

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

The Apostles' Creed – Week 2

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Your beliefs determine your behavior. If you believe that it's going to rain today, then you are not going to wash your car. If you believe that there is poison in your coffee, then you aren't going to drink it. If you believe that there's a police officer watching you, then you aren't going to run the stop sign. Your beliefs determine your behavior.
2. And your beliefs about God impact you more than anything else.
3. A **famous theologian** said, "What comes into our minds when we think of God is the most important thing about us (A.W. Tozer)."
4. That's why we're in a sermon series on the basic, essential doctrines of Christianity.
5. As a guide we are using an ancient piece of Christian literature called The Apostles' Creed. A creed is simply a summary of Christian doctrine. The Apostle's Creed is the oldest Christian creed. Since the second century, Christians of all denominations have been using the Apostles' Creed to teach sound doctrine.
6. The Apostles' Creed is not the Bible. It was not written by the apostles. But it does accurately reflect the teaching of the apostles, and that makes it a helpful tool.
7. Today, we are going to study the first line of the creed, "I believe in God, the Father."
8. Let's begin by reading it together. (This version of the Apostles' Creed comes from the website of the Episcopal Church.)
 - i. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth; I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He

ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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.

II. TWO THINGS THAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

1. Christians believe that God exists.

- i. Christians believe in God.
- ii. That means we reject atheism and agnosticism.
- iii. **Psalm 14:1** The fool says in his heart, “There’s no God.” They are corrupt; they do vile deeds. There is no one who does good.
- iv. The Bible says only a fool doesn’t believe in God. The word “fool” doesn’t mean someone who is intellectually deficient, but morally rebellious. It is not someone who doesn’t believe because of insufficient evidence, but the person who refuses to believe in God despite the evidence. It is the person who doesn’t want there to be a God because he doesn’t want to submit to God’s authority.
- v. It is actually illogical to be an atheist. In logic atheism is known as a universal negative. It is saying that nowhere in the entire universe does God exist. But before you can say that, you have to have complete and perfect knowledge of the universe. You have to be all-knowing. And nobody is all-knowing.
- vi. Some people realize that atheism is illogical, so they claim to be agnostic, which means they don’t know if God exists. The word agnostic comes from the Greek word agnostos, which literally means ignorant. In Latin it is the word ignoramus. Agnostos and ignoramus mean the same thing. And that’s a good description of most agnostics – ignorant. They are ignorant of all the evidence for God. I have never met an agnostic who has read a book about the evidence for God. In other words, they are willfully ignorant.

vii. You cannot disprove or prove God's existence. So why do Christians believe in God?

viii. Five Arguments For The Existence of God

1. The Cosmological Argument.

a. Something cannot come from nothing.

b. It can be explained with a simple syllogism:

i. Everything that begins to exist has a cause.

This is the law of causality, or the law of cause and effect. Something can't come from nothing or create itself.

ii. The universe began to exist.

iii. The universe has a cause.

c. What kind of "cause" could create the universe?

Something spaceless, timeless, immaterial, all-knowing, and all-powerful – God.

d. Napoleon and his army were sailing across the waters of the Mediterranean to Egypt. On the voyage, his generals were gathered one night on the ship's deck and were arguing about God. A number of atheists, one after another, were setting forth their views and their arguments about why they believed that God did not exist. Napoleon had a great mind a no doubt had pondered these ideas himself, but he listened to their arguments patiently. Finally, when they concluded, they looked to him to see his reaction. He simply looked up at the night sky with the millions of stars coruscating in the black heavens above. Waving his hand, he said, "But, monsieur, who made all that?" (Kennedy, *Knowing the Whole Truth*.)

2. The Teleological Argument.

a. Design is proof of a designer.

b. When you look at nature, you see evidence of design.

- c. For example, scientists have found that the universe has been designed just right for life to exist. Design is proof of a designer.
- d. When you see a car, you see evidence of design. No one thinks that a car was created by chance over millions of years. Obviously someone designed it. The human body is infinitely more complex than a car. It couldn't have been created by chance over millions of years. Someone obviously designed it, someone infinitely smart and powerful – God.

3. The Moral Argument.

- a. The moral law in our hearts proves the existence of a moral law giver.
- b. All human beings have a basic sense of morality, of right and wrong. People have always believed that murder, adultery, and stealing are wrong. All agree that love is better than hate, courage is better than cowardice. Where did that moral sense come from? Someone had to put it there – God.

4. The Life Argument.

- a. Life cannot come from non-life.
- b. How did life begin? For many years scientists believed in spontaneous generation, or abiogenesis – that life could emerge spontaneously from non-living matter. But over time scientists disproved spontaneous generation and came to develop a scientific law called biogenesis, which states that life can only come from life and not non-life.
- c. If life can only come from non-life, and since we know that the universe is not eternal, then who created the first life? It would have to be a living being who is eternal – God.

5. The Christ Argument.

- a. Jesus Christ said that God exists, and He is trustworthy.
- b. Jesus Christ claimed to be God and then proved it by predicting His resurrection and then doing it. The moment Jesus rose from the grave He proved that you can trust anything He says. If He says that God exists, then that's good enough for me.

2. Christians believe that God is Father.

- i. Which God do Christians believe in?
- ii. The Apostles' Creed doesn't just state that we theists rather than atheists. It clarifies which God we believe in. "I believe in God, the Father...."
- iii. The Fatherhood of God points to several realities:
 - 1. It points to the triune nature of God.
 - a. When the Creed talks about God the Father, it is distinguishing God the Father from God the Son and God the Spirit.
 - b. In other words, Christianity isn't the same as Islam and Judaism. They too believe in God. But Christians believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit.
 - c. This is called the doctrine of the Trinity. The word Trinity is not found in the Bible. It was first used by a theologian named Tertullian in the second century to describe what the Bible teaches about God.
 - d. The Bible says that there is one God (1 Tim 2:5), but the Bible teaches that God exists in three distinct persons who are coequal and coeternal. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God.

- e. What do I mean by distinct? The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father.
 - f. What do I mean by coeternal? All three persons have existed for all eternity. God has always been triune.
 - g. What do I mean that they are coequal? The Father is not stronger than the Son or the Spirit. They are equally divine.
 - h. So, Christians reject unitarianism – that God is one and not three.
 - i. Christians reject tritheism – that there are three gods and not one.
 - j. Christians reject modalism – that God is one person who has manifested Himself in different ways – or modes in history. For example, United Pentecostals believe that God is only one person – Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has manifested Himself in different ways in history. In the OT He manifested Himself as the Father; in the gospels He manifested Himself as the Son; and in the church age He manifests Himself as the Spirit. Orthodox Christianity rejects modalism. There is one God who exists eternally in three distinct persons.
 - k. You see the Trinity in verses like the Great Commission.
 - l. **Matthew 28:19** Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
2. It points to Father's relationship with the Son.
- a. **1 Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- b. The Fatherhood of God points to His unique relationship with the Son of God.
 - c. The Bible calls Jesus God's only begotten Son (Jn 3:16). The Greek word means that He is God's unique, one of a kind Son.
- 3. It points to God's relationship with all believers.
 - a. When you believe in Jesus and get saved, God adopts you into His family and you become a child of God.
 - b. **John 1:12** But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name
 - c. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century liberal Christians taught the idea of the universal fatherhood of God, and the universal brotherhood of man. The Bible doesn't teach that. It teaches the particular fatherhood of God – God is only the Father of believers; and the universal neighborhood of man – Christians are our brothers, everyone else is our neighbor.
- 4. It points to the personal nature of God.
 - a. The Fatherhood of God also speaks to the personal nature of God. In other words, God is not an impersonal force or energy, like "the Force" or "the Dark Side" in "Star Wars." God is personal.
 - b. The personal nature of God refers to three things:
 - i. He is self-conscious – He knows He exists.
 - ii. He is self-determining – He thinks and acts.
 - iii. He is relational. You can have a relationship with Him. This is evident throughout Scripture as God has a personal relationship with different people like Abraham, Moses, and David.

5. It points to God's love for you.
 - a. The Fatherhood of God means that God loves you. Just as a human father loves his child, God loves you. He is very fond of you. You are very precious, important, and valuable to Him.
 - b. How much does God love you? How do I know that God loves you? He sent His only Son to die for your sins (Rm 5:8).
 - c. What does it mean that God loves you? It means He only wants what is best for you. The gods of the Greek pantheon – Zeus, Poseidon, Athena, etc. – they were terrible. They wanted you to possess as little possible. They resented every upward step that might take in life. The gods were against you, and their goal was to keep you in your place and prevent you from prospering. The God of the Bible is not like that. He genuinely wants what is best for you (Jer 29:11). He will only tell you to do something, or allow something to happen to you, if it's for your good. He wants your joy, your peace, your flourishing.
6. It points to God's commitment to caring for you.
 - a. Christians reject deism. Deism is the belief that God created the world and then left it to itself. He is not involved at all with His creation. That's not Christianity. The God of the Bible is not an absent Father. He is highly involved in your life, and He is committed to taking care of you. He knows the number of hairs on your head (Lk 12:7). He is watching you all the time, and knows everything that happens to you (Mt 10:29).

- b. The two most popular religions in the time of Jesus were Stoicism and Epicureanism. Stoicism said that God was completely indifferent toward human beings – no passion or feeling or emotion. Epicureanism said that God was completely detached and uninvolved. That’s not the God of the Bible. God loves you and is highly involved in your life.
 - c. If you are His child, God promises to provide for you (Mt 6:33; Phil 4:19), to protect you (Ps 32:7) – only allowing what is good for you, to discipline you for your growth (Heb 12:5-6), to work all things together for your good (Rm 8:28), and to bring you to a heavenly home when die (Jn 14:1-3).
- 7. It points to God’s desire for a relationship with you.
 - a. Just as a father wants a relationship with his child, God wants a relationship with you. He wants you to talk to Him often and always, about everything. When life is good, sing praises to Him. When life is bad, cry out to Him. When you need something, ask Him.
 - b. God has done two things that indicate His strong desire for a relationship with you.
 - i. First, prayer. He has decided that the only way you can receive His blessings is through prayer. If you need or want something from God, He’s not just going to give it to you. You have to ask Him. “You have not because you ask not (James 4:2).” Why? That forces you to talk to Him. To stay close to Him. That’s like a father who tells his daughter in college, every month I’ll give you a check for \$500, but I’m not going to mail it to you. You have to come home and

get it. Why? He wants a relationship with his child.

- ii. Second, the cross. The whole purpose of the cross was reconciliation. “In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them (2 Cor 5:19).” Christ didn’t merely die to save us from hell; He died to restore us to a right relationship with God.

- iv. Do you know why we believe that God is our Father, and why we call Him our heavenly Father? Because of Jesus. Before Jesus the Jews did not think of God as their Father. He was the Father of their nation, but they did not think of God as their father in an individualized way. Then Jesus came along and constantly called God “your Father (Mt 6:4).” And He said that when you pray, address God as “our Father in heaven (Mt 6:9).” In fact, Jesus called Abba, which is an Aramaic term that means Daddy (Mk 14:36). And the Bible says that you can call God your Abba too (Rm 8:15).
- v. Think about that. You may have grown up without a father. Your earthly father may have failed you or hurt you. But let me tell you about your real daddy. The God who created the entire universe, who holds the whole world in His hand – that’s your daddy.

III. CONCLUSION

1. What have we learned today? Christians believe that there is a God, He is Your Father, He loves you very much, and He wants a relationship with You.
2. But there’s more to the story. The Bible says that you are a sinner. You sinned against God, and so your relationship with God is broken. And your sins are so serious that you deserve to go to hell. And you can’t do anything to make things right.

3. But the good news is that God made a way for you to be reconciled to Him and receive eternal life. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for your sins. If you will believe in Him, you can be forgiven, and reconciled to your heavenly Father, and receive eternal life.
4. How do you believe in Jesus? It's simple. Admit your need for Christ. Believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true. And call on Jesus to be your Lord and Savior.