

WHY DO WE HAVE CREEDS?

by Burk Parsons

TO THE READER: A good learning technique is to answer the following questions BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, you can refine your answers based on your reading. Then, when your group gathers, each can discuss his or her view and you can either affirm or modify what you wrote.

1. When you use the phrase “I believe,” what do you mean, and what is your belief based on? (5-7)
2. Who, or what, grants us our “rights?” Your answer to this will determine your creed, that is, what you believe. (7-8)
3. What does the word “religion” mean? (9-12)
4. Do we have to live according to what we believe? (12-15)
5. Do you see anything wrong the phrase: “I have no creed but Christ.” (15-18)
6. If we write down what we believe the Bible teaches (a creed), why can't we consider that as authoritative as the Bible? (19-20)

7. If Creeds do not teach us anything new, and if creeds exist simply to affirm what Scripture teaches, how are creeds useful? (20-25)

8. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-7; Philippians 2:6-11; 1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:3-8. What might these “trustworthy” or “faithful” sayings be considered? (25-29)

9. What might be some useful ways to use creeds? (29-32)

10. How should we view a Bible-believing church which holds a different creed than ours? (32-35)

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

For the Group

For each week you study together, try to bring in the part of your church’s creed which seeks to clarify the area you are studying.

For the Members of the Group

Get a copy of your church’s creed. Read it slowly, trying to digest its deep truths. Look up every Scripture reference given to back up the statement. Write down any questions you have and share them with the group.

For Further Study

Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes, G.I. Williamson. P&R, 2003.

Assured by God: Living in the Fullness of God’s Grace, Burk Parsons. P&R, 2007.

Connected: Living in the Light of the Trinity, Sam Allberry. P&R, 2013.

Training Hearts, Teaching Minds: Family Devotions Based on the Shorter Catechism, Starr Meade. P&R, 2000.

Find this and more at www.pcabookstore.com.

The Nicene Creed

(originally written in A.D. 325 at the Council of Nicea updated in A.D. 381 at the Council of Constantinople)

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God the Father, the Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen.

"We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son). With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

"We believe in one, holy, catholic* and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."

* The word "catholic" with a lower case 'c' does not mean the Roman Catholic Church. It is a Latin word that means "universal."