

The background of the cover features a white line-art illustration on a solid blue background. It depicts Jesus Christ in the center, with long hair and a halo, wearing a robe and having his arms outstretched. Below him, a crowd of people is shown in various poses, some looking up at him. The style is reminiscent of a religious mural or tapestry.

The Apostles' Creed

LEADERS NOTES

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The origins of the Apostles' Creed

The word "creed" comes from a Latin word "credo" meaning **"I BELIEVE"**

The Apostles' Creed was not written directly by the Apostles. It was not written at one sitting but grew over time. It reflects the teaching of the Apostles.

The Creed came into existence at the beginning of the third century when certain questions were asked of those being baptised. These questions were as follows:

Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?
I BELIEVE.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and died, and rose on the third day from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead?
I BELIEVE.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, and the holy Church, and the resurrection of the flesh?
I BELIEVE.

It was in Rome that this questioning originated and over time the questions became statements or a declaration. This creed was known as the Roman Creed and over time other beliefs were added. The form that we have the Apostles' Creed in now dates from about the fifth century.



Harry Boer explains:

In order to refute the Gnostics and other heretics the Apostles' Creed began to develop into a declaration. These groups claimed to have secret or apostolic teaching. They were teaching their own doctrines. The Apostles' Creed made the spread of this kind of heresy difficult. Statements such as 'creator of heaven and earth' were added to the creed later. The inclusion of statements like 'creator of heaven and earth' and that Christ came in the flesh, was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again on the third day, cut off Gnosticism at the root. The creed proved to be instrumental in rebutting these heresies. This creed would become universally accepted and enduring and eventually became known as the Apostles' Creed. This creed clearly passed down the apostles' teaching on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This creed gave form to beliefs that brought the church out of struggles with Gnosticism, Marcionism and Montanism.¹

1. Boer, Harry. "A Short History of the Early Church." Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976. Pages 73-77.



STUDY ONE

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth

Belief

1. How would you summarise what you believe about God?

As we begin a series looking at a statement of collective belief, let's take a moment to stop and think about what we actually believe when it comes to God, faith and salvation. Also important to remember that God is not us and not like us, he is 'other.' We are made in his image, not he in ours.

2. Does what we believe really matter? Why/why not?

God places an incredible importance on what we believe.
Reference John 1:11-13

The first line of the Apostles' Creed focuses on three distinct attributes of God and His work.

3a) Read: 1 John 3:1 and James 1:17-18

Why do you think it is significant for us to understand God as Father?

We learn so much about the nature of God as we relate to Him as Father. Being Father speaks of God's authority and position of leadership, it speaks of Creation being born of Him and it also speaks into the relationship we can have with God through the Son. We understand that God is intimate and caring; this is seen so clearly in the way He adopts us into His family.

3b) Read: Genesis 17:1 and Revelations 1:8

“The Almighty” is a name that God uses for Himself and one of the ways the prophets speak of Him. Why do you think God uses this name?

Even while we relate to God as children relating to their loving father, we are never meant to forget that He is all powerful. God’s might and power is beyond our comprehension; this is a reason to be in awe of Him, a reason to worship Him, a reason to obey Him, a reason to trust Him and a reason to come before Him in prayer.

3c) Read Nehemiah 9:5-6

How does understanding God as the Creator affect the way you view and relate to Him?

Understanding God as Creator should develop and deepen our knowledge of God, His power and glory and at the same time should produce a reverence and humility in us, a dependence and thankfulness.

Explore

Read 1 Corinthians 8:6

4. What are some objections that people have to belief in God?

Some may say that they believe in one less God than Christians. That is, if there are 3000 gods, Christians do not believe in 2999 while an atheist would ‘not believe in just one more’. Where did God come from? An atheist would say there is no need for God as an explanation of how things came into being; there is no evidence for him.

5. How would you answer some of these objections?

Remember as you think this through ... that ‘proving the existence of God’ never saved anyone. It is however reasonable that God exists, so think about things such as experience, revelation or reason. Perhaps you could think about the idea that there is something rather than nothing or that reason itself points to God or morality points to God.

From C.S Lewis
Mere Christianity
Sehnsucht

“If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

Implication

“Knowledge of God necessarily involves knowing ourselves. And this self knowledge involves the knowledge that we have rebelled against God and, as a consequence, it suits our purposes to ignore his existence. But, like trying to suppress a beach ball under the surface of the water, the knowledge of God keeps surfacing. It surfaces in the distorted form of idolatry - worshipping things that are not God.”²

6. What things can become idols for us to displace God?

Consider good things that become ultimate things. Think also about Colossians 3:5. Think about how greed is idolatry.

7. What ideas or traps should we be wary of?

². Shiner, Roroy and Peter Orr. *The World Next Door. A short guide to the Christian faith.* p46.

STUDY TWO

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord



Belief

1. Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17

What is the importance of Jesus as Christ (Anointed One/Messiah) as mentioned in God's promise to David?

The Old Testament develops the promise that God will send a future King, someone who is linked to the line of David, to fulfil God's redemptive purposes for the whole earth. Jesus is this promised King, or Messiah. In Matthew 1 this concept is supported by a recorded genealogy that shows Jesus as "the son of David".

2. Read Matthew 3:13-17

How does Jesus being announced as "my Son" by God make a difference to the impact of the rest of his life and ministry?

Jesus' ministry is done through the authority of being God's Son. God has sent his Son to earth to carry out his salvation plan. It is not being done by a judge or king or prophet, but his own Son.

3. Read Philippians 2:5-11

Why is it so important that we see Jesus as our Lord and not only as Christ and God's Son?

Seeing Jesus as Lord means seeing Jesus as having God's 'very nature' and being 'equal' with God. Following Jesus as Lord puts him in charge of every aspect of our lives. We obey Him as Lord for our good and for God's glory.

Explore

4. What stops people from believing these three aspects that are all part of Jesus' identity (Christ/Son/Lord)?

5. Does what we believe to be true about Jesus really matter?

Can someone believe that Jesus is Christ (anointed Saviour and Messiah) and Lord of all but deny that he is God's Son? Can someone believe that Jesus is God's Son and is Lord of all ... but decide that there are alternative ways to being saved?

Implication

6. Declaring that you believe Jesus is the Christ is saying that He is the only way to eternal life (John 14:6). Saying "I believe in Jesus Christ" is saying that He is your personal Saviour. What is your response to this?

7. Michael Bird says *"Confession of Jesus as Lord implies that all religions are not equal. Jesus is not a leader who has his authority curtailed by politicians or sociologists telling him which areas of life he's allowed to give people advice on. Jesus is the boss of everyone's religion, politics, economics, ethics, and everything"*. Do we act as if Jesus is Lord of all, over every aspect of our life - and how should this change how we live?

STUDY THREE

I believe in Jesus who was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary



Belief

Read Matthew 1:18-25 and Isaiah 7:14-17

1. What do you think it means to conceive or be born of the Holy Spirit?

The important thing here is to not get caught up in the practicalities. Rather, we need to recognise that it was the Spirit of God that caused Mary to be pregnant, not a man. This helps us understand how Jesus can be the means of all Creation (John 1:1-4) and be born by Mary. In biblical times, bloodlines were traced by the fathers. Jesus had no earthly father in his conception; instead we see the work of the Holy Spirit. He is God and he is of God. He is the Son of God, giving immeasurable worth to him and in turn to his sacrifice.

2. Why do you think it is important that Jesus was born of a virgin?

Discuss, then read Hebrews 2:11-18...and then continue the discussion. Being born of Mary shows us that Jesus is fully human. In the virgin birth of Jesus (Isaiah 7:14), many prophecies are fulfilled, showing us that from the line of Judah (Gen 49:10) this descendant of David (2 Sam 7:12-13), was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and fleeing persecution he would be found in Egypt (Hosea 11:1).

Salvation for humanity is tied to the humanity of Jesus. Jesus being the perfect human, was tempted as we are tempted and remained righteous. If Jesus simply materialised on earth we would not have the powerful, perfect and relatable High Priest that Hebrews 2 speaks of, nor would we have a fitting sacrifice for our sins.

3. We understand that being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary means Jesus was simultaneously fully God and fully human. What is lost if we deny either the humanity or divinity of Jesus?

The effectiveness of Jesus' ministry is lost if we lose either His humanity or divinity. We believe in a God who not only walked with us but walked as one of us, taking on our likeness and eventually our sin. In the resurrection of Jesus in His earthly body, we see humanity glorified, no longer subject to death or decay. This is the promise that is before us when we are glorified in Christ. If we lose this, we lose everything.

4. Jesus is given many names and titles during his ministry. In Matthew 1:23 we read the name Immanuel. Why do you think this is so significant?

Jesus is God, Jesus is with us. This verse is a summary of all of the above.

Explore

5. What does the virgin birth contribute to our knowledge of Jesus and how we see the Father in him?

It shows he came close and lived among us, as a human. It shows humility, given what he gave up to be born. No other god, form of religion or philosophy can match this.

6. Why should we not shy away from questions about the virgin birth...and how can it direct us to the gospel?

Implication

7. If we reject the virgin birth as truth, what are the implications for everything else in the New Testament?

8. What part does the virgin birth play in how the gospel influences our lives?

STUDY FOUR

I believe in Jesus, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried



Belief

1. Read Matthew 27:11-26. This is a long passage and covers a lot of ground. What role does Pontius Pilate play in Jesus' execution? What do we learn from his interactions with Jesus? (Matthew 27:11-26)

2. Read Matt 27:27-56. In what ways does Jesus suffer?
He suffered both physically and spiritually (Matt 27:46). Try not to get bogged down in the physical violence but understand his being forsaken by the Father.

3. Why is it part of the creed that Jesus suffered?
Jesus would not avoid the cost of his sacrifice but it is also demonstrative of the Christian life.

4. What does Jesus' execution on the cross tell us about his sacrifice?

It was the humblest of death (Philippians 2:8). It was public. Has historical credence. For the common people.

5. Read Matthew 27:57-61. What is important about the detail that Jesus was buried?

He was truly dead. There were witnesses to his death. As far as beliefs are concerned we see that it fulfils Scripture

Explore

6. Has suffering caused you or someone you know to question God's love? If so, what help have you found from scripture?

7. How does the suffering of Jesus help to answer those questioning God because of suffering?

Implication

8. What does Jesus' suffering offer the Christian worldview?

Jesus' suffering tells us that this kind of evil needed to be dealt with. Jesus submitted himself to pain and suffering which shows God's concern and desire to deal with it. It is not the norm but an intrusion on creation. There is suffering as we are not of this world but waiting for the world to come.

9. Knowing what Jesus went through, how should we live our lives even in the midst of suffering?

STUDY FIVE

...he descended to hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead

Belief

‘... he descended into hell...’ This may be a difficult thing to wrap our minds around. In the book “The World Next door - A short guide to the Christian faith faith” the authors explain how to read this line of the creed. *“In the New Testament, there is a word which most closely aligns with what we think of as ‘hell’. That word is Gehenna. This is the place of final judgement, the place of separation from God. But the word used in the creed is the word that refers to Sheol, or Hades, which is, more broadly, the place dead people go.”*³

1. What do we learn about Jesus’ activity when he descended to the dead from the following verses?

a) Ephesians 4:8-10.

Jesus brought the blessings of his death to those who had died in the faith before him. Those believers who had departed had their cry heard and were rescued from their bondage to death. They trusted in the promises of God and he fulfilled them. This shows that Jesus’ death was effective even for those who had lived before Jesus came to earth.

b) 1 Peter 3:19-20, Philippians 2:10, Revelation 1:17-18.

These verses speak of Jesus proclaiming his victory over the evil powers. His enemies were informed of his reign (1 Peter 3:19-20). Every knee would bow (Phil 2:10) including those under the earth. Furthermore he holds the keys to death and Hades (Rev 1:17-18)

¹⁵ Shiner, Roroy and Peter Orr. *The World Next Door. A short guide to the Christian faith.* p77-78

c)Philippians 1:21-23.

Death is a safe and blessed place for all who now die in him. Death was often feared, but in this Philippians passage “it is better by far.” It is better because Jesus has conquered the place of death and people will experience the blessing of God while they await the resurrection of the body (Luke 23:43). We can still grieve death but it is not without hope for the believer.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. What does Paul say about the resurrection in these verses?

3. In 1 Corinthians 15:12-28 what are the reasons Paul gives for the resurrection being of ‘first importance’ (from 1 Cor 15:3)?

Explore

4. What makes it hard for people to believe in the resurrection?

5. In what ways does the resurrection give hope?

Implication

6. What implications does the resurrection have for how we live now? How should our lives be different as a result of the resurrection?

7. How does the resurrection relate to Jesus’ statement on the cross, “It is Finished.” (John 19:30)

Resurrection means that there is vindication for Jesus’ sacrifice. The resurrection says that God is satisfied with what Jesus accomplished. This includes payment for sin, the fulfilling of scripture and bearing the weight of God’s wrath.



STUDY SIX

...he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

It is important to remember that even though Jesus ascended into heaven it does not mean that he is absent. Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, is available to all.

Belief

1. Read Acts 1:1-11. What do we learn from these verses about Jesus' ascension?

We learn that when he leaves they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes. Baptism of the Holy Spirit will become reality (Acts 1:5). He will return the same way (Acts 1:11). Jesus was taken up. He did not die again but was visibly taken.

2. Read Colossians 1:15-20. What assurance does this statement about Jesus' ascension give us?

We are assured that Jesus is exalted and glorified and that his power and glory can be reflected on our lives.

3. Read one or more of the following passages: Hebrews 12:2; Luke 22:69; Romans 8:34; Psalm 110:1; Psalm 2. Why is it important that we believe Jesus is at the right hand of God?

It fulfils prophecy. It is proof that Jesus is God's son and the Messiah. He rules over all nations.

4. What qualifies Jesus to judge the living and the dead based on Colossians 1:15-20?

First we are judged by someone who knows us totally. Second, we are judged by someone who is passionately committed to us. Thirdly, we are judged by someone we know and trust. We are already judged by our attitudes toward Jesus. Thus we are not judged on the basis of something unknown but on the basis of our response to Jesus Christ. We have already been judged and the outcome of that judgement; what remains is the conformation and enactment of that judgement. Only God can save - yet, on account of his divinity, Jesus saves. In the same way, only God can judge us - yet, on account of his divinity, Jesus judges us.⁴

Acts 10:42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.

Explore

5. Why is judgement important?

Judgement sets things right. Wrongs will be dealt with and paid for. Given that Jesus has risen from the dead and all people throughout time will rise and have to face this judgement. The shortcomings of human justice will be rectified also. We all like justice and the right judgments for the right crime handed down by the right people.

6. Why is it important that Jesus is the judge?

⁴ Comments taken from "Apostles Creed - Life guide Bible Studies" by Alister McGrath. Page 44-45.

7. How does the gospel show that judgement is a display of God's love and that it is final?

It is final because we are promised a new heaven and a new earth. Jesus cried "it is finished."

Implication

8. What ought the impending judgement drive us to do?

Repent

9. On what basis can we repent?

STUDY SEVEN

I believe in the Holy Spirit



Belief

Read Acts 2

1. What does this passage reveal to us about the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost is one of the first times in the New Testament we see the Holy Spirit working in Christians. The Holy Spirit is powerful and works through us.

2. What does the passage say we need to do in order to receive the Holy Spirit?

Repent and be baptised

Once we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord, he sends his 'helper', the Holy Spirit.

Read John 15:26-16:15

3. Why do you think Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as our advocate? What does this mean?

4. What does it mean for the Holy Spirit to testify about Jesus? (15:26 and 16:13-14)

5. What does it mean for the Holy Spirit to “guide us into all the truth?” (16:13-15)

Explore

6. What do you understand to be the work of the Holy Spirit?

7. When do you find it most difficult to rely on the Holy Spirit?

These questions will raise some controversy among people because of the different ways the work of the Spirit can be viewed or interpreted. Please help people to stay on track. Belief in the Spirit means that Jesus is still present, his main work is to testify to Jesus and work through the gospel to change hearts and minds. Look at 1 Peter 1:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Romans 8:13.

Implication

Read Romans 8:26-27

“The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus, sanctifies believers, edifies the church, and evangelises the world.” - John Stott

8. Discuss the implications of these four great descriptions of the work of the Holy Spirit.

9. What role does the Holy Spirit play in our lives as believers?

10. What does it mean to ‘believe in the Holy Spirit’

STUDY EIGHT

I believe in the Holy Catholic (universal) church, the fellowship of saints



Belief

1. Read Romans 12:3-8. What do you learn about Jesus' church from these verses?

2. What do you think makes the church universal? What sort of things divide the church?

The preceding lines of the creed ought to help us here. This creed is designed to help the church be united on the most important beliefs for salvation and reconciliation.

Perhaps you could ask how we overcome these divisions? What is good about denominations and what is bad about them? Try not to get bogged down here or have it turn into a complaints session.

3. How are Christians different but unified?

4. Read 1 John 1:1-4. What do we learn about fellowship from these verses?

5. How would you define saints?

Saints are God's holy people. Paul's letters are addressed to the saints (God's holy people). Saints are not those who died achieving certain criteria. Saints are those in whom Jesus dwells by his Spirit. They have responded to the gospel in repentance and faith (Mark 1:15, Romans 10:9). They are those in whom God has begun a good work and will carry it on to completion (Phil 1:3-6).

Explore

6. Identify as many things as possible that our church has in common with other denominations or fellowship groups. Consider both inward beliefs and outward practices. Are you surprised by any of the things raised?

7. Read Philippians 2:1-4. How can we be of one mind, one spirit and one love? How do we in humility put others before ourselves? How does this unite Jesus' church?

When we understand the gospel we can put others before ourselves because Jesus put us before himself. We have been shown love grace and mercy so we can be these things to others because we are already covered.

Implication

8. On what basis is the church universal (catholic)?

Must be based on the gospel as we read in Philippians 1:4-6, 1:12-14, 1:27. Also refer to Ephesians 2:11-22.

STUDY NINE

I believe in the forgiveness of sins



Belief

Read Mark 2:1-12

1. What is your understanding of the meaning of 'sin'?

2. Why did some teachers of the law claim that Jesus was blaspheming?

Because only God can forgive sins.

3. How did Jesus prove that He has the authority to forgive sins?

“The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”

(He healed the man, which proves that He is God).

Read Romans 3:23

4. Who does it say has sinned?

All of us.

5. What does this mean for us?

It means that we are sinners in need of forgiveness.

6. What does it mean to view yourself as a sinner? Do you often think about yourself like this?

Explore

7. What role does the forgiveness of our sin play in our salvation?

8. Can we have a relationship with God without the forgiveness of our sin?

9. Why was Jesus' death the only way to atone for our sins?

Implication

10. Are you right with God? How do you know?

11. How might you live, knowing you are free from sin?

12. In what areas of your life do you feel like you are not living as though you have been set free from sin? Reflect on this, or feel free to share with the group.

Spend some time at the end of bible study in prayer of confession of our sins and thanksgiving for the grace of God, given to us through Jesus.

STUDY TEN

I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting

Belief

1. When we think about the resurrection, it is important to remember Jesus himself was raised first. Can you think of places in the bible which talk about Jesus' resurrection?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

How does this passage suggest that we will be 'raised'?

Like Jesus, with heavenly/spiritual bodies. Our physical bodies are simply incapable of coping with the glory of God. "God will raise the dead in the same way he raised Jesus. The nature of this resurrection body is such that "the body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable, it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power" Michael F Bird - What Christians ought to believe

3. Why do you think we are raised with 'new bodies'?

"If we are going to be resurrected in Christ, we need to be transformed into his likeness" - David Prior (The message of 1 Corinthians)

4. What does Paul mean when he says "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies"?

Read Revelations 21:1-8, 22-27 & Isaiah 65:17-25

5. What are some of the characteristics of heaven described in these passages?

6. Where in these passages might it suggest that we have ‘new bodies’ as we spoke about before?

“I am making everything new”

Explore

7. Can you think what objections some people may have to the resurrection of our earthly bodies?

8. How would you counter these objections?

Some Christians don’t believe in the resurrection of our earthly bodies. When addressing this, it’s important to point out these key verses.

Phil 3:20-21 “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Genesis 9:6: “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind”

Implication

9. What hope does the promise of eternal life give us?

When our bodies are raised and we have eternal life, we are set free from any pain and suffering in this world. “For the old order of things has passed away”

Read Philippians 3:20

10. What does it mean that our citizenship is in heaven?

11. In practical terms, how does being a citizen of heaven change our lives, words and actions now, on earth?

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY 1ST MAY

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY 8TH MAY

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY 15TH MAY

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY 22ND MAY

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY 29TH MAY

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY 5TH JUNE

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY 12TH JUNE

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY 19TH JUNE

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY 26TH JUNE

Sermon Notes

SUNDAY 3RD JULY



ST PAUL'S
CASTLE HILL