

the ESSENTIALS



WHAT ALL CHRISTIANS BELIEVE AND WHY IT MATTERS

Part 11: I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting | Pastor Joe Wittwer | 3.29.09

Note: There will not be a Sermon Study Guide for the Easter services April 10-12. We encourage you to plan on enjoying a time of celebration and fellowship with your group that week! Think food. ☺

A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

Do you believe in life after death? That's the question we're going to discuss as we wrap up "The Essentials" with the last two articles of the Apostles' Creed: I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

1. I believe in the resurrection of the body.

Christianity is an embodied faith, which is seen in three great truths contained in the Creed:

- **Creation:** God created all things in this physical world. Creation is fundamentally good. But it has been corrupted by human sin. When Jesus returns, He will create "a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (**2 Peter 3:13**). Then all of physical creation will be redeemed and made new.

- **Incarnation:** We believe that matter is fundamentally good, created by God—and then it was inhabited by God. God Himself entered His creation, taking on a human body, becoming one of us. Christianity is an embodied faith.

- **Resurrection:** Just as Jesus died and rose again, so will believers be raised bodily, instantly, when Jesus comes again. We will have a total transformation. We will then have a new life in new, perfect bodies, and we will dwell with the Lord.

If this life is all there is, then live it up, because when you die, it's over: "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (**1 Corinthians 15:33**). But death isn't the end of life, as Jesus taught and then demonstrated by His own resurrection: "*For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day*" (**John 6:40**). And the apostle Paul echoes this teaching: "*By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also*" (**1 Corinthians 6:14**).

Likewise, our lowly bodies will be transformed to be like Jesus' glorious body: "*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body*" (**Philippians 3:20-21**). What will that be like? We know that after Jesus' resurrection, His body was recognizable, truly physical, unbound by the normal limits of time and space, and it will never die: "*For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him*" (**Romans 6:9**). Our resurrected bodies will never die: no more sickness, pain, disability or death. We'll be free and whole—forever.

How will the resurrection happen? Paul writes: "*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' ⁵⁵ 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'" (**1 Corinthians 15:51-55**).*

2. I believe in life everlasting.

Jesus said, “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (**John 6:40**). Jesus is the giver of eternal life. Eternal life begins the moment we believe, not the moment we die: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (**John 3:16**). What is eternal life? It is both a quantity and a quality of life that comes from Jesus. It is life that never ends, everlasting life. And it is life that is abundant and full: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (**John 10:10**). Jesus tells us, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (**John 17:3**). Eternal life is a relationship with the living God. This is what makes life full. If you have a relationship with Jesus, you have eternal life right now. And the good news is that that life goes on forever—death cannot stop it. Eternal life is a relationship with Jesus, and that relationship doesn’t end at death; it gets better. We see Him face to face; we get to be with Him like never before. Heaven is where Jesus is; it’s being “at home with the Lord”: “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (**2 Corinthians 5:8**).

3. Amen!

The last word of the creed is “Amen!” The word “amen” means “so be it” or “it is true.” The Creed starts with, “I believe” and it ends with, “Amen”—so be it. Let it happen! So let’s finish by saying . . . “AMEN.”

C. Life Group Questions (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

Following Joe’s lead from the sermon, take turns reading from **I Corinthians 15**, and share thoughts and insights that arise about 1) the resurrection, 2) life now, and 3) life everlasting. The chapter can be divided up into 7 sections for reading and discussion:

Verses **1-11**

Verses **12-19**

Verses **20-28**

Verses **29-34**

Verses **35-41**

Verses **42-49**

Verses **50-57**

D. Personal Application (1-3 Minutes)

- In light of your discussion on **1 Corinthians 15**, journal this week on what the “Therefore” is *there for* in **I Corinthians 15:58**, the last verse of the chapter. How does the promise of resurrection and everlasting life motivate you to live your life now?
- This is the final week (at least for now) that we’ll encourage you to memorize and meditate upon the Apostles’ Creed.

E. Prayer Time (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4: 10-15 Minutes)

- Conspiracy of Hope: please pray for the students and leaders who are participating!
- The Kenya Well Project: we got the permits! Please pray for the well-drillers to get there, get set up in the right place, and find water!
- Easter invites: we talk all the time about Find, Tell, Bring. Pray for God to help you Find someone you love, Tell them what you know, and Bring them with you to church. There is power in an invitation—ask God to unleash it through you!
- Pray for mutual encouragement to stand firm in your hope and faith.
- Cover any other praises, requests or concerns brought up by the discussion.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth,

and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
whence He shall come 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 life everlasting. Amen.

For further reading on Christian doctrine:

- *The Faith: What Christians Believe, Why They Believe it, and Why it Matters*, Charles Colson and Harold Fickett, Zondervan, 2008.
- *Christian Basics: An Invitation to Discipleship*, John Stott, Baker, 1991.
- *Basic Christianity*, John Stott, InterVarsity Press.
- *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*, N. T. Wright, Harper, 2006.
- *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis, Macmillan, 1952.
- *Christian Theology in Plain Language*, Bruce Shelley, Word, 1985

For further reading on the Apostles' Creed:

- *The Apostles' Creed*, William Barclay, Knox, 1998.
- *I Believe: Exploring the Apostles Creed*, Alister McGrath, Intervarsity Press, 1997.
- *Affirming the Apostles' Creed*, J. I. Packer, Crossway, 2008.
- *Credo: Believing in Something to Die For*, Ray Pritchard, 2005.