

The Apostles' Creed

TOGETHER WE BELIEVE

MATT CHANDLER

Bible study written by
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I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit;
born of the virgin Mary;
Suffered under Pontius Pilate;
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended to hell; the third day
He rose again from the dead;
He ascended to heaven and sits on the
right hand of the Father Almighty,
From whence He shall 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.

Introduction

It's easy for our culture of individuality and innovation to shape the way we think about the church. So what should we believe? Should Christians try to be more accepting of a postmodern worldview? With so many questions, opinions, and interpretations among people today—even within the church—what should we all agree on as essential to Christian faith?

Finding its genesis in the apostles' teachings, the Apostles' Creed contains essential Christian doctrines and beliefs that summarize the gospel and make up the foundation of our faith. The scriptural truths contained in the creed help us operate from good theology, with the knowledge that our faith is rooted in truth and a rich history that spans past, present, and future. The lines of the creed aren't mere words. They convey the essence of what we confess and believe as the body of Christ.

About the Author



MATT CHANDLER serves as the lead pastor of teaching at The Village Church in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. He came to The Village in December 2002 and describes his tenure as a replanting effort to change the theological and philosophical culture of the congregation. The church has witnessed a tremendous response, growing from 160 people to more than 11,000, including campuses in Flower

Mound, Dallas, Plano, and Fort Worth.

Alongside his current role as lead pastor, Matt is involved in church-planting efforts both locally and internationally through The Village, as well as in various strategic partnerships. Prior to accepting the pastorate at The Village, Matt had a vibrant itinerant ministry for more than 10 years that gave him the opportunity to speak to thousands of people in America and abroad about the glory of God and the beauty of Jesus.

Matt is the author of *To Live Is Christ, to Die Is Gain; Mingling of Souls*; and *The Explicit Gospel Bible Study* (LifeWay, 2012). He's also a coauthor of *Creature of the Word* (LifeWay, 2012).

Other than knowing Jesus, Matt's greatest joy is being married to Lauren and being the dad to their three children: Audrey, Reid, and Norah.

How to Use This Study

The Apostles' Creed provides a guided process for individuals and small groups to explore 12 core tenets of Christianity. This Bible study book includes 12 weeks of content, each divided into three main sections: "Group Study," "Family Discipleship," and "Personal Study." A leader guide is also provided to prepare those who are leading groups through this journey.

GROUP STUDY

Regardless of the day of the week your group meets, each week of content begins with a group session. This group session is designed to last 90 minutes, with approximately 45 minutes dedicated to video teaching and another 45 minutes to group discussion. Meeting even longer than 90 minutes will allow more time for participants to interact with one another.

Each group study uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among group members, with God's Word, and with the video teaching.

START

This section includes questions to get the conversation started, a review of the previous week's study to reinforce the content, and an introduction to the new content for the current week.

WATCH

This page includes key points from the video teaching, along with space for taking notes as participants watch the video.

DISCUSS

This page includes discussion questions that guide the group to respond to the video teaching and to relevant Bible passages.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

The Apostles' Creed presents a great opportunity for families to consider the truths of the gospel together. The "Family Discipleship" section provides discussion, activities, and memorization opportunities that encourage families to engage with this material on a deeper level.

ENGAGE

This page will guide your family to consider the truths of the gospel by utilizing the following framework: "Time," "Moments," and "Milestones." Use this framework for family discipleship in your home and on the go.

MEMORIZE

Space is provided for participants who want to memorize the Apostles' Creed as a family. Use this page to write from memory the sections of the creed you've covered up to that point in the study.

PERSONAL STUDY

Three personal studies are provided each week to take individuals deeper into Scripture and to supplement the content introduced in the group study. With biblical teaching and interactive questions, these sections challenge individuals to grow in their understanding of God's Word and to make practical application to their lives.

LEADER GUIDE

On pages 154–59 at the back of this book you'll find a leader guide that will help you prepare each week. Use this guide to gain a broad understanding of the content for each week and to learn ways you can engage members at different levels of life-changing discussion.

The Apostles' Creed Grid

Throughout this study we'll examine and apply the doctrines outlined in the Apostles' Creed by using a four-part grid as a filter to draw out key truths. The personal study in week 2 will introduce the grid, and the personal study in weeks 3–12 will explore a specific phrase in the creed by examining it through each of the four areas of focus and application.

SYMMETRY: *The creed helps us develop better symmetry as Christians, giving us a more robust understanding of biblical teaching.*

As Christians, it's easy to stick with what we already know. Either we don't grow and remain immature with a minimal, two-dimensional faith, or even if we're growing, we become out of balance instead of developing a holistic, well-rounded faith. The creed helps us intentionally cover the doctrinal spectrum. Think of it like an exercise routine. Just as you don't need to work the same muscle group every day, neglecting the others, you need to broaden your understanding of the full scope of biblical truth. Believing Jesus is your Savior is vital, but it's also necessary to recognize that He's called you into a relationship with the church. A Christian who settles for believing in Jesus as Savior but never develops a love for the church is out of balance and ultimately unhealthy. We desire symmetry or balance to be well rounded in our doctrinal understanding as mature disciples.

CLARITY: *The creed helps us with clarity, making clear who God is.*

While symmetry applies to our overall knowledge of core biblical doctrines, clarity is a more specific focus on what we believe about God and the world. By and large, American evangelicals seem to be terribly confused about who God is, what He's up to, what He's like, and what He's about. Surveys reveal shocking misconceptions, many of which are similar to the heresies that the Apostles' Creed was intended to refute. For example, is the Holy Spirit a He or an It? Is Jesus both fully God and fully man? Did Jesus literally die? Did He have a physical body when resurrected? The Christian life isn't about our preferences or opinions or the latest cultural trends; it's about God. What you believe about God is the most important thing in your life; it shapes all your attitudes and actions.

COMMUNITY: *The creed informs our community, whom we belong to, and whom we're with.*

As Christians who believe the doctrines summarized in the Apostles' Creed, we're part of a people who have been around for thousands of years. We're part of a people who go back to the beginning of humankind, when God called first people to Himself. Throughout history God's people, those He has chosen and called to Himself, have thrived and worshiped the one true God. We're part of that tradition. We're a global people. People all over the earth will gather this weekend because they share the beliefs expressed in the creed. They'll rejoice in it, they'll be shaped by it, and massive numbers of them will recite the creed together. We've been woven into something much bigger than us. The fabric created by God makes us stronger than any of us can ever be on our own. It's diverse, it's beautiful, and it's global.

As Christianity in the United States, having enjoyed great favor the past 150 years, now starts to fall out of favor, any effort to define ourselves by secondary beliefs must also fade away. The creed shows us what's primary in the Christian faith. We're a creedal people, united by truth that supersedes any other differences in our culture and sets us apart as a distinct community of faith.

COUNSEL: *The creed informs the way we counsel ourselves and others.*

Counsel is essentially the point of application. How do symmetry, clarity, and community lead to a change in your perspective? How do you think and act differently? What do you tell yourself or others as a result of believing the doctrines in the creed? For example, if you believe Christ will return to judge the living and dead, that will affect the way you think about sin and the way you warn and encourage others in regard to personal holiness. Think of the ammunition that belief provides against sin. When you grow in your understanding of the person of God, the work of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, you'll think differently.

The four parts of this grid work together to form a cohesive framework to help us grow within the long tradition of orthodox Christian beliefs. Symmetry in our understanding of the Bible leads to more clarity about who God is. The better we understand God and the big picture of the Bible, the better we can counsel ourselves and one another in the community of faith. As we counsel one another in community, we grow in symmetry and clarity. The result should be an ever-deepening maturity and a closer walk of obedience with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Week One

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit;
born of the virgin Mary;
Suffered under Pontius Pilate;
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended to hell; the third day
He rose again from the dead;
He ascended to heaven and sits on the
right hand of the Father Almighty,
From whence He shall 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.

Group Study

START

I BELIEVE IN

*Welcome everyone to week 1 of The Apostles' Creed.
Use this page to begin the group session.*

Let's begin by taking a few minutes to get to know one another.

Ask members of the group to introduce themselves by sharing their names, members of their immediate families, and where they grew up.

What was your favorite school song, team cheer, or student tradition?

Things like school songs, cheers, and traditions unite us with other like-minded people in the present and in the past. Gathering together and raising our voices in a unified declaration create a powerful sense of confidence, pride, and identity. Each of us desires to belong to something greater than ourselves. Even in today's society, which celebrates individuality and innovation, there's still nothing that compares to the energy, commitment, and reverence generated by a united community, group celebration, and proud tradition.

It's easy for our cultural values of individuality and innovation to undermine the unity that God intended for His church. For the next 12 weeks we'll consider the value of declaring our shared beliefs with one another and with the long line of Christians who came before us.

*Read the Apostles' Creed aloud as a group
before watching video session 1.*

WATCH

Use this viewer guide to follow along and take notes as you watch video session 1.

THE APOSTLES' CREED WILL HELP US WITH:

1. Symmetry—a robust understanding of the Bible
2. Clarity—who God is
3. Community—whom we belong to and whom we're with
4. Counsel—to ourselves and to others

Creeds do not hold any authority in and of themselves, but rather, they point outside themselves to the ultimate authority of the Word of God.

THE APOSTLE'S CREED HAS BEEN USED—

- to correct error;
- as a tool in the spiritual formation of God's people.

Believing leads to action, and knowing may or may not.

Belief is birthed in the heart.

The message of the Christian faith isn't that we have done anything, but rather, we have believed that Someone has.

We aren't chained to rote religious activity, but we have a Savior who has accomplished all that we desire for us.

The Apostles' Creed shows us what's primary.

When the early church recited this, it was simultaneously their greatest act of rebellion and their greatest act of allegiance.

This beautiful moment when the people of God recited this creed, they said, "We don't believe the story that our culture is telling."

DISCUSS

Discuss the video segment, using the following questions.

Before we watched the video, we read the Apostles' Creed as a group. What's the significance of reciting the Apostles' Creed together? Why is it significant that the first word of the creed is *I*?

Why is it important for Christians to articulate and agree on what we believe?

Why did Matt distinguish between the authority of Scripture and of a creed?

READ ROMANS 10:9-10.

How do belief and action relate to salvation, as described in these verses? What distinction did Matt make between knowing and believing?

In what specific ways do our historical Christian beliefs, as outlined in the Apostles' Creed, rebel against our present-day culture?

How does a Christian experience freedom in believing the gospel?

Because the Apostles' Creed is a faithful, truthful summary of Christian doctrine as revealed in the Bible, notice that no article of the creed can be removed without detracting from the gospel. Every point is essential.

Why is it important to preserve the full teaching of the gospel, not just the parts that are easier to believe?

What's your primary observation about the teaching on belief?

What remaining thoughts or questions do you have?

Encourage members to complete the following personal studies before the next group session.

Family Discipleship

ENGAGE

The Apostles' Creed presents a great opportunity for families to consider the truths of the gospel together by utilizing the following framework for family discipleship: time, moments, and milestones.

- **TIME.** Begin memorizing the Apostles' Creed as a family. This week should be fairly easy: "I believe." Explain what a creed is and the importance of knowing what we believe about God and why.
- **MOMENTS.** Look for opportunities to identify other belief systems or worldviews your family encounters. Point out that everything people do originates from their belief systems. How does the way we live point to our belief in God?
- **MILESTONES.** How will your family celebrate the occasions when your kids come to know the Lord? When your kids are baptized, what are some ways you could share with your unbelieving family and friends what God has done? Commemorate your own baptism by sharing your testimony with your family on the anniversary of your baptism.

MEMORIZE

*Use this page to practice writing
the Apostles' Creed from memory.*

Personal Study

DAY 1

The Apostles' Creed begins with the words "I believe in." When you recite the creed in your group each week, you're declaring to the world that you believe the Christian story is both good and true. God the Father is reconciling the world to Himself in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The creed is more than just an individual statement; it's both personal and corporate. You're "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1), and when you recite the creed, you publicly identify with the church—a group of people who believe in the work of the triune God.

In the early church, uttering the word *credo* ("I believe") meant identifying in the closest possible way with the gospel. Often new believers recited the Apostles' Creed during their baptismal ceremonies and were then welcomed into the fellowship of the saints. When believers said the creed, they were identifying themselves as citizens of a different kingdom—the kingdom of God. This meant, and still means today, that believers could face persecution, alienation, and even death. The creed is far more than a list of propositions; it's the summary of the apostolic faith that has been practiced throughout church history.

READ HEBREWS 11:1-2.

The beauty and tension of these Scripture verses come from the fact that based on what has happened in the past, Christians have assurance and conviction in placing their hope and belief in something they've never seen.

Though we believe in the existence of God since before time began and in His work that began human history with the creation of the world, a man named Abram was the first in a long tradition of people who put their belief in God.

READ GENESIS 12:1-4.

We learn more about Abram, later called Abraham, throughout the pages of Scripture in a beautiful account of a vibrant belief in action. His story is central in the historical record of faith that unfolds in Hebrews 11.

Why do you think details about Abram's age, family, and land were included in Genesis 12:1-4? What do they reveal about belief?

What experiences have challenged you to consider how seriously you believe something about God and/or His Word? How did those moments shape your perspective on life and what it means to live by faith?

Abram's belief in God affected his own life, the lives of his family members, and the lives of people around him. The same is true today. Your beliefs have been shaped by other people; your faith is a testimony that affects the people around you as well.

Identify specific people in your life who have been examples of living by faith. How did their actions shape your understanding of the Christian life?

Humans are made for community, and that's why the creed is confessed together by the entire believing community. However, even when a local congregation recites the creed in unison, the first word of each statement of the creed is *I*. Popular culture asserts that all people should have the opportunity, even the right, to define themselves. The Apostles' Creed reminds us that the truth isn't up for redefinition.

Prayer

Grant me faith, Father in heaven. Give me a faith that's focused on Your work, the work of Your Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the world. Even when I struggle to believe, sustain me by Your grace. Help me walk by faith, not by sight, and grow in my affection toward You as I learn more about Your mighty deeds. Help me not to depart from this apostolic faith You've given to all believers by Your providential and glorious mercy. Amen.

DAY 2

Whether or not people go to church and whether or not they know what the verse says, it's hard to go through life without seeing a reference to John 3:16.

Use this space to write John 3:16 from memory. If you don't have the verse memorized, look it up in your Bible and copy it here.

How would you explain the importance of belief, according to John 3:16?

Describe the moment when you first believed in Jesus. If you haven't had a moment like this in your life, record the name of your group leader and/or a trusted Christian friend whom you'll commit to ask questions about personal belief in Jesus.

This popular verse is part of a conversation Jesus had with a Jewish leader named Nicodemus (see John 3:1-21). Jesus' words boldly declared what it truly meant to believe in God. In that culture the majority of God's covenant people had grown to believe that their relationship and right standing before God were based on two things: observing Jewish religious traditions and being born into Jewish families. However, Jesus said anyone could have a relationship with God—if they truly believed in His Son for salvation.

A similar trap of mistaken belief in what makes people right with God exists today. If someone grew up in a Christian home or is a morally good person, it's easy to believe he or she is a Christian. The Bible is crystal clear, though, that merely believing correct things about God won't get anybody into heaven.

This point can't be overstated: cultural Christianity won't save you.

In which area(s) do you find yourself inclined to measure your relationship with God?

- ☐ **Having a good family**
- ☐ **Living a moral life**
- ☐ **Going to church**
- ☐ **Studying the Bible**
- ☐ **Volunteering to serve**
- ☐ **Giving money to a ministry**
- ☐ **Being recognized as a leader**

What's the danger of basing the certainty of your salvation on external behaviors like the previous ones?

Pisteuō, the Greek word translated as *believes* in John 3:16, has a richer meaning than the simple understanding of facts. To believe in something means to commit and to give your trust. Of course, trust and commitment find expressions in external behavior, so belief isn't just a matter of head knowledge. It's a matter of the heart's devotion.

It's easy for John 3:16 to become so familiar that the gravity of the situation is lost. Don't let words like *love*, *life*, and *saved* distract you from *perish* and *condemned*. You need to wrestle with each of those realities until you come to grips with what's at stake here. Christian belief is infinitely more than an adherence to a moral code or a knowledge of religious facts. True belief—life-changing commitment and trust—is a matter of eternal life or death.

Prayer

Spend time reflecting on the fact that your relationship with God isn't based on who you are, where you were born, or what you know. Thank Him that you can live eternally as part of His family by truly believing in His only Son, Jesus. Commit yourself to trust Christ wholeheartedly.

DAY 3

Unlike Matthew and Luke, John didn't begin his Gospel account by providing a detailed record of Jesus' birth. Instead, the Book of John begins with a beautiful description of the divine personhood and redemptive purpose of Jesus' incarnation.

READ JOHN 1:11-13.

What's the result of belief in Christ, according to these verses?

From the very beginning of the book, John told his readers that Jesus came to change their lives forever if they believed in Him. The opening words revealed that through faith in Jesus, anyone could become a child of God. However, the people who should have recognized and believed in Jesus—the Jews—didn't receive Him.

The account of Nicodemus in John 3 illustrates the lack of understanding among God's people. Nicodemus was a religious expert who couldn't wrap his mind around the truth of salvation by faith in the Son of God. This Jewish leader couldn't understand how "whoever believes in" Jesus (v. 16) could be born again into God's eternal family.

The closing chapters of the Book of John lead us to an unmistakable conclusion about what it means to believe in Jesus.

READ JOHN 20:24-31.

Notice that Jesus didn't leave Thomas in a state of confusion and doubt. Jesus met this disciple in the midst of his struggle to believe. Thomas had been a devoted follower of Jesus. He had committed to literally follow Jesus every day for almost three years. He had put his trust in Jesus. But after the crucifixion Thomas didn't know what was true.

Put yourself in his position. It would have been difficult to trust your own judgment and hopes after such an unexpected traumatic experience. Everything you thought you knew seemed to have been wrong. Of course, you would have wanted to believe Jesus had been raised from the dead. But if it was true, why would you be the only person without the same experience as the other disciples?

What have you struggled to believe about the Christian faith?

How did you come to a point of belief, even if you still don't understand?

In what ways is it comforting to read that even one of Jesus' disciples struggled with whether he could believe what he was being told about Jesus?

What objections do people have about the validity of Christianity?

Whom do you know who has doubts about the Christian faith?

How can you help share the truth about your Lord and your God, the resurrected Jesus?

The Gospel of John comes full circle in the final words of the book. John clearly restated in unmistakable terms his desire for the church. As a believer, you're a part of this legacy.

Prayer

Thank God that in His grace He has come to you, speaking your name, so that you can believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. Take time to worship Him now as your personal Lord and Savior.

Week Two

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit;
born of the virgin Mary;
Suffered under Pontius Pilate;
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended to hell; the third day
He rose again from the dead;
He ascended to heaven and sits on the
right hand of the Father Almighty,
From whence He shall 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.

Group Study

START

GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

*Welcome everyone to week 2 of The Apostles' Creed.
Use this page to begin the group session.*

Let's begin by taking a few minutes to review last week's study.

What was the most meaningful or challenging part of your personal study or family discipleship from "I believe in"? What did you learn or experience in a specific way this week?

Day 2 of last week's personal study included a checklist of things other than faith with which we may be tempted to measure our Christian identities and relationships with God. Which did you select and why?

Last week we established the importance of belief. From this point on, we'll focus each week on specific doctrines that make up the core of our Christian faith. This week we'll begin our study where the Bible begins: "God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth."

*Read the Apostles' Creed aloud as a group
before watching video session 2.*

WATCH

Use this viewer guide to follow along and take notes as you watch video session 2.

Our God is an infinitely powerful and yet intensely personal Father.

Only the Christian God in the ancient Near East was One who loved His people and sought their good.

It is only a selfish, unloving father that always says yes.

Our daily bread is not that God gives you everything you want. It's that He gives you what you actually need.

The gospel not only reconciles us to the Father but then begins to reconcile us to one another.

1. SYMMETRY

The Bible is vocal and loud about God's delight in you, His pleasure in you, and His desire to commune with you.

2. CLARITY

To be a God of love is to have wrath.

If God loves you, He will expose your secret sin.

3. COMMUNITY

We walk together as the communion of saints brought together by this Father.

4. COUNSEL

If God the Father Almighty is infinitely powerful and intensely personal, that should shape how we counsel ourselves and others.

DISCUSS

Discuss the video segment, using the following questions.

Matt said we all have to wrestle with the question of whether we believe God is good. Why is that question foundational?

When have you struggled to believe God is good? When have you wanted something and didn't understand why God wasn't saying yes?

**How does it affect your view of God to know that He delights in you?
How does it affect your view of yourself?**

How often do you think of God as Almighty Creator? How should this title of God shape our understanding of Him?

**Why do love and wrath necessarily go together in God's character?
Why would a loving God expose secret sin?**

What are the relational implications of being united with other Christians by a powerful yet personal Father?

Which of the two attributes do you tend to think of most when you think about God: powerful or personal? Why do you relate to Him in that way? Why is it vital to relate to God as both/and, not either/or?

READ MATTHEW 6:9-13.

How does each phrase in the Model Prayer reveal God's character as personal yet powerful?

What's your primary observation about the teaching on "God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth"?

What remaining thoughts or questions do you have?

Encourage members to complete the following personal studies before the next group session.

Family Discipleship

ENGAGE

The Apostles' Creed presents a great opportunity for families to consider the truths of the gospel together by utilizing the following framework for family discipleship: time, moments, and milestones.

- **TIME.** Continue to memorize the Apostles' Creed as a family by adding this week's article to what you memorized last week. By the end of the Bible study, you will have memorized the entire creed.
- **MOMENTS.** Look for opportunities to point out what God has created—people and nature. How do you see God's design in creation as a good gift from a good Father?
- **MILESTONES.** Consider the way your family celebrates Father's Day. What can you do that points both to the fatherly nature of God and to God the Father who helps you? Encourage and pray for the sanctification of our earthly fathers.

MEMORIZE

*Use this page to practice writing
the Apostles' Creed from memory.*

Personal Study

DAY 1

Have you ever been in darkness so complete that you literally couldn't see your hand in front of your face? No amount of time can allow your eyes to adjust when you're in total darkness. Now imagine a full moon on a dark night. It allows you to see the world around you in a way that would otherwise be impossible. Now imagine being in that same spot in the middle of a sunny day. You have a clear, more complete picture.

The Apostles' Creed is like the moon. It's not the source of light. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, the creed merely reflects the truth of Scripture. God's Word is the sun—our source of truth. Remember that you aren't studying the creed. It's a summary of what we believe. You're studying the Bible. It's the totality of what we believe. The creed should point you to the truth revealed in God's Word.

The creed starts where the Bible starts: with God.

READ GENESIS 1:1.

The Bible begins with one of the most stunning, reality-shaping phrases possible.

What's the first thing we learn about God from this verse? Why is this an important starting point for the entire Bible?

God created from nothing. He didn't simply fashion preexisting creation into new shapes and forms; He brought creation into being by His word (see Gen. 1; Heb. 11:3). By the incomparable power of His will, God spoke everything into existence. He's Almighty.

READ PSALM 8.

Where do you see God's power and creativity on display in the world today? What's particularly awe-inspiring in God's creation?

How does believing that God created you as uniquely valuable shape your perspective in life and your posture before God?

As the Apostles' Creed states, God the Father Almighty is the "Creator of heaven and earth." Referring to Christ, theologian Abraham Kuyper said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: 'Mine!' "¹ These words beautifully capture the fact that every bit of every created thing rightly belongs to God.

Why is it important to believe the fact that God is all-powerful and has authority over all things?

What in your life do you practically and functionally deny as belonging to God and therefore refuse to recognize is under His authority?

What actions will you take to acknowledge that everything belongs to God?

Prayer

Father, by Your mighty word You've brought all things into existence. I can rightly call You my Maker and Creator. Everything belongs to You, my Father. Continually give me eyes to see Your beauty and ears to hear Your marvelous truth. Thank You that not only are You my Creator, but You're also my Father. Draw me ever closer into fellowship with You, through the work of Your Son and by Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

1. Abraham Kuyper, as quoted in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 461.

DAY 2

Although God is the almighty, transcendent Creator of all things, He isn't a generic deity. The God of the Bible has given Himself to us as Trinity. We believe God has eternally existed as one essence and three distinct Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each Person is fully God, yet at the same time, there's only one God. Specifically, this part of the creed addresses the first Person of the Godhead: God the Father.

The first line of the Apostles' Creed confesses that we believe in God the Father. This line clearly indicates that we don't believe in a God who's far off and distant but in a God who's infinitely powerful yet intensely personal.

List as many characteristics as you can that describe a good father.

READ EPHESIANS 1:3-14.

In what ways does God act like a father to us, His children? List the different descriptions of God in this passage and identify what He has done for His children.

Why is it important to believe that God had a plan for your life since the beginning of time?

How should it affect the way you live today, as you face different decisions, circumstances, and relationships, to know that God has a plan for the future?

Consider the meaning of an inheritance through earthly relationships. How does this concept apply to our relationship with God? What's the inheritance for people whom God has adopted as His children?

Have you wrestled with any obstacles to trusting that the Father's care for you is best? If so, what are they?

How has God the Father shown faithfulness and love to you?

With whom can you share what you've experienced to be true about a relationship with God through faith in Christ?

Prayer

Thank God for His generous, sacrificial love for you, expressed in the giving of His Son, Jesus, and of His Holy Spirit. Confess any areas of your life in which you aren't trusting His will and glorifying His name as your good Father. Ask God for wisdom to recognize opportunities to share the good news of salvation from sin, adoption through faith in Christ, and the hope of eternal life as a coheir in the family of God.

DAY 3

Because every believer enjoys a personal relationship with God, the creed reminds us that we're also in fellowship with the millions of Christians around the world and from every age who believe these affirmations to be true about God.

Our belief in God is more than a theological point of agreement about correct doctrine. A right understanding of God is foundational to the way we live the Christian life. It has practical implications for our relationships with God and one another. Let's review this week's points of symmetry, clarity, community, and counsel that arise from belief in God.

1. SYMMETRY

As our Creator, God knows what's best for us. He made us. A creator of something knows how it works best, right? God created everything. He created the heavens and the earth and everything in them—including you. Everything has a purpose. The design is intentional, intricate, and beautiful. Throughout the story of creation, the common refrain in Genesis 1 is "It was good." The Bible is vocal and loud about God's delight in you, His pleasure in you, and His desire to commune with you. In other words, He loves you.

How does it affect the way you relate to God when you believe that He created you and wants what's best for you?

2. CLARITY

Because a father is wiser than his children, he wants what's best for them, even if they don't understand or like it at the moment. As part of God's family through belief in His only Son (see John 3:16), we have to take seriously the consequences of rebellion.

Sin is rebellion against the good design of our Creator and the loving desire of our Father. We need to realize that sin destroys us and our relationship with God. Because God knows and wants what's best for us, He hates sin. Because He loves us, He pours out wrath on that which destroys us and our relationships with Him and one another.

READ HEBREWS 12:5-11.

How does viewing God as Father affect the way you view sin? The way you view God's discipline?

3. COMMUNITY

READ GALATIANS 3:26-28 AND 1 JOHN 3.

How should belief in God as a good Creator and a loving Father change the way you view and treat other people? Whom have you not been treating as a brother or a sister, created and loved by God?

4. COUNSEL

By the authority of God's word at creation, we've been made His children. What He says to be true is true. A right belief in God also gives each person in the family of God the responsibility to remind one another of the seriousness of sin. If our Father's love includes wrath toward sin, then we should love members of His family enough to address sin and to welcome correction from others when they confront our sin.

Who will speak truth into your life as a brother or a sister through faith in Christ? Whom do you need to remind of the goodness of God or of the seriousness of sin?

Prayer

Take a few minutes to let the profound reality of 1 John 3:1 sink into your heart.

In this one simple statement you can see God as both a powerful Creator and a loving Father. Pray that this truth will reorient your life, giving you a confidence in and conviction of the awesome privilege of being a child of God.

Week Three

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit;
born of the virgin Mary;
Suffered under Pontius Pilate;
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended to hell; the third day
He rose again from the dead;
He ascended to heaven and sits on the
right hand of the Father Almighty,
From whence He shall 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.

Group Study

START

AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD

*Welcome everyone to week 3 of The Apostles' Creed.
Use this page to begin the group session.*

Let's begin by taking a few minutes to review last week's study.

What was the most meaningful or challenging part of your personal study or family discipleship from “God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth”? What did you learn or experience in a specific way this week?

Day 3 of each week calls for interaction with the grid Matt introduced for understanding and applying the core doctrines summarized in the Apostles' Creed. Which of the four areas were most applicable this week and why? (Refer to pp. 32–33 if needed.)

- 1. Symmetry: a balanced, robust understanding of biblical teaching**
- 2. Clarity: a picture of who God truly is, not who we want Him to be**
- 3. Community: an understanding of how to relate to one another as Christians**
- 4. Counsel: an ability to speak biblical truth to ourselves and to others**

In the Apostles' Creed we see the divine relationship within the triune Godhead. This week we move from “God the Father” to the second Person of the Trinity: “Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.”

*Read the Apostles' Creed aloud as a group
before watching video session 3.*

WATCH

Use this viewer guide to follow along and take notes as you watch video session 3.

Jesus is the King of everything.

JESUS IS UNIQUE IN HIS SONSHIP

1. He is coeternal with God the Father
2. He walks in a distinct authority.
3. He is a part of the Godhead.

When Jesus is called Lord, He is called the Savior of the world.

1. SYMMETRY

Many of us feel that Jesus can be our Savior with no submission to Him being King, and this is a foreign concept in the Bible.

2. CLARITY

If Jesus is who He says He is, we cannot be indifferent to that claim.

3. COMMUNITY

God Himself comes and makes peace with the rebellious.

The world is broken, and we've got good news.

4. COUNSEL

You have a King who is the Creator of all things. He designed things to work a specific way for your joy and for the glory of God.

There will come a day where Christ returns to judge the living and the dead.

DISCUSS

Discuss the video segment, using the following questions.

How is Jesus equal to God the Father? How is He distinct as the Son?

READ MATTHEW 16:13-16.

How would you describe the difference between knowing what people say about Jesus and personally knowing Jesus? What positive yet incorrect or incomplete ideas do people have about Jesus today?

Why is it important to recognize and confess Jesus as Christ (Savior), God's only Son, and Lord (King)?

Why is it common in our culture to claim Jesus as Savior without submitting to Him as King? Has this unbiblical mentality been a part of your own testimony? If so, what happened to change your perspective?

What did Matt mean when he said, "If Jesus is who He says He is, we cannot be indifferent to that claim." How does that assertion affect your view of evangelism? Discipleship? Personal obedience? What does indifference look like in your life?

If sin can be understood as rebellion against our King, why is the gospel such good news? How does it unite us as Christians?

How does the belief that your Creator and King designed things to work for your joy affect your view of sin? Of submission to Him?

What's your primary observation about the teaching on "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord"?

What remaining thoughts or questions do you have?

Encourage members to complete the following personal studies before the next group session.

Family Discipleship

ENGAGE

The Apostles' Creed presents a great opportunity for families to consider the truths of the gospel together by utilizing the following framework for family discipleship: time, moments, and milestones.

- **TIME.** Continue to memorize the Apostles' Creed as a family by adding this week's article, "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord," to what you memorized last week. Consider reciting it during a meal or during drive times.
- **MOMENTS.** As you pray together this week, point out occasions when you conclude prayers with "In Jesus' name." Talk about the meaning of this phrase. Why do Christians pray that way? For clues read John 14:12-14.
- **MILESTONES.** *Jesus* means "the Lord saves." *Christ* is a title meaning "Messiah" or "Anointed One." Read Matthew 1:18-21. In what ways is the giving or receiving of a name a milestone? Talk to your family about what their names mean or why you gave your children their particular names. What are you saying about them every time you say their names? Then talk about the significance of Jesus' name and its origin.

MEMORIZE

*Use this page to practice writing
the Apostles' Creed from memory.*

Personal Study

DAY 1

If you attended a function at which Queen Elizabeth was present, she wouldn't be introduced to you as Liz Windsor. She would be presented as "Her Majesty Elizabeth II, by the grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of her other realms and territories queen, head of the commonwealth, defender of the faith." Each part of the queen's title explains her true identity. The same can be said of this week's portion of the Apostles' Creed. It presents God's Son to us in terms that communicate who He is and the authority He commands.

When God made the birth of Jesus known to His earthly father, Joseph, two names were given: *Jesus* and *Immanuel* (see Matt. 1:18-25). The Gospel of Matthew explains that *Immanuel* means "God with us" (v. 23). The account reveals that Jesus is the incarnate God. The name *Jesus*, a common name at the time, means "the Lord saves." When we see the name *Jesus*, we're reminded of our Lord as both the Son of God and the historical man who bore that name. Jesus' earthly name points us to the truth of His full humanity.

READ ROMANS 1:1-4.

What evidence do these verses present for Jesus' humanity and divinity?

True belief in Jesus is at the heart of a relationship with God. The most popular verse in the Bible summarizes the gospel of Jesus, including His identity:

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

JOHN 3:16, NKJV

Many Christians recognize the phrase "only begotten son" from the King James translation of this verse. *Begotten*, to modern ears, sounds like a synonym for *created*. However, the Greek word from which it's translated is *monogeneses*, expressing not that Jesus was created but that He's uniquely God the Son. Jesus is equal in substance and coeternal with the Father. Jesus has always been God, but there was a moment in time when God the Son was "begotten"; He took on flesh and dwelt with us. Even before the incarnation, the second Person of the Trinity was always—and is eternally—the Son of the Father (see Col. 1:15-20).

READ HEBREWS 1.

Last week you studied some key characteristics of God. In what ways did the writer of Hebrews intentionally describe Jesus as being divine?

READ HEBREWS 2:17-18.

Why is it essential to salvation that Jesus is both fully God and fully man?

READ HEBREWS 4:14-16.

What does this passage say we gain in Jesus' humanity?

The writer of Hebrews used the word *propitiation* to describe the purpose of Jesus' life and death as God and man (see 2:17). Our sin deserves the wrath of God, as we studied last week. In His love for us, God poured out wrath on His Son for our sin but provided grace and mercy through Him as well.

The gospel—the good news—is that Jesus took our place, accepting the punishment for our sin and making peace between us and God (see 2 Cor. 5:21). But Jesus does more than pay for our sin. He helps us live each day in the freedom and joy of our salvation. No matter what we're going through, Immanuel is with us.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, increase my awareness of the beautiful truth that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. Thank You that He's both my perfect substitute and my perfect Savior. Help me acknowledge His lordship through greater obedience to Your commands. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord, amen.

DAY 2

While it's difficult, if not impossible, to fully wrap our finite minds around the reality that Jesus is 100 percent God and 100 percent man, the glorious mystery of God's love for us is revealed in Christ. As the second Person of the Trinity, the Son has made a way for us to become children of God.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-20.

List the words and descriptions these verses use to emphasize the unique personhood of Jesus Christ.

READ MATTHEW 16:13-17.

How would you answer if Jesus asked you the same question He asked Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" (v. 15)? Record your response.

Peter recognized that there was more to Jesus than people saw. The word *Christ* means "Anointed One" or "Chosen One." It has the same meaning as the Greek word for *Messiah*, the Savior who was predicted throughout the Old Testament. God opened Peter's eyes to this reality. Peter's affirmation was more than factual. It was personal. It was relational.

Nobody can believe for you. It's not enough to know what other people believe about Jesus. The conversation with Peter points out that a lot of people can believe good things about Jesus but can still be wrong about who He truly is.

Other than the Christ and the Son of God, what opinions, good or bad, have you heard about Jesus?

The Bible includes another conversation between Jesus and His disciples about His identity and a relationship with God. Once again, Jesus used familial language.

READ JOHN 14:1-6.

Notice that Jesus said, “I am *the* way, and *the* truth, and *the* life” and was then unmistakably clear: “*No one* comes to the Father except through me” (v. 6, emphasis added). The Apostles’ Creed is also exclusive and definitive in its wording: *His only* Son.

Jesus may be popular and often well respected, but belief in Jesus as the only way to truly know God and to live eternally in heaven is as divisive now as it was when Jesus spoke these words.

If you believe in Jesus as the only Son of God, the only way to know the truth about God, and the only way to eternal life in heaven, then what other religious or philosophical beliefs can’t be true?

READ JOHN 14:15.

Faith in Jesus is more than agreeing that He’s fully God and fully man. Belief in Jesus is even more than agreeing that He’s the only way to know God and to live with Him forever. Saving faith is belief that leads to action.

Think about the different things going on in your life. What do you need to do to obey Jesus in each area of your life?

Prayer

Spend time declaring the truth about Jesus, praising Him for who He is and what He’s done for you. Thank God for revealing to you the truth about His only Son.

DAY 3

Christian belief is more than an opinion about Jesus. It's surrender to His lordship as Savior and King. He's the promised Messiah, the only One who can save us. Therefore, He's worthy of our lives.

Early Christians who professed Jesus as Lord were doing more than declaring a religious affiliation; they were declaring allegiance to only Jesus' authority. The Roman law required everyone to acknowledge Caesar as Lord. Christians who proclaimed that Jesus was Lord were singled out as disloyal to Rome and the prevailing culture. Their disobedience brought condemnation and persecution. Furthermore, the Jewish culture rejected belief in Jesus as the Christ and the only Son of God. To believe otherwise was to be rejected by the religious community. Professing the lordship of Christ is central to the gospel in every age because in doing so, Christians declare that Jesus is the true King and Lord of all.

The statement "I believe in ... Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord" brings symmetry, clarity, community, and counsel to the Christian life and witness.

1. SYMMETRY

Time for a gut check. Legitimate, life-or-death persecution has been a part of Christianity since Jesus was crucified. Millions of Christians live with the reality of persecution right now. Though it may be easy to say you're committed to your faith in Jesus, consider your life. Are you claiming Jesus as your Savior with no submission to Him as Lord? This is a foreign concept in the Bible. It's a lie of our convenience-based consumer culture to believe we can have the benefits of salvation without paying a cost for following Jesus.

2. CLARITY

If Jesus is who He says He is, you can't be indifferent to that claim. Is He the way, the truth, and the life or not (see John 14:6)? Is He the only Son, fully God and fully man, or not? Is He the Savior and Lord or not? Like the disciples, you must decide what you believe about Jesus. To be clear, deciding what you believe doesn't mean deciding whether it's true. Truth is truth. You're responsible for what you'll do now that you've heard the truth about Jesus.

How well do your actions line up with what you say you believe about Jesus? Mark a point on the scale that represents your answer.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all								Completely	

READ MATTHEW 7:21-23.

These are some of the most sobering words in Scripture. We can't take faith and obedience lightly. They're inseparable parts of the Christian life. For Christ to be Savior, He must also be Lord. There's no middle ground. Jesus said we're either in or we're out. If we merely pay lip service and don't submit to Him as King, then we're not a part of His kingdom.

3. COMMUNITY

When you declare, "Jesus is Lord," you join the voices of every believer from the past two thousand years and around the world today. You join your brothers and sisters in Christ. The Apostles' Creed is specific when it says Jesus Christ is "our Lord," not just "the Lord." A confession of personal faith is a commitment to the community of faith.

4. COUNSEL

Jesus said to believe in Him and that He will return when our eternal home is ready (see John 14:1-6). He's coming back. When He does, He's coming for those in true relationship with Him. We've been given the truth. We must live each day for the sake of Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21.

Prayer

Ask God to give you a desperate burden for reconciliation with Him. In prayer repent of your sin, submitting to Christ as Lord. Also pray that God will equally burden you with a sense of urgency for others to be reconciled with Him through saving faith in Jesus.