

PCJH STUDY GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

Apostle's Creed

I Believe In The Forgiveness of Sins

Week of October 25

Text: Matthew 18:21-35

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. This 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.

Opening Questions (choose whichever one(s) you prefer):

- What is your earliest memory of getting caught doing something you knew was wrong?
- Has someone ever taken the blame for something you've done? What happened?
- Have you ever taken the blame for something, someone else has done? Why?
- What is your definition of sin?
- What is your definition of grace?

Discussion Questions:

1. Karl Menninger, in his book, "Whatever Became of Sin?", wrote: "The assumption that there is sin...implies both a possibility and an obligation for intervention. Presumably something is possible which can be reparative, corrective, meliorative, and that something involves me and mercy." According to this, why is this statement in the creed significant?
2. How does our culture deal with sin? Is it ignored? Avoided? Accepted? Meh? Why so?
3. Some people use the phrase, "I'm only human" when they've found themselves in some wrong or injury. Is this a helpful phrase or not? Why?
4. The Greek word for sin is *hamartia*, which means "missing the mark." What are some ways in which you see evidence of sin in the world around us? In ourselves (if anyone feels comfortable sharing this).
5. Does God forgive all sins? Are some actions unforgivable? Why or why not?
6. What do you think of the phrase, "forgive and forget"? Some would say that forgiving is different from forgetting? Would you agree? How do you separate forgiving someone from their wrongdoing and forgetting it?
7. What makes forgiveness so hard?
8. In Mt. 6:14-15, Jesus says, "If you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you don't forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your sins." How do you respond to Jesus' words?
9. When have you been most aware of God's forgiveness of your sins?
10. When have you had a hard time forgiving someone? What did you do (are doing) about it?
11. Since we believe God has forgiven us in Jesus, do we still need to pray for forgiveness? Why or why not?
12. What does Matthew 18:21-35 teach about forgiveness?
13. Complete this sentence..."A new thought I had about forgiveness...."
14. Has there ever been a time when you felt almost immobilized by guilt? What metaphor would you use to describe the feeling?
15. Some people who struggle with excessive guilt do so because of their conception of God. How do you describe God? What or who has influenced how you picture God and how he relates to our sin? How he relates to our forgiveness?

16. In Colossians 1:15-20, we learn that Jesus is the “visible expression of the invisible God.” What about Jesus shows you how God addresses sin? What sayings, actions or parables that he used that shows you what God is like?

17. Read Psalm 103. What brings you comfort in reading this?