

# THE GOSPEL CALL

1. Are the sacraments useful in evangelism? If so, how? If not, why not?

2. Should the sacraments be offered to non-believers? If yes, why? If no, why not?

## CALVIN ON SACRAMENTS

"...In short, the tree of life was for him [Adam] a sacrament, just as baptism and the Supper are for us. A little water that is put on the head and face of a child is not to cleanse the soul, which is stained with sin. The water is nothing so far as the heavenly life is concerned, but it refers us to the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is our true washing, by whom we are cleansed of all our blemishes, and it sends us to his Holy Spirit, by which we are made new after he has put to death all our carnal desires and all the vices which reside in the flesh. And in the Supper we see something other than bread and wine. Now meat is for the stomach, says Paul, and all that is for destruction (1 Cor. 6:13). But the subject here is nourishment but for our bodies, but spiritually, for our souls." - From Calvin's Sermon, "Jesus Christ, the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:22– 24)"



*Celebrating*  
**SACRAMENTS**

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Cross-shaped baptismal font excavated at Kalibia near Carthage (Tunisia) Six century A.D. The font was dedicated to St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, martyred by the emperor Valerian in 258.



The Lapis Lazuli Tabernacle of the Cathedral of Palermo, Sicily (1653). Created by Cosimo Fanzago (1591- 1678)

The following is from Catholic Answers - a Catholic apologetics ministry. Catholics believe the bread in the Eucharist becomes the literal body of Christ. Therefore, the consecrated bread must be housed for use in a tabernacle. "The tabernacle is a liturgical furnishing used to house the Eucharist outside of Mass. This provides a location where the Eucharist can be kept for the adoration of the faithful and for later use (e.g., distribution to the sick). It also helps prevent the profanation of the Eucharist. Thus the law requires, "The tabernacle in which the Eucharist is regularly reserved is to be immovable, made of solid or opaque material, and locked so that the danger of profanation may be entirely avoided" (CIC 938 §3). The word tabernacle means "dwelling place." Thus the tent-like sanctuary that the Jews used before the Temple was built was called the Tabernacle, because God dwelt there. Similarly, for the feast of Sukkot the Hebrews erected temporary shelters to live in for the festival, which is often called "the feast of tabernacles" or "the feast of booths" as a result. The tabernacle in Church is so named because it is a place where Christ dwells in the Eucharist." - Catholic Answers

# GOD SPEAKS IN WORSHIP

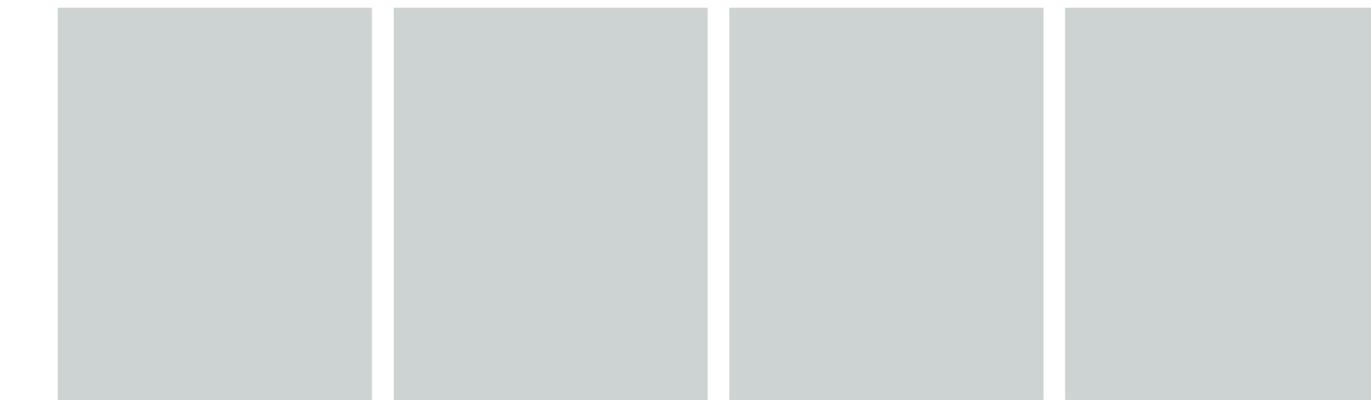
1. The Christian Reformed Church of North America uses approved liturgical forms when we administer the sacraments. Is the use of liturgical forms necessary? If so, why? If not, why not?

2. When, if ever, should the church deny the sacraments to a person who desires to participate in them?

## EXCERPT FROM THE DIDACHE\*

**And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:19 in living water. But if you have not living water, baptize into other water; and if you can not in cold, in warm. But if you have not either, pour out water thrice upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whatever others can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.**

\*The Didache, or "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," is an early Christian manual from the late 1st or early 2nd century. It outlines the "Two Ways" of life and death (moral instructions), rituals for baptism, fasting, and Eucharist, guidelines for ministry and prophets, and an apocalyptic warning of Christ's return.



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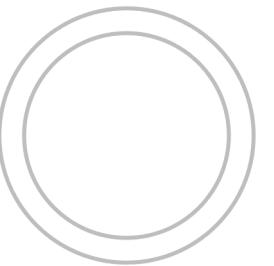
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## *Prerequisites for* **LIFE GROUP**

***Someone at Life  
Group needs to hear  
from you. Come  
prepared!***

- If you're bringing a new person to the study, we recommend getting them study materials ahead of time so they can feel prepared.
- Pray that the LORD will open your eyes and heart to receive the lessons he has to teach you in the study.
- Read the scripture focus and any extra information in the study booklet.
- Go through the questions and think about how you might answer them. We've provided space in the study for you to write down your answers if you'd like.

## **GOD SPEAKS TO OUR FAMILY**

1. Baptisms and professions of faith are often celebrated by families. Why do we celebrate these occasions?
2. What role(s) do...  
A. the family  
B. the church  
C. the school  
play in preparing children to make profession of faith and taking communion?

## **WHAT ARE SEALS?**

Seals are marks of authentication or confirmation, like a wax seal on an official document or a king's signet ring (e.g., Esther 8:8). They "seal" or guarantee the reliability of God's promises, assuring believers of their personal share in the gospel.

Seals confirm God's promises of forgiveness and eternal life are not just general truths. Rather, God's promises of forgiveness and eternal life apply specifically to individual believers. This assurance combats doubt, as the sacraments act as God's pledge or warranty. In baptism, the seal marks entry into God's covenant community, confirming adoption as His child. In the Lord's Supper, partaking seals ongoing communion with Christ and fellow believers.

Abraham's circumcision is called both a "sign" and "seal" of the righteousness he had by faith (Romans 4:11). Similarly, sacraments seal the New Covenant in Christ's

# CATECHISM CORNER

Heidelberg Catechism

Lord's Day 25

Q&A 65

Q. It is through faith alone that we share in Christ and all his benefits: where then does that faith come from?

A. The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts<sup>1</sup> by the preaching of the holy gospel,<sup>2</sup> and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; Eph. 2:8

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 10:16

Q & A 66

Q. What are sacraments?

A. Sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals. They were instituted by God so that by our use of them he might make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and seal that promise.<sup>1</sup> And this is God's gospel promise: to grant us forgiveness of sins and eternal life by grace because of Christ's one sacrifice accomplished on the cross.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 17:11; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 4:11

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 26:27-28; Acts 2:38; Heb. 10:10

Q & A 67

Q. Are both the word and the sacraments then intended to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

A. Yes!

In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us and by the holy sacraments confirms that our entire salvation rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 3:27

Q & A 68

Q. How many sacraments did Christ institute in the New Testament?

A. Two: holy baptism and the holy supper.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26

# WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. Read the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 25. Where does our faith come from? Provide a scripture reference for your answer.

2. Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 66 says, "Sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals." In your own words, what is a sign? What is a seal?

3. What are the promises of the sacraments?

4. What sign(s) are used in baptism? What sign(s) are used in the Lord's Supper? What do they represent?

# WHAT ARE SIGNS?

Signs are outward, visible symbols or representations that point to inward, spiritual realities. They illustrate God's promises using our senses, making abstract truths more concrete and memorable.

For example, in baptism water acts as a sign of the washing away of sins and the renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). In the Lord's Supper, bread and wine (or juice) signify Christ's body broken and blood shed for redemption (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

God has always used signs to point his people toward His great work. In the Old Testament signs like the rainbow (Genesis 9:12-17) or Passover (Exodus 12) visibly reminded God's people of His covenants. In the New Testament, sacraments continue this by visibly preaching the gospel, reinforcing what is heard in sermons.

The Holy Spirit uses these signs to strengthen faith when received rightly.

# GOD SPEAKS TO US

1. The Lord used signs and seals in the Old Testament. What signs and/or seals did the Lord use with His people under the Old Covenant?

2. The purpose of the sacraments is to confirm the faith we have in Christ, make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and seal that promise (HC Q&A 65). Have the sacraments done this for you? Share an experience with a sacrament where you grew in your relationship with the Lord.



# NOTES