

PCJH STUDY GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

Apostle's Creed

I Believe in Jesus Christ

Week of September 27

Text: Phil. 2:5-11; I Corinthians 15:1-28

Background

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

- This creed is called the Apostles' Creed not because it was produced by the apostles themselves but because it contains a brief summary of their teachings.
- It sets forth their doctrine "in sublime simplicity, in unsurpassable brevity, in beautiful order, and with liturgical solemnity." In its present form it is dated no later than the fourth century.
- More than any other Christian creed, it may justly be called an ecumenical symbol of faith. his creed had its origin as a profession or confession of faith by converts at their baptism.
- This is not how someone becomes a Christian but rather is a summary of the main points of faith.
- The creed emphasizes that to believe is to belong. To become a Christian means we belong to the body of Christ, which is the church.

Opening Questions (your choice).

- What is your background with the Apostle's Creed? Familiar? Unfamiliar?

- What do you think of when you see the word, *believe*?
- How would you like your belief in God to grow and deepen in this study and beyond? What are you hoping for in this closer look at the creed?

Discussion Questions:

- What comes to mind when you think of God the Father?
- What's your favorite description of God (i.e. Almighty, Creator, King, Sovereign, Trinity, All-powerful)? Why?
- What do you think most people in our culture mean when they say, "I believe in God"?
- Has it always been easy for you to say, "I believe in God," or has it been a struggle/process. Why?
- What does it mean for you to say that you believe in God?
- What does it mean for you to say that you are a Christian? Why is that an important distinction?
- How does the creed describe Jesus? What does the title "Christ" mean and why is that significant?
- What does it mean for you to say that Jesus is Lord? That Jesus is *your* Lord?
- The creed talks about the suffering of Jesus. What are some typical responses to suffering?
- Why is Pontius Pilate mentioned in the creed and why is that significant to Christians?
- The cross is a symbol of horrific torture. When you look at a cross, what kind of thoughts or feelings come to you? Why?
- Has suffering ever caused you to question God's love? If so, how have you been helped through that?
- In I Corinthians 15, Paul says that death and resurrection of Christ are "of first importance". What reasons does this passage offer for why they are so important?
- Vs 2 and 12-19 make bold statements about the implications if Jesus did not really rise from the dead. If he did not actually rise from the dead, what would change for the human race? What difference would it make for you and your belief in God?
- What do you think it means that he "descended to the dead"? Why is that in the creed?
- The Heidelberg Catechism addresses the Apostle's Creed. How might this help explain Christ's death and resurrection?

Q&A 40

Q. Why did Christ have to suffer death?

A. Because God's justice and truth require it:1 nothing else could pay for our sins except the death of the Son of God.2

1 Gen. 2:17

2 Rom. 8:3-4; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:9

Q&A 41

Q. Why was he “buried”?

A. His burial testifies that he really died.¹

1 Isa. 53:9; John 19:38-42; Acts 13:29; 1 Cor. 15:3-4

Q&A 42

Q. Since Christ has died for us, why do we still have to die?

A. Our death does not pay the debt of our sins.¹ Rather, it puts an end to our sinning and is our entrance into eternal life.²

1 Ps. 49:7

2 John 5:24; Phil. 1:21-23; 1 Thess. 5:9-10

Q&A 43

Q. What further benefit do we receive from Christ’s sacrifice and death on the cross?

A. By Christ’s power our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with him,¹ so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer rule us,² but that instead we may offer ourselves as a sacrifice of gratitude to him.³

1 Rom. 6:5-11; Col. 2:11-12

2 Rom. 6:12-14

3 Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:1-2

Q&A 44

Q. Why does the creed add, “He descended to hell”?

A. To assure me during attacks of deepest dread and temptation that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from hellish anguish and torment.¹

1 Isa. 53; Matt. 26:36-46; 27:45-46; Luke 22:44; Heb. 5:7-10

Q&A 45

Q. How does Christ’s resurrection benefit us?

A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, so that he might make us share in the righteousness he obtained for us by his death.¹

Second, by his power we too are already raised to a new life.²

Third, Christ’s resurrection is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection.³

1 Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:16-20; 1 Pet. 1:3-5

2 Rom. 6:5-11; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-4

3 Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:12-23; Phil. 3:20-21

- Consider some difficult situations in your life. How does the resurrection of Jesus change your perspective on those circumstances?