



Devotions for Families:

The Lord's Prayer

The Apostles' Creed

The Doxology

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Use this devotional guide to teach your children, teens, and adults in Sunday School classes, Small group settings, Prayer groups, and worship service

INTRODUCTION - Devotions for Church and Home

Without delving in to deep theology, it is valuable for parents and Christian Educators to be able to talk about the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. Not just as rote memorization exercises or steps for rewards. But living documents that help shape our World-view and can be used for personal encouragement, for words of affirmation of faith in Worship, and in evangelism as these words should be used to defend our faith and express our core beliefs, In this document we break down each of these into short phrases and try to unpack them each as a way of starting discussion and giving opportunities for children to ask questions and learn their importance as well as hear from the Lord through them.

In the pages below, we are going to take a few words of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed and unpack them. We are going to think about the words and wonder what they mean and what God might want us to know through the words and reflecting on what they mean. Finally, we will reflect on the Doxology. I hope these encourage you to talk with your children about the Lord. ~ *Mickie*

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED ABOUT THE LORD'S PRAYER?

Prayer is such a gift. It never ceases to amaze me that the Creator God of ALL the Universe actually invites us to talk with Him. And that's what praying is - a conversation with God. Conversation includes times of listening, not just talking. So how do we listen to God? There are a few ways to do that. *Lectio Divina* is an ancient practice of listening to God by taking a small passage of Scripture, reading It out loud and then being quiet to think about one word or phrase that seems to stand out. Read the passage again. Ask God to reveal something to you about that word or phrase. Being quiet is a challenge in our hurried world, but it is important. "Be still and know that I am God."

Will you be still today? Will you read a passage of Scripture (a Psalm perhaps) and then listen? God wants to talk to you.

DAY ONE: "Our Father, who art in heaven..."

When we pray, we are actually talking to God, the Creator of the Universe! When we pray we first realize that God, the Father is "our" Father and he IS in heaven.

When you pray today, picture God, in heaven, listening to you. Revelation 5:8 says: "And when he had taken [the scroll], the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people." Picture your prayers in those bowls. See them in the smoke of incense rising to God the Father and believe that He is loving the sweet fragrance of what you are talking to Him about.

Your prayers are important.



DAY TWO: "...Hallowed be thy name" When I was a child, we lived in Los Angeles, CA. Every week at our church we would recite the Lord's Prayer. In childlike innocence I would clearly pray loudly *"Hollywood be thy name..."* ☺

The word "hallowed" didn't have any meaning to me and since I wasn't reading the prayer, just reciting what I was hearing, "Hollywood" sounded right to me.

Of course, as I grew older I learned what hallowed meant, but this story always reminds me to be thoughtful when I pray, reminding myself that when I talk with God, I am speaking to the most HOLY and I have the privilege of speaking out His HOLY NAME. I am speaking to the most HOLY and perfect God. I stand in awe that this Hallowed God actually wants to talk with me. Are you aware of that? How many of us simply recite without thinking of the actual words? Today, as you pray for your family, think about God's HALLOWED name. Remind yourself that THE Holy God is listening. Bring God all your concerns. Let's be impressed by God's hallowed name and leave Hollywood behind.

DAY THREE: "Thy Kingdom come. . ." Whose Kingdom? Is it mine or God's? That's such a ridiculous question because of course, as Christians, our focus in life is not to be to build kingdoms for ourselves, but to do what needs to be done to build GOD'S KINGDOM.

When we pray this, we are actually telling God that we will put our personal desires aside and do what we can to help bring GOD'S Kingdom into reality. As you pray today for BHCC, are you really thinking about what you and your family can do to make GOD'S KINGDOM arrive on earth? How do we do that? What should it look like?

Here's a hint. . .God's Kingdom is about God's purposes for the world, not our own purposes for ourselves. Think about this. Ask God to help you understand what God's purposes might be so that you and your family can actually help the Kingdom come to your town. You might be surprised that what God wants to do in HIS KINGDOM has nothing to do with what we are doing or have done in the past. Be open to understanding what God's Kingdom is really all about. It's going to be very exciting.

DAY FOUR "...Thy will be done. . ." This phrase of the model prayer Jesus taught his disciples, is really convicting isn't it? It goes with the previous phrase "Thy Kingdom come". When we pray today, let's focus on asking God to help us to be willing for HIS WILL to happen, not for our own. We might not even be able to understand God's Will, but we do have to pray that His will happens and that we won't fight it.

In this model of prayer, these first few words declare that we, as believers, set ourselves aside in order to participate in what GOD is doing. We don't pray to manipulate God to our will, our needs, our wants, or our desires. No. We proclaim that we want GOD'S WILL to happen. Pray this over and over today and trust God for the results.

DAY FIVE "...on earth as it is in Heaven." Okay, now this is where the last two sets of words find their full import. We have just prayed for God's will be done, not ours. We had previously said that we want to bring God's Kingdom into reality. But what is that to look like on earth?

In praying this we are saying we want God's Will, which is obvious in Heaven, to also happen here on earth. What do you think God's Will looks like in Heaven? Do you think there are a lot of committees? Do you think God sits back and let's others control what goes on? Do you think God acts like a selfish politician?

Of course, all of these speculations are ridiculous. In Heaven, there is UNITY. The Father, Son, and Spirit work together in the most perfect unity and all in heaven trust and obey what God is doing. So, when we pray that we want God's will to happen on earth the same way it happens in Heaven, it means we are always going to yield to God and not push our own agenda. How do we do that here on earth? We trust God's Word. We behave in ways that promote God's purposes not our own. We follow what Scripture says about how we should live as Christians. A friend of mine once said that a healthy church consists of People who Pray, have Unity, and are Expectant. I think the same applies to a healthy Christian family. As you Pray today for your family - tell God you will do what's necessary for Unity to exist so that God's Will can be done on Earth, right here at your house, like it is in Heaven and then be Expectant . . .What do you think might happen???

DAY SIX "Give us this day our daily bread..." At this point in the model prayer, Jesus encourages us to ask God for something we need. Notice that we are taught to ask simply and not overly extravagantly. This doesn't mean we can't ever be extravagant in our "asks" but it seems to indicate that we should focus on needs not wants. We need daily bread, we do not need daily Thanksgiving feasts 😊 even if that is what we want!

We ask God for what is necessary and that should keep us focused on our daily need not our global wants. Greed has no place in our prayers, nor do long "wish" lists. How often do we come to God with a "shopping list" of wants, leaving behind praising God and forgetting to put God's Kingdom first? . Don't come to God with your own long set of personal wants. You might be surprised at what you hear.

DAY SEVEN ". . .and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Now, this is where the prayer starts to meddle with our sinful, snarky, selfish selves! This phrase cannot be split into two parts. We are asking God to forgive us, yes, but we are also saying that God should do so AS we do to others!

Okay friends, whom haven't you forgiven? What hurt or burden or grudge are you still carrying? We owe God EVERYTHING. We need to ask God to forgive us. 1 John 1:9 assures us that God WILL forgive us IF we confess. The Scriptures admonish believers to

be sure to set things right with those we have offended before coming to the Communion Table as well as being up to date on acknowledging our own sinful condition so as not to eat and drink condemnation on ourselves. This business of forgiveness is a big deal. If we have not asked Jesus to save us from our sins, if we have not forgiven others, then God's work in our life is limited. Is that what you want? I sure don't. I want to be totally transparent with God because God sees it all anyway.

I don't want anything to stand in the way of being able to hear God's voice and live in the victory that God provides for those who have accepted Christ as Savior and Lord. Praying for BHCC today means we have to take a good look at ourselves. Have we asked forgiveness? Have we given forgiveness? And if no one has said "sorry" to us, are we able to still live with an attitude of "forgiveness is available" so that when forgiveness is asked for, we can give it freely?

As we pray this part of the model prayer, realize that God is getting personal. Don't hold on to the past. Move on in the victorious life of forgiveness!

DAY EIGHT "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil..." Actually the more accurate translation here is not the word "temptation" but "test." You see God doesn't tempt us. We are the ones who are at fault for temptations that try to get us to fall away from obedience to God. So surely God isn't the one who is doing the "tempting."

However, "testing," by God, is something that helps to reveal the strength of our faith (Genesis 22). Going through a difficult time will show up our real strength of character and whether we are authentic believers.

In this model prayer we are aware that tests will come, even though we don't want them to. We might even pray at the moment "Oh please God, not this!!" But at that moment of testing, instead of running away or shrinking from it, we need to ask for God's power to keep us from giving in to evil (or as some translations say "the evil one") while we are in the midst of this test. Giving in to evil might mean that we do things that would be very sinful as we put our own will ahead of God; try to make the 'test' go away, or get mad at God and shut Him out of our lives, or blame others, etc. Instead, we need God to "Deliver us from evil!"

As you think about this part of the model prayer today, consider what you and your family is going through right now. Could this be a test from God? What are you actively doing as you react to this test that is pleasing to God? Are you asking for God's power to deliver you from doing anything during this time that would play into Satan's hand or that might prove to thwart what God is trying to do here? Pray about this today. This isn't easy, but difficult times can be like a purifying fire. Are you willing to be purified? Or are you going to let the evil one have his way?

DAY NINE "For Thine is the Kingdom. . ." Isn't it interesting that this model prayer recognizes, twice, God's Kingdom and God's ultimate authority? "Thy Kingdom come. . . for Thine is the Kingdom..."

This prayer model really keeps the focus on God and not on ourselves. How often do we come to God in prayer with our laundry lists of wants? Instead, Jesus taught his disciples to pray from beginning to end acknowledging the priority of His Kingdom, God's ability to strengthen us, and God is the one who will provide our daily "needs." How often, instead of starting and ending our prayers acknowledging God's supremacy, do we come to God in prayer as if He was our own personal "Genie in a bottle"? As you pray for yourself and your family, is your focus on the kingdom you want to build or on God's Kingdom? Think about that. The next time you recite the "Lord's Prayer," set aside your desires and declare that it is God's Kingdom you are seeking because actually, there is no other. . .

DAY TEN "...and the power..." Who has the power? Not me, that's for sure!! 😊 At this point in the model of prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, the prayer is coming to a climatic Benediction. The Lord is telling us to always finish our prayers, which are our personal and corporate conversations with God, with a complete acknowledgment of the supremacy of God. It is God who has the power. We are to declare it! "For THINE is the Kingdom, AND THE POWER..."

If we truly declare this, we should live our lives as if we believe it. We should TRUST this declaration. Who has the Power? God. Not you. Not me. Not anyone. If we really believe what we declare in this prayer model, and we include this declaration in every prayer we pray, we might just stop fighting God's purposes and instead trust God for what happens. I'm so happy to "let go and let God" because frankly, I'm weak. Every time you pray, declare the truth of who really has all the POWER and trust that God knows what He is doing. Okay?

DAY ELEVEN "...and the Glory...". In a world where everyone seems to be vying for fame and glory, this part of the model prayer reminds us that only God should be given glory. Again, we are declaring a truth about God. God gets all the glory. Not us. We should not seek glory for ourselves, nor should we give honor and glory to anyone other than God and God alone.

This model prayer keeps reminding us of who, and who alone, has all the power and glory. This should help us to not rely on our politicians, bosses, pastors, our money, fame, popularity, educational degrees, anyone or ANYTHING, but instead give God the GLORY. As you pray, give God the Glory for what will happen next. Be ready to accept what GOD is going to do to reveal His Glory through what you are living through each day. What you and your family needs to decide to do next is to bring God the glory, not our own glory. Wonder about how you are going to try to do that.

DAY TWELVE "...Forever and ever". Well, that pretty much settles it doesn't it? How long will God's Kingdom last? FOREVER and EVER. How long will God have the power and the glory? FOREVER and EVER. How long will God be in Heaven? FOREVER and EVER. You get my drift. 😊

So now, here are some other questions. How long do we want to acknowledge that God is our Father and that God is the one we can praise? How long do we want to ask for God's help? How long should we trust God's will? How long do we think God will give us what we need daily? "FOREVER and EVER."

If this is really true, then, we should live like God is really the Forever ruler of our lives and hearts. As you pray today, ask the Lord to give you a sense of His forever Love for you and for your future. Trust the Lord for the Forever future and remember, while God is FOREVER and EVER, what we are doing here on earth is NOT. Think about that as you pray. Listen for your FOREVER God to speak to you.

DAY THIRTEEN "Amen". Okay, that's the last word of the model prayer as we have usually been taught. Do you know what AMEN really means? In the simplest sense it means "SO BE IT!" It is a way of saying that you not only agree with what was just said but that you want it to actually happen! It reminds me of the phrase the Star Ship Enterprise: Next Generation Captain, Jean Luc Piccard, used to say when something had to be done - he would announce to his crew "MAKE IT SO!" 😊

Therefore, when we end our prayer with AMEN we are telling God SO BE IT/MAKE IT SO. We should be careful with our "AMENS" then. We tend to throw the word around like a catch phrase but actually it's a serious affirmation that you stand with God on what was just said.

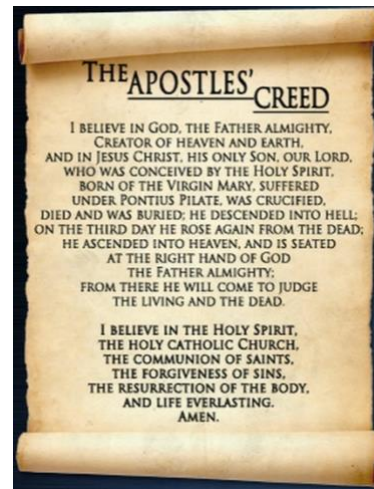
In the Old Testament, the people of God even said AMEN to God when he was pronouncing curses. The AMEN says "Yes Lord, I agree and I want it to happen!" As you develop your own prayers after this model prayer which we call "The Lord's Prayer" start by acknowledging God as your Father, giving God praise and adoration, ask forgiveness, check your own heart's willingness to forgive others, ask God for just what you need, then give God all the glory and power, make an effort to seek God's Kingdom and Will above all else and finally say AMEN ~ really mean it - Forever and ever. SO BE IT!

DEVOTIONS USING THE APOSTLE'S CREED:

These daily devotions are developed off of short phrases of the Apostles' Creed. Read one each day and then Wonder together as a family about what it might mean and what you believe.

DAY ONE: Introduce the Creed "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, . . ." Do you recognize it? Yep, it's the first few words of the Apostles' Creed. During the next few days we will unpack this amazing creed phrase by phrase.

Although it was not written by the Apostles'. In its oldest form, this Creed goes back to at least 140 A.D. Many of the early church leaders summed up their beliefs as they had an opportunity to stand for their faith. While the Apostles' Creed is not Scripture, it is a simple list of the great doctrines of the faith. And like anything that we recite repetitively, we can easily forget the power of the words and the incredible import to our faith. So, let's start to reflect on this Creed. Do you know it well enough to use as a defense for your own faith if someone were to ask you what you believe? If someone asked you why you believe these things, could you share why? Do you know where these words match Biblical theology? If you profess to be a Christian then you should be able to.



*So, in whom do we actually say we believe? **God the Father, Almighty.***

Right from the start we are professing our faith in an ALMIGHTY GOD. Mentioning God, the Father, we are identifying the first person of the Triune God. What does "almighty" mean? Why do you think this is important as the first part of this Creed? God is not just "kinda mighty" or "occasionally mighty." No, we believe God is ALL Mighty. The greatest mighty. All powerful. One of God's attributes is *Omniscience* - and that means *having all the power!* Think about what this means.

DAY TWO: "...maker of Heaven and earth." In this part of the creed we are acknowledging WHO created everything, but not HOW. At the start of the Apostles' Creed we proclaim belief in God, the Father, Almighty, which means we believe in the ALL Mighty power of God, not just that God is "kinda" mighty. Then to prove the complete, full-orbed MIGHTY-ness of God, (omniscience) we proclaim that God is the MAKER of ALL that exists.

The "WHO" of creation is the only thing that is worth proclaiming, not the HOW, because God could use any manner of means to make Heaven and earth. As Christians our focus is always on WHO God is and that God is ALL-Mighty. Notice Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning, GOD. . ."

I always think it's goofy to fight over HOW the world came into being. NO ONE WAS THERE except GOD, Father, Son, and Spirit. So, let's just praise the Lord and acknowledge God's Almighty-ness, which should send us to our knees!! In your prayers for your family today, proclaim WHO you believe in and then trust that GOD, the Father, WHO is the

maker of all things, and that God has your best in mind. Then listen for what God is saying to you today.

DAY THREE: “...and [I believe] in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord...”

Remember the first words are “I believe.” Let’s unpack that a bit. In this context, believing isn’t just acknowledging, or stating a fact. It’s not just head knowledge.

We know from Scripture that even the demons “believe and shudder” so that kind of “believe” isn’t what we are talking about. The word here means a complete commitment to, trust in, to “have full faith in,” so much so that you decide that you will be a disciple of Jesus fully. Some people say they are FDF which means a “Fully Devoted Follower” What do you think it means to be FULLY DEVOTED? Are you fully devoted to your family? To your favorite sports team? Do the sport or hobby you have? Sometimes we are more devoted to other things than we are to God.

When we say the Apostles’ Creed we are actually saying that Jesus is OUR LORD. That is where this phrase ends “...our Lord.” So, who is Lord in your life? Who is Lord of “your family?” As you pray for your family today, say this first part of the Creed over and over ***“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our (my) Lord”*** Reflect honestly on whether or not you have truly made Him Lord of your life, or are you still holding on to the lie that Satan gave Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden that “...you will be like God.” What kind of belief do you have: Head? Or heart and life?

DAY FOUR: “who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary...”

WOW! This, my dear friends, is a statement of fact that is one of the many Old Testament Prophecies about the Messiah. And like all the prophecies in the Bible, it came true. This proclamation of historical truth is absolutely RADICAL. A woman who did not have sexual relations with a man actually conceived and delivered a child? Inconceivable.

Mary herself wondered how it could be when the Angel Gabriel told her she was going to have a baby. Gabriel said that God, the Holy Spirit, would put the seed in her womb, not the seed of ‘man’ but of God. Then Gabriel said, “Nothing is impossible with God!”

Notice that the angel uses the word “WITH” and not the word “for.” We all know God can do anything, but this time Mary was being asked to cooperate WITH God.

As you pray for your family remind yourself of what you say you believe via The Apostle’s Creed. And then grab ahold of the idea that “Nothing is impossible WITH God. As a Christian, we are invited to cooperate WITH God to bring the Good News of Jesus to your neighborhood and the world. Are you ready to do your part like Mary did? Think about this and pray, expect a miracle.

DAY FIVE: “...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried...” In this part of the Creed we move passed the fact of Christ’s Incarnation, to the ***reason*** The Messiah came. He came to die. God, who is perfect, cannot be near that which is imperfect. Like a

bird that would fly into the sun and be totally disintegrated, in our sinful condition we cannot be near God. God's perfect power would disintegrate us. *Poof!*

Someone *perfect* had to die in our place, making a clear path for a relationship with God to be possible. So, God himself became that perfect sacrifice. The Messiah, Emmanuel (meaning God *with* Us) came to earth and suffered all the punishment for our sin. Scripture says "He who knew no sin BECAME sin for us ..." For those who have accepted Christ as Savior and Lord, we are actually covered in Christ's righteousness. So, that means that when God looks at us, He sees Christ's perfection and not our sin. Then we are ABLE to approach God, have a relation with God, we are fully forgiven, and have assurance of our eternal destination. We have all this because Jesus suffered and died in our place. He traded his perfection for our sin. This is the amazing thing about Christmas.

Every time we recite the Apostles' Creed we are proclaiming that we BELIEVE this. Do you? Have you fully accepted Christ? As you pray for your family, what does believing this get you excited about telling others about Jesus?

DAY SIX: ..."he descended into hell...". Now this may seem like a weird part of the creed, but it's really rather significant. Let's not get overly theological on this. There's really a very simple reason why these words are in here. Previously we attested to the words "crucified, dead, and buried..." so why add "descended into hell"? These words are not in the earliest renditions of the creed, but were first found in 390AD, and more regularly included after 600AD.

Some take this phrase to mean that Christ suffered the pains of hell while on the cross. Calvin takes this approach, as does the Heidelberg Catechism. Others have understood it to mean that Christ continued in the "state of death" until his resurrection. The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 50 takes this approach: "Christ's humiliation after his death consisted in his being buried, and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day; which hath been otherwise expressed in these words, He descended into hell."

One explanation for the inclusion of these words is that they were added to do away with the idea that Jesus just "fainted" having only appeared to "die" but had awakened and escaped the tomb. NO! This Creed seems to scream the confession that Jesus had died, was buried, and was really truly DEAD - completely.

There are many goofy theories that have developed over the centuries that try to do away with the authenticity of Christ's death, so as to dilute the power of His Resurrection. This Creed takes a very strong stand on the truth of Christ's death as a preamble to the truth of His Resurrection. I love repeating this Creed, don't you?

As you pray for your family, think about how believing in Christ's sacrificial death, his real physical death for us, can radically transform what it means for us to be a Christian Family and be part of the church.

DAY SEVEN: “...On the third day he rose again from the dead...” Brothers and sisters, this is an essential belief central to our faith. Without the physical resurrection of The Messiah there is no hope of eternal life, no chance of having a relationship with God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), and no Hope of having the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. Jesus died. He traded his perfection for our sin. And he was really dead - three days in the tomb solidified this as FACT.

BUT!! Jesus didn't stay dead. WOOHOO 🎉 His Resurrection proves that He had the power to defeat the permanence of death that is the natural consequence of sin. We couldn't do it on our own. Only God has that power (remember? ALMIGHTY Omniscient). God loves us so much He didn't leave us in our sinful state. Jesus' death paid the price for us and His Resurrection proves His power over death completely!

This is a Hope beyond measure. This is the greatest illustration of Love.

As we recite this Creed, recognize that we are proclaiming a belief in the miraculous. We are testifying to this miracle and we live in its truth. The Resurrected Christ, God the Son, is the Head of the Church. As you pray for your family today, ask the Lord, your resurrected Savior, to show us the miracle He wants for His people and for your life.

DAY EIGHT: “. . . and ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. . .” The Ascension of Christ is a much overlooked aspect of what the Lord did for us. We observe Advent and Christmas to celebrate His birth. We have Lent to commemorate Christ's road to the Cross. We have Holy Week to emphasize Christ's final week of suffering and his death. We have Easter Sunday to celebrate the triumph of Christ's Resurrection (and the defeat of death!), but where is our celebration of His Ascension?

There are two things to notice about this part of the Creed. First - there is this incredible, miraculous ASCENSION to Heaven. Harkening back to the way Elijah was swept up into heaven without an earthly death first, Jesus, in the presence of his Disciples was lifted up out of their sight. He said he couldn't stay with them for he now needed to "return to the Father" so that the Holy Spirit could come to bring them (and us) the power needed to do God's work.

Second - Jesus is now SITTING at the right hand of God the Father. This means that Christ's mission, His work on earth is COMPLETE. No one SITS in the presence of a King unless they have completed their task. And to sit at the RIGHT HAND means Christ has the highest position of Honor next to the Father. The work of salvation that God the Son was sent to do is DONE.

Remember when He cried out on the cross "It is finished!"? Well, Salvation became fully available at that moment. There is no need for anything else to be done for any one of us to receive this great gift of salvation except to accept Christ as our Savior! We cannot add anything to what Jesus has already done. We cannot earn salvation. Nope, Jesus paid it all,

and all to Him I owe. The only thing necessary is to believe in Jesus, accept the gift, consider the cost of being a disciple of Christ, and decide to put your trust in Him.

So, without the Ascension, the Holy Spirit wouldn't be here with us, empowering us and teaching us the incredible truths of Scripture and of who Jesus really is.

So, I say - let's find a way to really celebrate Ascension! Next time you talk about what you believe about Jesus, mention his Miraculous Birth, His Miracles of Ministry, His Miraculous Sacrificial Death, His Miraculous Resurrection, AND His Miraculous Ascension. Isn't it amazing how this Creed is so full of Powerful Truth?

As you pray for your family tonight and all the rest of this week, think about these things. Have you ever realized how important Christ's Ascension is? Have you ever realized where Jesus really is right now? Jesus, God the Son, is sitting next to God the Father in heaven. It is God the Holy Spirit, who is here with us on earth. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to be with us in a special way this Sunday, because Jesus had Ascended to Heaven so that the Holy Spirit could be here.

DAY NINE: "...from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead." Ahhh! Christ is coming back from "thence" or "there" which is heaven. This is in accordance with what the Scripture says in Acts 1. Remember that? The disciples are all standing around watching Jesus lifted up and disappear into a cloud. Just imagine them with their heads tilted back looking up into the sky when there are two other people standing with them who say "What are you looking up there for? This same Jesus will one day return in the same manner in which he has left."

Yep, the Apostles' Creed reminds us that we attest to and affirm in the truth that Jesus is coming back. Scripture tells us that when he does, ALL EYES WILL BEHOLD HIM! Oh my goodness! I can hardly wait.

Whenever I look up into the sky and wonder about the cloud formations, whether it's a stormy sky or a sunny sky, I think to myself "is it today Lord??" Someday it will happen and I want to be ready.

Notice that no one will escape Christ's judgement moment. Living or dead. Scripture says "it is appointed unto people, once to die and then the judgement." But what will we be judged on? Not our good works, not our happy attitude, not how often we attend church, or anything like that. Nope, it's whether or not, when God (Father, Son, Spirit) looks at you, God sees you wrapped in the robe of Christ's righteousness. And the only way that's possible is if you confess your sin, ask for God's forgiveness through believing in Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension which allows you to be called "a child of God." If you've done that you don't need to fear this judgement that will happen when Christ returns.

These words in this Creed are words that hold deep meaning and spiritual significance. What if today is the day the Lord returns? Will He be pleased with what we are doing? Our relationships with our family? Our work? Our ability to be "The Church?" Imagine that? Even if the Lord doesn't return, we still need him to be pleased with what we are doing.

Right? Let's keep praying for the future for however long it will last. Look to the sky knowing Jesus will come again, and then do what you need to do to prepare for it!

DAY TEN: "I believe in the Holy Spirit..." I love this part of the Creed because we get to affirm our belief in our Triune God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Let's be clear. The Trinity is not a hierarchy. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the three PERSONS of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is not some "force" like the wind or something. NO! The Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Triune God. And believing in Him (not "It") is an essential aspect of the Christian faith.

With Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, the Holy Spirit was sent to indwell believers, empowering them to carry out the work that Jesus commissioned believers to do. "Go into all the world and make disciples..." As we pray for your family and consider the future, consider how the Holy Spirit is here, willing, able, and available to you if you believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is here to help us do what God wants us to do, which is to make disciples. Have we been doing that? Do we really "Believe in the Holy Spirit"?

DAY. ELEVEN: "...[I believe] in the Holy catholic Church..." Okay, let's look at this phrase. Some people misunderstand the use of the word "catholic" here. It is NOT referencing Catholicism as opposed to Protestantism. No. The word "catholic" (small letter 'c') is an adjective which means "universal" or "comprehensive." It is meant to refer to the historic Christian Church (believers not buildings) in continuity throughout all time. It means the Church from her inception at Pentecost to the present day and beyond. It is a reference to all those who believe in Jesus Christ. We make up the "Church universal."

Now please don't get confused, this is not a belief in "Universalism" either. That is a sect that does not believe Jesus is God but rather, he is just another prophet or a good moral teacher. They do not believe in Christ's physical resurrection. They believe that salvation is not because of faith in Christ's death on the cross.

When we recite the words of the Apostles' Creed, we are affirming our historical Christian connection to all those who have ever and will ever profess faith in the crucified, risen and ascended Christ who will one day return. And it has nothing to do with Catholicism or Protestantism. So, next time you go to church with your family, will you be able to recite this Creed with conviction and understanding? Isn't it exciting to think that your faith in Christ and Christ alone has an historic comprehensive connection to believers ~ past, present and future?

DAY TWELVE: "[I believe in]...the communion of saints," When you go to church on Sunday, you get to experience a gathering of "saints" all focused on learning together, sharing their ideas with one another, maybe speaking words in unison praying the Lord's Prayer, and maybe even reciting the Apostles Creed. Some Sundays we share the Lord's Supper, the meal that believers the world over share together as a sign of our shared

common belief. These are things we cannot do all by ourselves. We NEED to be in community with one another.

If, as we recite this Creed, we say that we believe in the communion of saints, we are saying we believe that being with other Christians is central to our faith. *Communing* (or being) with each other is important to our spiritual growth. One of the benefits of this “communion of saints” is learning from each other. Another benefit is the energy we feel when we are together. It’s like the dinner table at home. When everyone is there eating at the same time, we are close to one another. We talk with each other. We laugh together, we are surprised together, and we share stories of life with each other. The same thing happens at Church. We are hearing each other singing. It is a Communion Experience even before we share the Communion meal. God’s Word tells us to NOT forsake the gathering of ourselves together. We need to be together. And as Christians, we are already “saints.”

Yep, Saints. Once we become a Christian we join with all believers past and present, and welcome all those who become believers yet in the future. We are saints because of Jesus. Please continue to pray for your family and be willing to set aside your private preferences and join with the community of believers in new worship experiences to help you grow. We need one another.

DAY THIRTEEN: "[I believe...] in the forgiveness of sin," I know that we repeat this in our Creed, but sometimes I wonder if we really BELIEVE it. The thing to remember here is that if we believe in the need for forgiveness of sin, we are admitting that IS such a thing as SIN. Woa... do we really recognize ourselves as sinners? Well, we are. All of us. Scripture says "For ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

So, there it is. You and I are sinners and therefore we need forgiveness of our sin, so that we can have a relationship with God. Jesus paid the price for our sin on the cross. Therefore, we can now receive this incredible forgiveness. If we really understand what this forgiveness means for us, we should be shouting from the rooftops! Living with the JOY of Forgiveness should be so evident to others that they should be begging us for the secret of this JOY.

Let us JOYfully forgive those who have hurt us (remember the Lord's Prayer). Let us tell others this incredible forgiveness is so readily available to them through confession and a profession of faith in Jesus. Wow - I believe in the forgiveness of sin. Do you? How do you show it? Praise the Lord. I'm forgiven!

DAY FOURTEEN: "[I believe..in..]...the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Well, there it is. The final phrase of the Apostles' Creed. Oh my goodness! Did you read that? Do you really believe this? As a believer in Jesus, I will die from this earth, but I am going to resurrect too, not because I'm perfect, but because Jesus' death paid the price for my sin - he died in my place so that when my time on this earth is up, I will be resurrected and will get to live forever with the Lord and with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is like knowing the end of a scary novel, or a mystery movie. If I've already read the end of a novel because I peeked. . . when I read the middle of the book I'm not as nervous about what is happening to the main characters since I know how it ends.

The same should be true of us in our lives. No matter what happens to me now, because I love Jesus, I already know how it's eventually going to end. I WIN!! I don't stay dead. I get to live forever. I come back to life - a life in heaven. Do you understand how incredibly amazing this is? So, when we recite this Creed, we should actually be excited to say these words. We should recite these words each morning of our lives as a way of reminding ourselves of the truth of our salvation; The truth of what God's Love for us is all about; The truth of what the Bible speaks of.

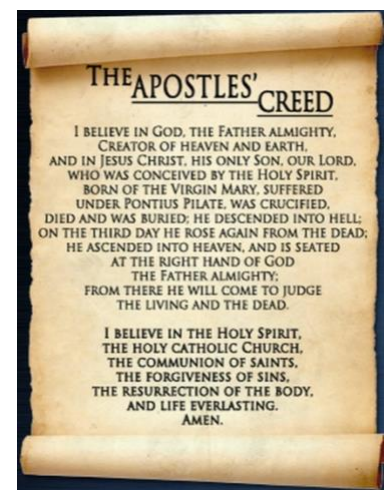
It should encourage us to share this incredible truth with others who might not know what God has provided for them if only they would just accept Christ. A Christian who says he/she believes in what this Creed professes WILL BE AN EVANGELIST. You just won't be able to help it. Jesus, who is God the Son, told his disciples (and us) to GO into all the world and make disciples teaching them to obey all that Jesus has taught them/us. If you want to recite this Creed each week at Church, it means you also want to be a disciple-maker; that you want to share your faith openly.

Paul encouraged his disciple Timothy with these words:

"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."

Our "Ministry" as Christians, is to share the Good News of our salvation with the world. And if we really believe what we recite - we will. One of the reasons some denominations don't recite the Apostles' Creed every week is because they understand the power of its import and they do not want it to be recited without meaning. Repetitive recitation can often diminish the words, like a rote repetition that becomes vacuous and dull. I am praying that explaining the Apostles' Creed in these devotions will help you understand how important it is and that you will also respect it's recitation whenever you speak the words.

Please don't let it become a meaningless repetition. Don't let attending Church become a meaningless repetitive activity either. Come with joy, hope, love, and peace so that you can GO into the world and make disciples. You know the end of the story. **Get excited!**



LET'S WONDER ABOUT THE DOXOLOGY

Have you ever wondered about “The Doxology”? What does it mean? Why do we sing it? When did it start being part of a worship service? Is it really Biblical?

Actually, there are many Doxologies. The word means “short words or a psalm of praise to God.”

Doxology passed into English from Medieval Latin *doxologia*, which in turn comes from the Greek term *doxa*, meaning "opinion" or "glory," and the suffix *-logia*, which refers to oral or written expression. The word appeared in the English languages around 1674. Doxologies were said or sung at the end of hymns or canticles, and the tradition of speaking “praise words” can be traced back to the Jewish tradition. In Christianity, the familiar “Gloria Patri” is a Doxology as is the “Gloria in excelsis Deo.” In 1674 the Doxology “Praise God from whom all blessings flow” was written as the final words of two different hymns.

What is also interesting to note is that the words “for Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and Glory, forever, Amen” is actually also a “Doxology” as these words of praise were added at the end of the model prayer Jesus taught his disciples. This Doxological phrase is not in the original Biblical manuscripts. Some scholars believe that the phrase was added to the prayer at a later date as people added the “praise words” as an affirmation of belief and praise. You may have noticed that in some churches these words are not said when reciting the Lord’s Prayer.

Uttering words of praise to God is always a good thing. However, there is nothing magical, mystical, powerful, or holy when we repeat them week after week. Actually, mindless repetition can make the utterances of the words meaningless which would not bring God any glory.

It reminds me of a child who runs past his mom once a week at a set time and says “I love you” but who never stops spontaneously to show that love, or obey what the mom has asked, and who somehow never enters into a meaningful conversation or relationship with mom.

Let’s wonder about why ritually speaking or singing one particular doxology in our Worship Services is so dear to us. Is it really because our uttering of these particular praise words is an authentic expression of our love for God, to give Him glory, or is it just a habit we would feel empty not doing? Worship is supposed to be about God. Not about us.

Wonder about this a bit, and then wonder what you want to do next time you say or sing a “doxology” at church.

