

## Lesson 14: The Sacraments

“We have now finished with the three chief parts of our common Christian teaching. It remains for us to speak of our two sacraments, instituted by Christ. Every Christian ought to have at least some brief elementary instruction in them because without these no one can be a Christian...”

- Dr. Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*: Baptism

### Keys to Lesson 14:

Topic: The Sacraments

Thesis: Sacraments are holy acts instituted by Christ using visible elements in union with the Word through which God gives spiritual gifts.

Key question: What makes a holy act a Sacrament?

Catechism: Sverdrup Questions 333-334

Accompanying Bible Story: Acts 3:1-26 – Peter Heals the Crippled Beggar

### Warm-up or review:

As students enter the classroom, have a task posted for them.

Options:

Finish paragraph from Lesson 13

Finish questions from Lesson 13

Finish Lesson 13 summary

Lesson 13 quick quiz

Read and summarize Acts 3:1-26

Read the Sverdrup questions assigned for this lesson

### Introduce new lesson:

Options:

Engage your students in a conversation about words we use to label theological ideas—Trinity, Means of Grace, etc.—leading to our conversation about the Sacraments

Read and discuss the student worksheet text

*“Look at us!” Peter and John wanted the lame beggar at the entrance to the Temple to see they were just common people. They didn’t have coins or cash to give him. They did, though, have something of much greater value. They knew Jesus, and they knew there was power in the name of Jesus. So Peter said to him, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!”*

*Peter then took the man by the hand and helped him stand up. Immediately the lame man’s feet and ankles were strengthened. He started jumping and running about the temple. All the motion and commotion caught the attention of others who were at the Temple. They were amazed at what they saw. The beggar whom they had seen sitting by the entrance to the Temple for years and years had been healed. A crowd began to form and gather around Peter and John.*

*As we read the words Peter spoke to the crowd, we find something quite interesting. Yes, through the name of Jesus, the lame man had been healed. But the focus of Peter’s words was not on physical healing as we might expect it to be. He did not tell the crowds that if only they believed, God would heal them also of all their illnesses and physical problems.*

*Like Jesus did when He saw the paralytic lowered down in front of Him from the roof,*

*Peter understood that the gathering crowd had a much deeper need. The point of his words was not that Jesus would heal their bodies. The point of his words was that Jesus would heal their souls. At the core of his message were these words: "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord..."*

*Peter took an act of physical kindness and turned it to the true meaning for which Jesus came to us. Our physical needs are important, but they are important only in this life. Our spiritual needs are so much more important because they have meaning for our eternal life. It is good and we should pray for God to meet the needs we have for our lives on earth. That is why Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." But it is better and we ought even more pray for our souls and pay attention to our spiritual needs.*

*To feed our spirits, to lavish on us forgiveness and life, Jesus has given us two beautiful and holy acts through which He gives us spiritual gifts. These two acts are the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.*

### **Lesson:**

Help the students work through the text and Bible passages in the student material.

### **\* Read Acts 2:41, 42.**

*So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

### **List five things the first Christians did?**

*The first Christians were baptized, devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, devoted themselves to fellowship, devoted themselves to the breaking of bread, and devoted themselves to prayer.*

Help your students understand that the core of the devotion of the early Christians was to the Means of Grace: the Word (apostles' teaching), Baptism, and Holy Communion (breaking of bread)

*Ever since the beginning of the Christian Church, we have been doing things that identify us as the Church. Because some of these things are holy or sacred acts, we have given them the label "Sacraments." One of the discussions Martin Luther and the other Lutheran reformers had was about how we define and number these holy acts.*

*Luther grew up believing there were seven Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion (also called the Eucharist), Reconciliation (also called Confession or Penance), Anointing the Sick, Holy Orders (Ordination to the Priesthood), and Marriage. He was taught that these seven acts of the Church were visible signs instituted by Christ to give grace.*

*An important part of the Lutheran Reformation is that we have been encouraged to examine everything we believe according to the authority of the Bible. That is why we believe one of the primary pillars of the Reformation is "Word Alone." When Luther went to Scripture, he discovered that Jesus Himself had not commanded all seven of these acts. Of the seven, he could only find three that Jesus Himself told us to do. Jesus began His ministry by calling people to repentance or to be reconciled to God. During His last Passover celebration, Jesus told His disciples to eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine in remembrance of*

***Him. Before He ascended back to heaven, Jesus told His disciples to make more disciples by baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.***

***Luther also discovered as he read the Bible, that grace was promised only through these three acts. Finally, on further thought, Luther determined that only two of the acts actually used physical, visible elements.***

***From these conclusions, we have determined there are only two Sacraments specifically given to us in the Bible. We have applied five conditions to these in order for them to be called Sacraments.***

- 1. They are holy acts.***
- 2. They are specifically instituted by Christ in the Gospels.***
- 3. They use a visible element.***
- 4. The element is used together with God's Word.***
- 5. God gives us spiritual gifts, especially forgiveness of sin, through them.***

***Of the seven holy acts that Martin Luther grew up with, only Baptism and Holy Communion meet all five parts of our definition. (NOTE: Holy Communion is also called the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper.)***

***It is important for us to be aware of another very important difference between how we and our Roman Catholic Friends understand the Sacraments. Our Roman Church friends believe that God gives grace through the Sacraments. We believe that, too, but we have a very different understanding of grace. Our Roman Church friends believe that grace is a "controlling influence" or a power that God gives. This power can then be used to do the things needed to please God so that He will forgive our sins. In contrast, we believe that God saves us completely by His grace. When He forgives our sin, our salvation is complete and there is nothing else that can or needs to be done for our salvation.***

***In addition to Roman Church friends, you probably have friends that go to a Baptist, Assembly of God, Methodist, Presbyterian, or other Christian church. Instead of being influenced by how Martin Luther understood the Bible, their traditions have been influenced by how John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and other reformers understood the Bible. Calvin and Zwingli were what we call "rationalists" or "humanists." It was very important to them that they understood with their human minds and reason all the teachings of the Bible. They were not willing to allow the things we believe to be mysteries or paradoxes. They could not understand how God could forgive our sins by having some water poured over our heads. They could not understand how Jesus could be truly present in and under the bread and fruit of the vine. They could not understand how eating a little piece of bread and drinking a swallow or two of the fruit of the vine could result in forgiveness. As a result, they pretty much abandoned the use of the word sacrament. They still have the practices in some form, but they believe they are confessions of faith or symbols. Sometimes they use the term "ordinance."***

Please note our use of the term "fruit of the vine." It is not our intention to make instruction toward Confirmation a theological debate over the use of grape juice or wine in Holy Communion. If needed, please explain to your students that the term "fruit of the vine" most closely identifies the beverage as one produced by squeezing grapes. We use the term in an attempt to be sensitive to the traditions of pietism that sometimes exclude the use of wine in the Sacrament but also the traditions of a more formal liturgical practice where wine is used.

**\* Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-4.**

*For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.*

**Why is it important for us to know what we believe about Baptism and Holy Communion?**

*The Word of God itself tells us that we should not be unaware regarding baptism and the eating of spiritual food.*

You may have to help your students work through the ideas presented in 1 Corinthians 10. Paul, here, applies the crossing of the Red Sea and the gift of manna in the desert spiritually. He equates them with baptism and the eating of spiritual food. The key for our purposes is that he encouraged his readers to “not be unaware.” In like manner we are taking an extended part of our instruction time—four lessons on Baptism, one lesson on Confession, and four lessons on Holy Communion—to get some understanding of what it is we believe. You might tie this back to the Luther quote at the beginning of our lesson where he said, “Every Christian ought to have at least some brief elementary instruction in them because without these no one can be a Christian...”

**Summary:**

Options:

Students write questions in their question column

Students write a three to four sentence summary: What did I learn in this lesson?

Students write a SEE paragraph

Possible paragraph prompt:

*What makes a holy act a Sacrament?*

Sample paragraph:

*We give the label “Sacrament” to a holy act that Jesus commanded which uses a visible element together with God’s Word through which God gives spiritual gifts. Jesus commanded repentance, baptism, and the eating of His body and drinking of His blood in the New Testament. Only two of these acts, though, have a visible element. Baptism uses water. Holy Communion uses bread and the fruit of the vine. When we do these holy acts with and according to God’s Word, we believe God forgives our sins. So, we have these two holy acts, Baptism and Holy Communion, that we call Sacraments.*

## Acts 3:1-16

1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. 2 And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. 4 But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!" 5 And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-walk!" 7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. 8 With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God; 10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

11 While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. 12 But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14 But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. 16 And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. 17 "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. 22 Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. 23 And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. 25 It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways."