

The background of the entire page is a light blue line-art illustration. It depicts Jesus Christ in the center, with his arms outstretched in a gesture of blessing or teaching. He has a halo around his head. Below him, a crowd of people is shown in profile, looking up at him. The style is simple and elegant, with clean lines and no shading.

The Apostles' Creed

SMALL GROUP STUDIES

Contents

- 4. THE ORIGINS OF THE APOSTLES' CREED**
- 6. WEEK ONE** - I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth
- 9. WEEK TWO** - I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord
- 11. WEEK THREE** - I believe in Jesus Christ, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
- 13. WEEK FOUR** - I believe in Jesus Christ, who suffered under Pontious Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried
- 15. WEEK FIVE** - he descended into Hell, on the third day he rose again from the dead
- 17. WEEK SIX** - he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father; he will come again to judge the living and the dead
- 20. WEEK SEVEN** - I believe in the Holy Spirit
- 22. WEEK EIGHT** - I believe in the Holy Catholic (universal) church, the fellowship of saints
- 24. WEEK NINE** - I believe in the forgiveness of sins
- 26. WEEK TEN** - I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting
- 28. SERMON NOTES**

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?

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

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?

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?

3c) Read Nehemiah 9:5-6

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

Explore

Read 1 Corinthians 8:6

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

5. How would you answer some of these objections?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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

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?

Explore

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

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?

3. Why is it part of the creed that Jesus suffered?

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

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

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?

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.

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

c) Philippians 1:21-23.

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

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)



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?

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

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?

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

Explore

5. Why is judgement important?

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

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

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?

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

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?

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?

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?

Implication

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

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?**

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

Read Romans 3:23

- 4. Who does it say has sinned?**

- 5. What does this mean for us?**

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.



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'?**

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

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?

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?

Implication

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

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



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