



I BELIEVE



Life Group Series Guide



Welcome to the “I Believe” Life Group Series Guide!

We as a church are so glad that you are in a Life Group. We truly believe these groups foster community that is life changing.

As you prepare for your first gathering, we have some suggestions for you:

1. Consider gathering for a meal beforehand or having dessert after the study.
2. Before starting the study, have everyone introduce themselves. Discuss the corresponding week's message you heard on the weekend.
3. Have a greater focus on *community* and *sharing* than “getting the study done.” Of course, we want you to benefit from the compiled material, but we also want you to build relationships and rapport with others.

In Life Groups, we think there's four essential activities:

1. **Sharing:** Each session, your Life Group starts with members sharing what is going on in their lives. (John 2:1-3)
2. **Studying:** Each session, your Life Group will study God's Word. Your examination of God's Word will lead to discussion and to a personal application of God's truth to life. (Acts 17:11)
3. **Supporting:** As your Life Group gathers, and trust is built, your members will care for one another. You will not have to create it. It springs up out of the healthy body of a Life Group. You will support one another through prayer, encouraging words, words of challenge, a listening ear, your presence, and meeting physical needs. (Hebrews 10:24-25)
4. **Serving:** As your Life Group develops adult faith relationships through sharing, studying, and supporting, the Holy Spirit will lead you to serve others. Others will include Christian brothers and sisters, but also neighbors and complete strangers in San Diego and around the world. (Matthew 14:13-18)

We could include a whole slew of other information, but we think that's enough for now. If you have any questions related to Life Groups, please feel free to contact Pastor Travis Ferguson at tferguson@christlamesa.org.

Series Outline

Week 1	I Believe in God...
Week 2	...the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
Week 3	I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...
Week 4	...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried...
Week 5	...He descended to into hell.
Week 6	On the third day He rose again; He ascended into heaven...
Week 7	... He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He will come to judge the living and the dead.
Week 8	I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church...
Week 9	...the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins...
Week 10	...the Resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting...

Week 1

I believe in God...



The Christian identity is marked by the confession of God. The content of the Christian faith begins with the affirmation of who God is, who spoke, and who revealed Himself. Without this affirmation, Christianity is incoherent.¹

PRAYER, SHARING, and DISCUSSION

Begin your time sharing with one another about your week. Share any personal prayer requests, and then pray with one another for those things mentioned. Then, move into discussion about the corresponding message from the weekend before beginning.

If you were asked to describe God to a 5-year-old, what would you say? What would you say to a 70-year-old who has never heard of God?

What is an obstacle you've faced in believing in God?

What church did you grow up in and how did that experience impact your view of God? If you didn't grow up in church what were your thoughts of God?

¹ R. Albert Mohler Jr., *The Apostles' Creed*, (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2019), 5.

READ HEBREWS 11:1-3 & GENESIS 12:1-4

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, faith, and trust?

Think of an experience in your life which challenged you to consider how seriously you believe something about God and/or His word. How did that moment 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, and the lives of the 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 one person in your life who has been an example of "living by faith." How did his/her actions shape your understanding of the Christian life?

What have you struggled to believe about the Christian faith? How did you come to a point of belief, other than through the power of the Holy Spirit, even if you still don't understand everything?



When we profess “I believe in God,” we cannot simply mean “I think a supreme being exists.” We mean something more all-embracing: we mean “I commit myself to God.”² A life committed to God is different than *just* believing... even Satan believes in God.

CLOSING 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.

MEMORY VERSE

NOW FAITH IS THE ASSURANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR,
THE CONVICTION OF THINGS NOT SEEN.

-HEBREWS 11:1-

² James C. Howell, *The Life We Claim: The Apostles’ Creed*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 13.

Week 2

... the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.



If God is the Creator of heaven and earth, and of you and me, then my life is not my own. I depend on God for every breath I take, for having a brain, energy, talent; it all belongs to God.³

PRAYER, SHARING, and DISCUSSION

Begin your time sharing with one another about your week. Share any personal prayer requests, and then pray with one another for those things mentioned. Then, move into discussion about the corresponding message from the weekend before beginning.

How has your relationship with your own father influenced how you view God as Father?

READ GENESIS 1

The Bible begins with one of the most stunning, reality-shaping phrases possible: “In the beginning, God created...” What’s the first thing we learn about God from this verse? Why is this an important starting point for the entire Bible?

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

³ Howell, *The Life We Claim: The Apostles’ Creed*, 28.

not cry: ‘Mine!’” Why is it important to believe the fact that God is all-powerful and has authority over all things? What is an area in your life you practically and functionally deny as belonging to God, and therefore refuse to recognize under His authority?

The Creed brings together this belief in the Creator as “Father.” Have you ever wrestled with any obstacles to trusting that the Father’s care for you is best? If so, what was it? When and how has God the Father shown faithfulness and love to you?

In the Small Catechism it says “A ‘god’ is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart [...] If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true one. Conversely, where your trust is false and wrong, there you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God.⁴ Based on this definition of “god,” what are some of the “gods” people have in life?

If there truly is one God, what are the others “gods” (or idols) that need to be set aside in our life?

⁴ Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 386.

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



When we confess this part of the creed, we are saying that we believe God has created absolutely everything. Furthermore, we believe that He sustains everything, and provides us with all the necessities for life. Confessing God as Creator means that when we look at our life, we aren't just seeing particles jumbled together, we are seeing the image of God.⁵

CLOSING 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.

MEMORY VERSE

SEE WHAT KIND OF LOVE THE FATHER HAS GIVEN TO US, THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD; AND SO WE ARE.

-1 JOHN 3:1-

⁵ Paraphrase of Martin Luther's Small Catechism on the explanation of the first article of the Apostles' Creed.

Week 3

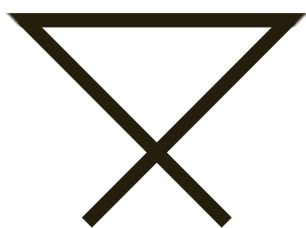
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son,
our Lord, who was conceived by the
Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...



“Christians are defined by one primary mark: we believe and are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever beliefs may separate churches and denominations, a true Christian is someone who has repented of his or her sin and embraced Christ as the only Lord and Savior.”⁶

PRAYER, SHARING, and DISCUSSION

Begin your time sharing with one another about your week. Share any personal prayer requests, and then pray with one another for those things mentioned. Then, move into discussion about the corresponding message from the weekend before beginning.



Three simple objects give us the answer to who Jesus is: a manger, a cross, and a crown. This part of the creed focuses around the manger – the place where Jesus was born. The manger represents the life of Jesus. The manger is the incarnation—the God who takes on flesh—even to the point of being born in an animal feed box (a manger).

The manger means that God is not distant, but near. Where have you felt the “nearness” of Jesus in your life?

⁶ Mohler, *The Apostles' Creed*, 27.

The manger means that He comes to be with you, so that you are not without Him. Explain why it's comforting to know that God comes to us, rather than us having to ascend to Him.

The manger means that God dwells in the midst of messy human drama. Where have you seen Jesus show up in the drama of your life?

READ ROMANS 1:1-4

If Jesus was fully God, but not fully man, then He could never really know what humans are experiencing. If Jesus was fully man, but not God, then His death meant nothing. What evidence do these verses present for Jesus' humanity and divinity?

READ HEBREWS 2:17-18

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

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?

How would you answer if someone asked you “Who is Jesus?” What are some “non-negotiables” in describing Jesus to someone?



“We confess these truths: Jesus Christ is the one Word of God whom we have to trust and obey in life and in death. We reject all other powers and historic figures. We reject the false doctrine that there could be areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords.”⁷

CLOSING 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.

MEMORY VERSE
YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!
-MATTHEW 16:16-

⁷ Howell, *The Life We Claim: The Apostles’ Creed*, 41. This excerpt is taken from the Barmen Declaration, which was written in opposition to German Church leaders who were fawning after Hitler and saluting the Nazis as God’s instruments in the 1930’s.

Week 4

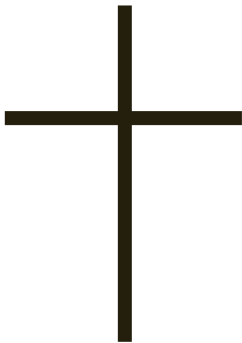
... suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried...



“All the longings of redemptive history, all the groans of the creation subjected to sin, find their rest and hope in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. He paid it all. He secured it all. Nothing else need be done.”⁸

PRAYER, SHARING, and DISCUSSION

Begin your time sharing with one another about your week. Share any personal prayer requests, and then pray with one another for those things mentioned. Then, move into discussion about the corresponding message from the weekend before beginning.



Three simple objects give us the answer to who Jesus is: a manger, a cross, and a crown. This part of the creed focuses around the cross – the torture device on which Jesus lost His life. The cross communicates the pardon of God for us. The cross is God’s forgiveness for sinful people. For years, God had to appoint priests to make sacrifices on behalf of the people. To pay for things done wrong, God ordained a sacrificial system in which the blood of animals took the place of the peoples’ blood. But this was an endless cycle of animal sacrifice for the endless sins of human beings. So God sent his Son to serve not only as priest, but also as the sacrifice.

The cross means substitution - His life for your life; His death in your place and for your sins. How does this influence the way you look at yourself?

⁸ Mohler, *The Apostles’ Creed*, 63.

The cross means justification—you are made right by his sacrificial death. Could you ever make yourself right by your own will? Why or why not?

The cross means cleansing—in Christ, God has wiped away guilt and shame. Do you struggle to believe this? What are the areas of your life that you have a hard time believing that Jesus can cleanse with His blood?

READ JOHN 18:36-38

What did Jesus say He had come into the world to do? Why is it important to believe in Jesus as more than an abstract, philosophical idea, but rather as the Truth of God incarnate?

Pastor Matt Chandler from The Village Church in Dallas/Fort Worth, says “There is no sin imaginable with more power than the cross of Jesus Christ.” If we believe no sin has more power than the cross, why do we struggle with feeling forgiven? Why do we struggle to forgive?

READ JOHN 15:18-21

Believing in Christ doesn't exempt you from suffering. In fact, some suffering may result because of your faith. What hope do you have as a Christian in the midst of suffering?



Who was responsible for Jesus' death? The Jews? The Romans? You and me? Hans Urs von Balthasar noticed the truth: "No one wished to be responsible. That is why they are all guilty. He rolls like a ball between the competitors, thrown from one to another, held by none, undesired by all."⁹ Perhaps, instead of asking "Who was responsible for Jesus' death?" we might ask "who was forgiven in Jesus' death?"

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for paying the price for my sins and for dying the death I deserve. The cross is a reminder of Your love for me. Continue to transform my life and make me more like You. I love You because You first loved me. Amen.

MEMORY VERSE

HE WAS PIERCED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS; HE WAS CRUSHED FOR OUR INIQUITIES.

-ISAIAH 53:5-

⁹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. Aidan Nichols (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 115, 118.

Week 5

... He descended into hell.



Even as Christ truly died and His body was buried, and even as [He] entered into the realm of the dead (hades), Christ was not abandoned nor did His body suffer corruption. And so, even as we confess that Christ descended into hell, we get ready to celebrate that hell could not hold Him.¹⁰

As an opening note, it's important to embrace the brevity of this part of the creed, and the scripture that corresponds with it. We are to believe all that the Bible teaches – and resist the temptation to go further than it does. We manage the tension this part of the Creed brings, knowing it's Scriptural, and not going further to make more sense of it.

PRAYER, SHARING, and DISCUSSION

Begin your time sharing with one another about your week. Share any personal prayer requests, and then pray with one another for those things mentioned. Then, move into discussion about the corresponding message from the weekend before beginning.

READ 1 PETER 3:18-20 and PSALM 16:10

We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus descended into hell (Hebrew: שְׁאוֹל, Sheol; Greek: ᾍδης, Hades). His task in hell is one of triumph, liberating Old Testament saints. He did not go there for further suffering, or to liberate those who did not believe in God (Hebrew: יְהוָה, Yahweh). How does this understanding of Jesus' action connect to what is promised in Psalm 16? Why is it important?¹¹

¹⁰ Mohler, *The Apostles' Creed*, 91.

¹¹ Catholic Church, *He Descended into Hell, on the Third Day He Rose Again*, (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed., Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012).

Hell is not a place most people want to visit. And yet Christ goes there. How is this both comforting and terrifying?

Everyone we interact with in our daily life is experiencing his/her own “hell” – including you. When Christ descended into hell, He proclaimed victory over sin and death. How can that influence the way you interact with those around you?



We do not follow Christ safely behind stone walls. God calls us to follow Jesus into the teeth of evil itself, to find the lost, those who do not believe. And we dare not bore them, or live lives where our faith is only pasted superficially on the outside. Jesus goes to hell, and if we love Him and want to be near Him, we, too, go to hell.¹²

CLOSING PRAYER

O Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, who descended into hell and proclaimed victory over death and sin, we ask You to be with us as we venture into our own hell, and the hell of others. Help us, protect us, and guide us as we seek to show people heaven in all that we say and do. Amen.

MEMORY VERSE
FOR CHRIST SUFFERED, THAT HE MIGHT BRING US TO GOD.
-1 PETER 3:18-

¹² Howell, *The Life We Claim: The Apostles' Creed*, 79.

Week 6

On the third day He rose again;
He ascended into heaven...



The message of the Resurrection brought by the disciples on their return to Jerusalem could hardly have lasted a single hour in the city if it had been possible to show that Jesus' body was lying in the grave.¹³

PRAYER, SHARING, and DISCUSSION

Begin your time sharing with one another about your week. Share any personal prayer requests, and then pray with one another for those things mentioned. Then, move into discussion about the corresponding message from the weekend before beginning.

How would you explain the resurrection to a non-Christian?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-23

What did St. Paul say about the relationship between the Resurrection of Jesus and the Resurrection of all people? Can you believe one but not the other? Why or why not?

¹³ Jürgen Moltman, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 222.

How does the reality of heaven, hell, and the Resurrection affect your thoughts and feelings about death? How does it affect your sense of urgency in sharing the Gospel?

How does it affect your sense of urgency in sharing the Gospel?

Who are the people you know who don't believe in the Resurrection? Take a moment to write down the names that everyone in your group mentions and pray for them for the remainder of this series.

The Resurrection of Jesus is not only miraculous, but also evidence that only He has authority over life and death. Because Christ isn't dead, we can be confident that all our sins can be met with forgiveness. How does this truth strengthen your faith and make Christianity unique?



For although we feel that sin is still in us, it is only permitted that our faith may be developed and strengthened, that in spite of all our feelings we accept the Word, and that we unite our hearts and consciences more and more to Christ.

Thus, faith leads us quietly, contrary to all feeling and comprehension of reason, through sin, through death and through hell. Then we shall see salvation before our eyes, and then we shall know perfectly what we have believed, namely, that death and all sorrow have been conquered.¹⁴

CLOSING PRAYER

Take time to pray for all the people in your life and community who don't believe. Ask God to help you be the vessel through which He reveals His grace and salvation.

MEMORY VERSE

**FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH. AND
THIS IS NOT YOUR OWN DOING; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.**

-EPHESIANS 2:8-

¹⁴ Martin Luther, *The Sermons of Martin Luther: On Christ and His Resurrection*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000).

Week 7

... He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He will come to judge the living and the dead.



[Jesus] grounded our future hope in heaven with His Ascension to the right hand of the Father. His present reign serves as a reminder for all believers that their citizenships rests in heaven.¹⁵

PRAYER, SHARING, and DISCUSSION

Begin your time sharing with one another about your week. Share any personal prayer requests, and then pray with one another for those things mentioned. Then, move into discussion about the corresponding message from the weekend before beginning.



Three simple objects give us the answer to who Jesus is: a manger, a cross, and a crown. This part of the creed focuses around the crown – something worn by a ruler or leader. The crown communicates the power of God over us. The crown is the resurrection power of God. We believe that after three days in the grave, Jesus of Nazareth walked away from the tomb. “Resurrection” literally means “to stand again.” It is the ultimate act of God’s recreating power.

The crown means that Jesus stands as the supreme, ultimate king of the entire universe. If Jesus is king, how does that influence how you are living in the day to day?

¹⁵ Mohler, *The Apostles’ Creed*, 110.

The crown means that history is steadily advancing toward a powerful Last Day of resurrection. It means everything will be fully set right under the merciful rule of the crucified and risen One. What are you most looking forward to as the Last Day comes?

READ ACTS 1:1-11

What did the Ascension, another historical fact, reveal to Jesus' disciples? Before ascending, Jesus promised that He would not abandon us. In what way is the Ascension a turning point in the life of the church? Why did Jesus say His Ascension benefits His followers?

Why did Jesus say His Ascension benefits His followers?

Although Jesus ascended to heaven, it's wrong to say that He's not active in the world today. Throughout the book of Acts, Jesus was still working in the world through the Holy Spirit. The same is true today. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is at work to empower Christians to be His witnesses. We've received the Spirit in order to know God and to make Him known with boldness. Like the disciples who were looking to heaven after Jesus' Ascension, what do you need to do right now to obey Jesus and to be His witness?

READ ACTS 9:1-9

When did the reality of who Jesus is transform your life? Though your story may be different and not as dramatic as Saul's, it's no less miraculous. Describe that experience.

How has Christ changed your life? List out all the ways the person and work of Jesus has influenced you.



Christ has no body now on earth but yours... Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out on a hurting world; yours are the feet with which He goes about doing good; yours are the hands with which He is to bless now.¹⁶

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank God that Jesus is alive and in control, seated at His right hand with all authority. Pray for boldness to testify of His worthiness in your life.

MEMORY VERSE

FOR ALL WHO ARE LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD ARE SONS (AND DAUGHTERS) OF GOD.

-ROMANS 8:14-

¹⁶ Saint Teresa of Avila, quoted by James C. Howell, *Yours Are the Hands of Christ: The Practice of Faith*, (Nashville: Upper Room, 1999).

Week 8

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church...



I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith...¹⁷

PRAYER, SHARING, and DISCUSSION

Begin your time sharing with one another about your week. Share any personal prayer requests, and then pray with one another for those things mentioned. Then, move into discussion about the corresponding message from the weekend before beginning.

What has been your experience or thoughts about the Holy Spirit before now? Did He play much of a part in whatever spiritual upbringing you have had?

READ ACTS 8:26-39, ROMANS 8:1-11, and JOHN 16:5-15

How do you see the Holy Spirit working in these passages? How do you see sanctification (the process of being made holy) happening?

¹⁷ Kolb et al, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 355–356.

READ GALATIANS 5:16-24

According to St. Paul, all virtue is born of the Holy Spirit, and all vice is born of the flesh. How do you seek the Holy Spirit's power in resisting fleshly vice? What specific Fruit of the Spirit have you noticed most evidently in your life since you've been growing in faith?

Look again through the Fruit of the Spirit. How can these be employed in your everyday life: at home, in the workplace, in traffic, etc.?

READ PROVERBS 11:14

Describe a time when you were blessed by the counsel of other Christians? In what ways has God convicted, encouraged, or taught you through conversations and relationships with other people, including in this group?

Why do you think it's important to remember that the Creed says "one holy *catholic* church," instead of "only holy *Lutheran* church" or "one holy *Baptist* church"? Though denominations have several differences, we all still hold to the Trinity, and the truth that our only hope is in Jesus Christ. Where have we failed to remember this?



For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian church that there the Gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the Sacraments are administered in conformity with the Divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that uniform ceremonies, instituted by human beings, be observed everywhere. As Paul says in Ephesians 4: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.”¹⁸

CLOSING PRAYER

Take time to pray for the Holy Spirit’s work in your lives. Pray that the Holy Spirit would enter into every church and cause all divisions to cease.

MEMORY VERSE

ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND THE GATES OF
HELL WILL NOT OVERCOME IT.

-MATTHEW 16:18-

¹⁸ Kolb et al, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 42.

Week 9

... the communion of saints, the
forgiveness of sins...



The Creed derides any notion of individualism or a “go-it-alone” Christianity. The Creed calls all Christians to recognize their new identity as eternal members of the eternal family of the eternal God.¹⁹ And that family is made up of people we see here on earth, and those who have gone before us.

PRAYER, SHARING, and DISCUSSION

Begin your time sharing with one another about your week. Share any personal prayer requests, and then pray with one another for those things mentioned. Then, move into discussion about the corresponding message from the weekend before beginning.

What immediately comes to mind when you hear “the communion of saints”?

Who are the “saints” in your life who have helped you come to a deeper knowledge and love of Christ?

¹⁹ Mohler, *The Apostles’ Creed*, 162.

READ EPHESIANS 4:4-7

Ephesians focuses our attention on what we have in common: one Church and one God. What specific things do Christians, across the board, share in common that unite us?

While it may seem popular or culturally acceptable today to believe you can be a Christian without being committed to a local church, that idea is absolutely foreign to biblical Christianity. St. Cyprian said “You cannot have God as Father if you don’t have the Church as mother.”²⁰ What can we do as the catholic church to bring more people into the reality of this truth?

What do you think affects people’s commitment to the local church? What affect’s their attendance?

READ HEBREWS 10:24-25

According to these verses, what’s one major purpose of meeting regularly? How have you benefited from this practice?

²⁰*Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Cox, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1886).

“The forgiveness of sins” is one thing that happens within the catholic church, and within the communion of saints. Though we hear the declaration of forgiveness in the words of absolution through the pastor, by the authority of God, how does that forgiveness extend to your personal relationships?



The communion of saints displays confidence in the bond of unity existing among all those who live in Christ, including even those whose lives on earth are ended.²¹

CLOSING PRAYER

Take time to thank God for the communion of saints that has helped shaped you. Pray for those people in your life who don't have the community around them.

MEMORY VERSE

**SO THEN YOU ARE NO LONGER STRANGERS AND ALIENS, BUT
YOU ARE FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS AND MEMBERS
OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD.**

-EPHESIANS 2:19-

²¹ Daniel G. Reid et al., *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

Week 10

... the Resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting...



The Cross had asked the questions; the Resurrection had answered them...The Cross had asked: "Why does God permit evil and sin to nail Justice to a tree?" The Resurrection answered: "That sin, having done its worst, might exhaust itself and this be overcome by Love that is stronger than either sin or death."²²

PRAYER, SHARING, and DISCUSSION

Begin your time sharing with one another about your week. Share any personal prayer requests, and then pray with one another for those things mentioned. Then, move into discussion about the corresponding message from the weekend before beginning.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:54-57

How do Resurrection and eternal life reorient our hope and our perspective on the sting of death and life's disappointments? Why is it significant that God resurrects our bodies and restores creation rather than making something entirely different?

Why is it significant that God resurrects our bodies and restores creation rather than making something entirely different?

²² Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, *Lent and Easter Wisdom*, (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2004).

The Creed, like the Bible, begins with God as Creator, and concludes with eternal life in a resurrected state. How do these two points relate to each other? Why are these important starting and ending points for what we believe?

Because of the Resurrection, we are energized and catapulted out into the world on a mission. Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking on behalf of Memphis garbage workers the night before he was assassinated, declared: "It's all right to talk about long white robes over yonder. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here! It's all right to talk about streets flowing with milk and honey, but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and His children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's all right to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preacher must talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee. This is what we have to do."²³ Sometimes we get caught up in life everlasting and forget the mission that God has before us right here and now. What does your community need you to do right now?

What does your country need you to do right now?

²³ Martin Luther King, Jr., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1986), 282.

What does your church need you to do right now?



For creation is now behind us, and redemption has also taken place, but the Holy Spirit continues His work without ceasing until the Last Day, and for this purpose He has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all His work [...] Therefore, we believe in Him who daily brings us into this community through the Word, and imparts, increases, and strengthens faith through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins. Then when His work has been finished and we abide in it, having died to the world and all misfortune, He will finally make us perfectly and eternally holy. Now we wait in faith for this to be accomplished through the Word.²⁴

CLOSING PRAYER

Take time to pray for the work that is still left to do in this world before Jesus brings you to Himself.

MEMORY VERSE

THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN, AND THE POWER OF SIN IS LAW.
BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO GIVES US VICTORY THROUGH
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

-1 CORINTHIANS 15:56-57-

²⁴ Kolb et. al., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 439.