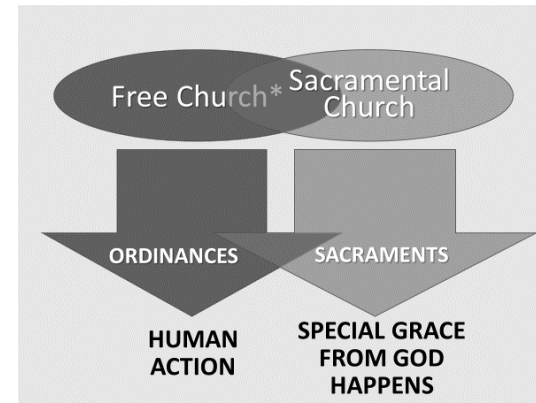




Some denominations talk about the sacraments while around here we talk about ordinances. What are these and what difference does it make?



**What's the Difference?** The big difference between the two terms is God's role in the act. When viewed as sacramental, baptism is more than an act of a person – it is a means by which God conveys grace (does a special spiritual work) through the church. When viewed as an ordinance, baptism is the testimony of the person being baptized. While it points back to an act of God in the person's life, God is not acting in the baptism.

**Who Believes What?** 1. Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and a few of the Protestant denominations use the term "sacrament." Typically, there are seven sacraments in these denominations. They are baptism, confirmation, holy communion, confession, marriage, holy orders, and the anointing of the sick. According to the Catholic Church: "There are seven sacraments. They were instituted by Christ and given to the Church to administer. They are necessary for salvation. The sacraments are the vehicles of grace which they convey." God acts through the actions of the ceremony.

2. In Evangelical or Free churches, we understand that the Bible, in contrast, tells us that grace is not given through outward symbols and no ritual is "necessary for salvation." Grace is free.

## Talk #4: Sacraments or Ordinances? (and what are they anyway?)

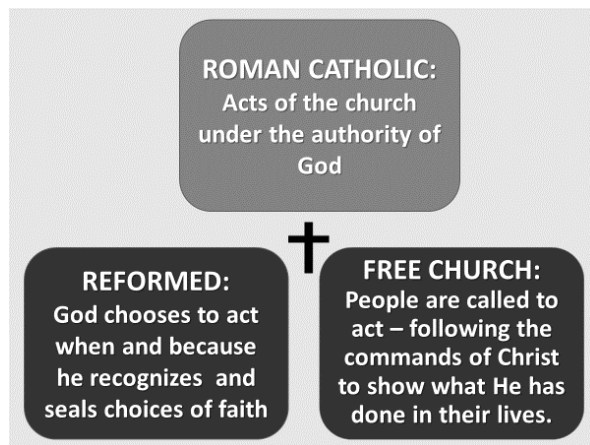
**ThED**  
Theological Education & Discussion

*"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us..." (Titus 3:4)*

Most Evangelicals see ordinances as symbolic reenactments of the gospel message that Christ lived, died, was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven, and will someday return.

Rather than requirements for salvation, ordinances are visual aids to help us better understand and appreciate what Jesus Christ accomplished for us in His redemptive work. Ordinances are determined by three factors: they were instituted by Christ, they were taught by the apostles, and they were practiced by the early church. Since baptism and communion are the only rites which qualify under these three factors, there can be only two ordinances, neither of which are requirements for salvation. Ordinances are generally understood to be those things Jesus told us to observe with other Christians.

3. Churches from Reformed backgrounds (such as Reformed, United and Presbyterian churches) live in a land between these 2 views. They use the terminology of sacrament and would say that God acts because he chooses to recognize the faith behind the action taken in the ceremony of the sacrament.



Here at Bethany Evangelical Missionary Church?  
The statement of beliefs of our denomination says:

**FP-2.1. Ordinances** *The Christian **ordinances** are two in number, baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are the outward rites appointed by Christ to be administered in each local church, not as means of salvation, but as visible **signs and seals** of its*

We call them ordinances.... We do not believe that because we baptize someone that God says, "Okay.... NOW that person is saved because that person was baptized in a church by someone with special authority to do so." It's a sign of human obedience.

And though we are not sacramentalists in the sense that we think that our act asks God to recognize the faith on display and do something specific – like conferring salvation – our use of the term 'seals' says that we are not ruling out God being present in our midst when we do this..... That God DOES recognize a true act of faith and will bless it.

TED Talks™ are a worldwide phenomenon. The TED organization began as a conference in 1984 to provide short and powerful talks on what it called "Ideas That Matter" in the fields of **T**echnology, **E**ducation & **D**esign. Now, in addition to conferences, it produces 100's of widely viewed short videos on a huge variety of topics.

Our Bethany version of TED Talks is ThED talks – Theological Education & Discussion. They will focus on particular key ideas about what It means to be 'the Church' in a fast changing world with special reference to Bethany. Drawn from Biblical references and key ideas from theologians, church leaders and other research, our ThED talks will come every several weeks or so and will provide a 3-6 minute look that will help us as a community to focus on our purposes, organization, & tasks.

Please take this page home to reflect upon in the light of who we are as a church today. Talk about the ideas with others. Open up your Bible to check the ideas against God's word, and then think and pray about what you've learned. As we all do this, we will be opening ourselves to the leading of God's Spirit in our church community.

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