major Points

1. What is the biblical origin of the Sabbath?

The Sabbath originates in **creation** when God **rested on the seventh day** (Genesis 2:2–3) and was later **commanded in the moral law** (Exodus 20:8–11). It is both a **creation ordinance** and a **covenantal command**, grounded in God’s own rhythm of work and rest.

Example: God blessed the seventh day — not because He was tired, but to establish a divine pattern for human flourishing.

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2. Is the Sabbath still binding for New Testament believers?

Yes, in principle. While **Christ fulfilled the ceremonial aspects of the law**, the **moral law remains**, including the call to set aside one day in seven for worship and rest. Early Christians observed the **Lord's Day** (Sunday) in honor of Christ's resurrection (Revelation 1:10; Acts 20:7).

Example: The Sabbath is not abolished – it is transformed and fulfilled in Christ, pointing to our eternal rest in Him (Hebrews 4:9–10).

3. What is the purpose of the Sabbath for the believer?

The Sabbath is a **day for worship, rest, and delight in God**. It reminds us of creation, redemption, and our dependence on divine grace. It is not a day of legalistic restriction but **joyful consecration** (Isaiah 58:13–14).

Example: Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27) – meaning it was designed for our benefit, not our bondage.

4. How should Christians observe the Sabbath today?

Believers are called to **gather for worship, rest from ordinary work, and engage in spiritual renewal and acts of mercy** (Exodus 20:10; Matthew 12:12). It's not about rigid rules, but a heart aligned with God's design for worship and rest.

Example: Refraining from work and worldly distraction enables deeper communion with Christ and a more focused expression of love for neighbor.

Conclusion: The Sabbath is God's call to rest in a restless world. It is a weekly declaration that we are not slaves to time, labor, or anxiety – but children of a sovereign,

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providing God. Far from being obsolete, the Sabbath is a **rehearsal of heaven**, a celebration of the finished work of Christ, and a spiritual reset for weary souls.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the Sabbath rooted in both creation and the moral law?
 2. How does Christ transform – but not abolish – the meaning of the Sabbath?
 3. What distinguishes the Christian observance of the Lord’s Day from Old Testament Sabbath laws?
 4. In what ways does regular Sabbath rest protect us from idolatry and burnout?
 5. How can you cultivate greater joy and worship on the Lord’s Day?
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Scripture References

- Genesis 2:2–3
 - Exodus 20:8–11
 - Mark 2:27–28
 - Hebrews 4:9–10
 - Revelation 1:10
 - Acts 20:7
 - Isaiah 58:13–14
 - Matthew 12:12
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Chapter 10: Oaths and Vows

“The Weight of Words”

A man once stood at the altar and vowed, “For better or worse, until death do us part.” But years later, when things became difficult, he shrugged it off: “It was just words.” His family paid dearly for that shrug.

In God’s economy, words are never “just words.” **Oaths and vows matter**, because truth matters – and God, who cannot lie, calls His people to reflect that integrity.

Overarching Question

What are oaths and vows, and why does Scripture take them seriously as sacred expressions of truth and commitment before God?

Major Points

1. What is the biblical definition of an oath or vow?

An **oath** is a solemn appeal to God as **witness to the truth** of what is said (Hebrews 6:16), while a **vow** is a **sacred promise made to God** to perform a duty or act (Ecclesiastes 5:4–5). Both carry **moral and spiritual weight**.

Example: In court, people still say, “So help me God” – a reflection of the enduring belief that calling on God as witness is no light matter.

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2. Are Christians allowed to take oaths and vows today?

Yes, but only **in truth, justice, and necessity** (Westminster Confession, 22.2). Jesus' words in Matthew 5:33–37 warn against **casual or manipulative oaths**, not lawful, solemn ones. Paul himself took oaths (Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23), as did God (Hebrews 6:17).

Example: Marriage vows, court oaths, and ordination vows are biblically legitimate and binding.

3. What are the dangers of taking oaths or vows lightly?

Taking an oath or vow without intention to fulfill it is a form of **blasphemy**, treating God's name and truth as a convenience. Ecclesiastes 5:4 warns, “It is better not to vow than to vow and not fulfill it.”

Example: Ananias and Sapphira lied to God about their vow and paid with their lives (Acts 5:1–11). God takes promises seriously – even when we don't.

4. How should believers approach oaths and vows in everyday life?

With **sobriety, clarity, and integrity**. Believers should speak with such truthfulness that oaths are rarely necessary. But when oaths are required, they must be taken **reverently**, and vows must be fulfilled as unto the Lord (James 5:12).

Example: The Reformed tradition sees oaths and vows as **exceptions**, not norms, and always subject to God's revealed will.

Conclusion: Oaths and vows are not relics of a legalistic past – they are **acts of reverence in a truth-starved world**. In an age where promises are broken with ease, the

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Christian's word should reflect the character of our covenant-keeping God. To speak truthfully is to worship with your mouth; to keep a vow is to honor the One who never breaks His.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between an oath and a vow according to Scripture?
 2. How does our culture treat promises, and how should Christians differ?
 3. Why did Jesus warn against taking oaths lightly?
 4. When is it appropriate for Christians to take solemn vows or oaths?
 5. How can we grow in faithfulness to our word, even in small matters?
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Scripture References

- Hebrews 6:16–17
- Ecclesiastes 5:4–5
- Matthew 5:33–37
- James 5:12
- Romans 1:9
- 2 Corinthians 1:23
- Acts 5:1–11
- Deuteronomy 23:21