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The Funeral Home Illustration

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The purpose of the *Funeral Home Illustration* is to demonstrate Paul's teaching of grace made to the Ephesians.

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."

Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)

While drawing a picture of a casket on a blackboard (cf. *Illustration One* below) ask, "What do you find in a funeral home?" Answer: A casket.

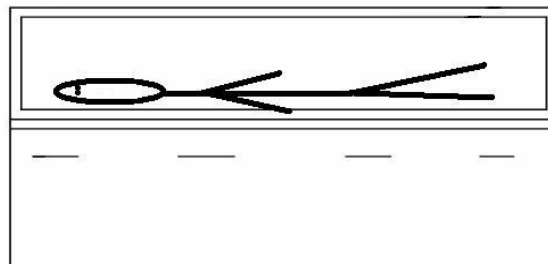


Illustration One

Then ask, "What do we find in a casket in the funeral home?" While drawing a simple stick person in the "box," say a dead person.

Continue by saying, "If I went up to the "box" and asked the dead person to get up, what will the dead person do?" Students will answer, "Nothing." Then ask, "Why?" The answer is, "Because he's dead."

"What if I yelled really, really loudly in his ears and asked him to get up? What would happen then?" Again, the students answer, "Nothing." Again ask, "Why?" The answer is "Because he's dead."

"What if I yelled even louder and said that if he doesn't get up, I'll tickle his feet?" Again, the students answer, "Nothing." Again ask, "Why?" The answer is "Because he's dead."

"What if I told the dead person that if he didn't get up, I'd do something really crazy—like blow up the world? What would he do?" Again, the students answer, "Nothing." Again ask, "Why?" The answer is "Because he's dead."

Point out that as long as this person is dead, he can do nothing. Then ask, "What's the only way this dead person can do something?" The answer is, "To be made alive." "How is that done?" After receiving responses, indicate that the only way this person can come alive again is for a special type of miraculous CPR ("Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation").

Because of original sin, the Bible tells us that all of us are dead in our sins. Like the dead person in "the box," the only way we can come alive is through a special type of miraculous CPR—directly from God.

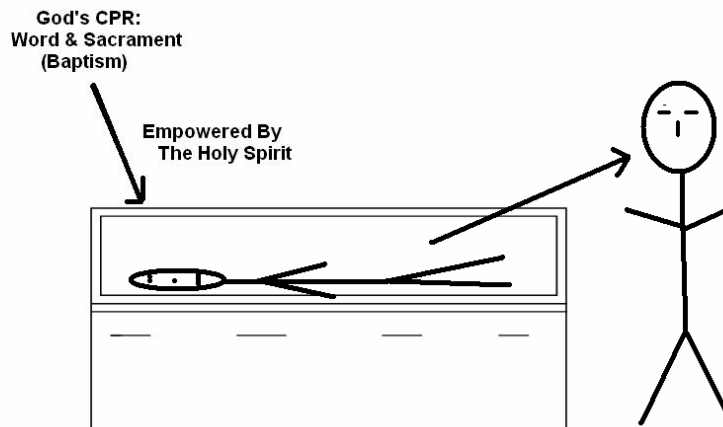


Illustration Two

Illustration Two (above) demonstrates how God, the Holy Spirit, uses His “CPR.” Lutherans call God’s CPR the *Means of Grace*. God’s Holy Spirit uses two tools (or *means*) to raise us to faith and give us new life. These tools are His Word (the Bible) and the Sacraments (in this case, Holy Baptism).

When God’s Holy Spirit works in us, we come out of the box and are alive in Christ—forgiven, redeemed and saved.

After God’s Spirit works in us and makes us totally alive in faith, we have two choices.

- 1) We can serve God with gratitude (cf. *Billfold Illustration*) that God has chosen and raised us by grace; or
- 2) We can choose to reject God’s grace and choose to go back into the box—and remain dead in sin and condemned to hell forever.

A person can kill themselves. But they can’t bring themselves back to life. That’s the same way it is in faith. We can reject God and Jesus’ grace. But, like the dead person in the box, we can’t do anything to earn or choose God while we’re in sin.

Those who respond to God and receive His grace, are indeed alive. But we are still trapped by sin. We are both saints and sinners at the same time. It’s almost as if we have one foot in the box and one foot out of the box.

How do we keep out of the box? How can we stay alive in faith and continue to serve God with overflowing thanksgiving? The same way we came to faith: By God’s Holy Spirit using Word and Sacrament (in this case, the Lord’s Supper) to keep us in faith.

So Christians live and serve God only by God’s *Means of Grace*. The way we come to faith and stay in faith is the same: through God, the Holy Spirit’s working through Word (the Holy Bible) and Sacrament (i.e. through Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper).

How important are the Means of Grace? Without them, salvation is impossible! Thanks, God, for sending Your Holy Spirit to us and giving Your miraculous “CPR”—Word and Sacrament—to raise us from spiritual death to new life in You.

TFF