

St. Paul 2017 Faith Focus: The Small Catechism
Week 2: Apostle's Creed
Host guide

Getting to know each other

You can introduce yourself; then have each person in the group share:

- What is your favorite song that has the word "believe" or "faith" in it?

Warm-up activity

This is a free for all:

- What are the most basic things Christians believe?

Teaching: Audio

These audio segments will be available online and in a CD format.

Segment 1 of audio content (4 minutes): Origins of the Apostle Creed

- The Apostle's Creed is not found directly in the Bible.
- The creation of the Apostles' Creed was driven by the need for clear teaching!

Some discussion questions:

- Was anything Pastor Rob said new for you? What surprised you?
- Do you think a person could still be considered a Christian if they did not believe every article of the creed? What if they did not believe any of the Creed?
- If you could add or take away one line of the Creed, what would it be. Why?
- Some churches do not use the Creed. Do you think you would miss it if it were not in our worship services?
- Does it make the Creed seem more or less important that it was not the creation of the original 12 apostles but the creation of the numerous believers over a few hundred years?

Segment 2 of audio content (3 minutes): Luther's insights into the Apostle's Creed

- Luther emphasizes God as "person", not "idea."
- Luther most clearly emphasizes that God is gracious. Each explanation includes what God has done "for me."

Some discussion questions:

- Do you think of God as a God whom you can speak to? With whom you have a relationship?
- Why do you think Lutherans sometimes shy away from the term "personal relationship" with God, even though it is clearly an idea comfortable with Luther? [Answer – we need to be reformed and learn from Luther; but we also want to emphasize a communal relationship as well.]

- Do you believe that God is gracious? Do you think that most people outside of our congregation think of God as gracious?

Application: 1st Article

1st Article: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth

What does this mean?

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my limbs, my reason, and all my senses, and still preserves them; in addition, clothing and shoes, food and drink, house, family, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He provides me richly and daily with all that I need to support this body and life, protects me from all danger, and guards me and preserves me from all evil; and all this out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I owe it to Him to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

Some discussion questions:

- Do you believe God made you?
- Luther talks about all the ways in which God continues to create for us: food and drink, etc. Go through the exercise of trying to determine all the things that needed to happen for the breakfast you ate this morning to be on your table.
- Luther reminds us that humans are not the only elements of God's creation – God has made all creatures; fields...and cattle are listed as chief goods ☺ What other parts of creation fill you with affirmation of God's creative powers?
- Luther concludes that we are to thank, praise, serve and obey God? For what are you thankful today? How can we foster thankfulness in our lives and in our homes?

Prayer: Audio

Segment 3 of audio content (1-2 minutes)

Luther emphasizes praying through the parts of the catechism. In a book to his barber, he emphasizes four moods of praying through each of the articles of the creed. For example, with the 1st article of the Creed:

- + Meditate -- Ask God what does this mean for my life; meditate on its meaning
- + Thank -- Thank God for the way in which God has blessed you through creation
- + Confess – Confess to God the ways in which you have neglected to give thanks, ignored the beauty of creation, or taken for granted God's providence
- + Pray for binding – Ask God that your life would fill your heart with gratitude and praise.

I would suggest the class close with roughly a minute to give each person time to prayer through the 1st article of the Creed. I would end by inviting everyone to conclude with the Lord's Prayer.