

The Apostles' Creed (Part 1) – I Believe In

Matt Chandler – August 22, 2015

[Video]

Male: I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth...

Female: And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord...

Male: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...

Male: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

Male: He descended to hell.

Female: The third day he rose again from the dead.

Male: He ascended to heaven...

Female: And sits on the right hand of the Father almighty...

Female: From whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

Male: I believe in the Holy Spirit...

Female: The holy catholic church...

Male: The communion of saints...

Male: The forgiveness of sins...

Male: The resurrection of the body...

Male: And the life everlasting.

Male: Amen.

[End of video]

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. Romans, chapter 10, is where we're going to camp out, just two verses there that we'll pick apart for the next 40 minutes or so. Before we get started, this is Promotion Weekend, which means we have a handful of sixth graders in here with us finally in "big church."

If you're a sixth grader, will you lift your hands for me? In fact, why don't you go ahead and stand up? I know if you wrestle with anxiety this is probably terrifying, but if you're a sixth grader go ahead and stand up, even if you're at Plano or Fort Worth or Dallas. I know this could be really weird. Maybe there are not any sixth graders even in here, if you're watching me on this.

Let me talk to you just for a second, sixth graders. We love that you're in here with us. I say this all the time. As men and women get older, they get crustier, not more fun, and you with your love for life, your zeal, and your squirminess remind us of what's really important and what's not. So as your pastor, I love that you're in here. Welcome. I've been giddy this week just knowing you would be here. In fact, we prayed for you earlier tonight before we got ready to do all that we were going to do, and our prayer was that your love and energy would be contagious for us. So welcome.

We're going to do 12 weeks on the Apostles' Creed. Here's what I know. Let's chat. Let's just talk about it. Those of you who have more liturgical backgrounds... Maybe you're a formal Catholic or an Anglican or grew up in a Reformed Presbyterian church or something like that. You're geeked out of your mind right now. You're like, "Can you even do this? Is he allowed to do this? I thought we weren't allowed to do creeds."

If you're a modern Baptist... Not a historic Baptist, because historic Baptists were also credal people, but if you're a modern Baptist and you've heard something like, "No creed but the Bible," then you're probably concerned about me right now and wondering what in the world the elders

are thinking. "How could they let him do this, and how do we shut it down?" So there's this mixture of excitement and nervousness in the room about the Apostles' Creed.

Let's just talk very briefly. What I want to do today in our time together is tell you why we would spend 12 weeks on the Apostles' Creed. I'm going to give you my outline right out of the gate, and then we're going to very quickly get to the Bible. Here's my outline. The creed will help us develop better *symmetry* as Christians, give us a more robust understanding of the God of the Bible. The creed helps us with *clarity*. It makes it clear who God is. The creed informs our *community*, who we belong to and who we are with. Finally, the creed informs our *counsel*, both to ourselves and to others.

So again, the Apostles' Creed, by the grace of God, through the Spirit of God (and we'll get to the Bible and all that in just a second), is going to help us with *symmetry*, *clarity*, *community*, and *counsel*. That's what we're going to talk about in our time together today, but with that said, here are three little caveats that I haven't decided yet, but I might say every intro for the next 12 weeks. Here's what they are.

It's important to know that I have no intention of preaching the creed, but rather using the creed to preach the Bible. Here's why. Creeds do not hold any authority in and of themselves, but rather they point outside of themselves to the ultimate authority of the Word of God. Maybe this is a helpful illustration. The moon is awesome to look at. It has no light of its own, but it tells me there's a light out there.

If you're in sixth grade and haven't learned that yet, you're like, "What?" Here's what's happening. The sun is casting out, radiating, heat and light, and that hits the surface of the moon and reflects to us, so that we look up and see light reflecting off the moon. Well, the creed is reflecting the light of the Word of God. The creed has no authority in and of itself, and I would never preach it like it does, but rather it points back to the authority that is the Word of God. It's going to be helpful for you to keep that in your head at all times.

Secondly, the creed's historic use has primarily been twofold. This is the oldest of the Christian creeds, and it has been used in two ways historically. The first is to correct error. God's people have a tendency at times to drift into what is not true about God, and the creed corrects that. It has also been used, and primarily been used, as a tool in the spiritual formation of God's people. The

Apostles' Creed has been used by the church for two millennia to shape the people of God around what is true.

Now if you're here and you're not a Christian or you're not quite sure what to make out of all of this, let me say this very quickly. Christians do not believe in incantations. Here's what I mean by that. You saying this along with us will not make you a Christian. You knowing this and memorizing this does not make you a Christian.

With those three things before us... It's not the Bible. It has no authority in and of itself, but rather it reflects the light and heat of the Bible. It has been used to correct error and to shape God's people, and it's not an incantation that will save you, make you lucky, get you a promotion, or get you that girl you've been staring at. It just doesn't work that way.

With that said, I want to read the Apostles' Creed. Just know later on in our service we're going to all stand and read it together. If you're not a Christian, don't be wiggled out. You can just stand and not read anything at all or you can just stay seated, but we're going to stand near the end of the message today, and we're going to make this a habit over the course of the next 12 weeks to stand and read this together as the people of God. Before we dive in, let me just read the Apostles' Creed to you.

"I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell..." That's going to be a fun week. "...and the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting, amen."

With that said, let's look at Romans 10:9-10. Again, here's what we're doing: *symmetry, clarity, community, and counsel*. "...**because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**" Verse 10 is huge. Pay close attention. "**For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.**"

There are two pieces here, and it's important that we see and understand and grab hold of both of them before we consider the creed in any way. Here's the first one. What we have here is a confession that Jesus is Lord, a type of pledge of allegiance. I grew up in the day and age before it was un-American to say the pledge of allegiance to America in your schoolroom.

I grew up in San Francisco. We stood up, put our hand over our heart, and said, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands..." (I know the whole thing, but I'm going to cut it there for time's sake.) I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord. He's the Lord of my life. My allegiance is to Christ. I might say the pledge to the United States, but my allegiance is to Jesus. My confession is that Jesus is the Lord of my life.

Maybe you're in here and you're a nominal Christian, if there is such a thing. I get confused thinking about that. You go, "Oh, I believe in Jesus. I'll confess it right now. Jesus is Lord! Looks like I'm saved." You're a little too quick on the pull there. Let's keep reading the text. Look back at verse 10. **"For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."** There's an order by which belief and confession occurs.

In the first part of the text, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord you'll be saved, but if you look at the context of Scripture, here's what you find out. Notice the text does not say, "Know." It says, "Believe." It doesn't say, "I *know* Jesus is Lord." It says, "I *believe* Jesus is Lord." Why is that important? It's important because belief leads to action, and knowing may or may not.

Quick survey. How many of you know things you should be doing and shouldn't be doing, and that has not stopped you from doing them or not doing them? Go ahead. This is universal. If you don't have your hand up right now, you're a liar. To believe is to be moved upon toward action, and to know is to think, "Maybe, maybe not." So the word here is not to *know* in your heart; it's to *believe* in your heart that Jesus is Lord.

That leads to justification, right standing before God, which then leads ultimately to a confession with our mouth that Jesus is Lord. We don't confess with our mouth and that save us. We believe in our heart that Jesus is Lord, and then that leads to a confession with our mouth. That order is imperative for you to understand what the gospel is. It's important that he's saying you believe, not that you know.

Here's something to consider. If you're in our theological training program, you're hearing some of this right now. It's so important. What we see in this text and what we try to teach you around any kind of theological belief is that human beings are not primarily thinking creatures. I'm not saying we don't think and spend a lot of time thinking. I'm saying we are primarily creatures driven by our loves.

Although we do think, no amount of intellectual information necessarily transforms or moves you, but rather when the heart believes, when the loves are aligned. This goes back to what we taught last week. You do what you love. You chase what you love. You grab hold of what you love and what you think will satisfy you. You are driven by your affections. Any other understanding of what drives you is incorrect.

It's the heart that must believe, not just the mind, because that would be knowing. Belief is birthed in the heart. The reason the creed begins with, "I believe" and not "I know" is the creed has tied itself, anchored itself to the gospel. All other moral religions say, "Here's the bar. Good luck. Here's the bar; you have to measure up." Any of the world's moral religions, even philosophies of living, are, "Here's the bar; measure up to it."

If you buy into the narrative of materialism, "Here's the bar; live up to it." If you buy into the need to be perfect, like say the Muslims do, "Here's the bar; live up to it." But that's not Christianity. In fact, the moment Paul teaches this to the church in Rome and really across the ancient world, he separates Christianity out from all of the other world religions by starting not with, "We do" but rather "I believe," so that the message of the Christian faith isn't that we have done anything, but rather we have believed that someone has.

That's the difference between the gospel and all other moral religion, and it's why our hearts, as believers in Christ, should be made alive that we're not chained to rote religious activity, but we have a Savior who has accomplished all that we desire for us. "I believe." Again, the reason we're going to look at the creed for 12 weeks is because it's going to, by the grace of God, wrung out of Scripture, create *symmetry*, *clarity*, *community*, and *counsel*.

Let's start with *symmetry*. Quick survey in the room. How many of you at some point of your life worked out consistently at a workout place? Go ahead and raise your hands. Oh, praise God. What about Fort Worth, Dallas, Plano? I know Dallas does. They're so pretty down there. Here's the thing

if you've ever worked out consistently at a gym. In every gym, regardless... I even will try to hit up a gym traveling sometimes.

In every gym out there, there is a man working out who's shaped like an upside-down pear with two toothpicks jammed into its bottom. You know what I'm talking about? You take a pear, turn it upside down, stick two toothpicks on it, and there's a man in that gym who looks like that. Here's what he has done. He wants a chest and some abs and some arms, and he just doesn't like doing his legs.

So that dude will sometimes be wearing pants at the gym. He's sweating to death, but he has on some gym pants, because he knows he's a pear with two toothpicks jammed into the bottom of it. It's important you know that the pear has been turned upside down. Here's what has happened. He's now asymmetrical, and because he doesn't have the right symmetry, although he feels like he looks good, here's what we know.

We know he's weaker than he thinks he is, and we know that even though he can bench-press 400 pounds, I could shove him over with my gangly self, because he has no base. He has no root. He has no power, because power in the human body is birthed out of the glutes, the hams, and the hips. All your power is down here. So brother, you can keep doing bench flies all day long, but you'd better blow up those legs or you're in trouble.

The same thing happens to us spiritually. We get out of symmetry. We get out of the robust build-out that God desires for our souls to possess. Let me give you out of the creed (I'll tie it to the Bible in the weeks to come) how we can get out of symmetry as Christians. Some of you in here, your understanding of what it means to be a Christian is that Jesus Christ is your Lord and your Savior. He is your personal Lord and Savior.

Now just like doing upper body, that's great. That's true. You should believe that. You should love that. In fact, I desire earnestly for you to understand that Jesus sees you as an individual, as a person, but you're not lined up with biblical symmetry if you don't understand that you also belong to the holy catholic church, *catholic* there meaning universal. The holy catholic church, the communion of saints. When we get to that week, some of you are going to have your understanding of Christianity line up. You're going to have a leg day, if you will.

Let's say maybe that's not you. Maybe you're just really dialed in to the historicity of Jesus Christ. You love the Gospels. You love Jesus. That's a good thing. You can tell all of the stories from the Gospels. You love the woman at the well. You love when Jesus walks on the water. You love when he tells dead people they're not allowed to be dead. You love how he reads the minds of the Pharisees and calls them out.

You love all that about him, and yet somewhere along the way you've lost sight of the fact that Jesus is still alive. He is ascended. He is seated at the right hand of God. We worship not a former dead Messiah, but a living Messiah, who right now as we're in here is alive, and not in some spiritual form. He's alive. We need to be reminded. That's going to be yet another leg day for us, if you will, if that illustration will hold true.

So it's going to help with symmetry. We could do this throughout the creed, but this is what the creed is going to help us do by the grace of God. It's going to help form symmetry. It's also going to help us with some *clarity*. Ligonier Ministries partnered with LifeWay Christian Resources on a massive survey about evangelical belief about the doctrine of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, sin, the Bible. What do evangelicals believe about these things? The survey was called, "What is Our Theological Temperature?" You can look all this up online.

The survey revealed some disturbing beliefs among evangelical Christians in the United States. It's important to know these are United States-centered beliefs. The survey revealed significant confusion regarding the doctrine of God. Let me unpack that to you when I say the "doctrine of God." Large swatches of evangelical Christians deny that Jesus is God in the flesh. They deny the deity of Christ. They deny that the Holy Spirit is a person. They think he's some sort of ethereal presence and not a person.

In fact, it gets worse. The survey revealed that less than half of evangelical Americans think the Bible is the Word of God and that it is true. These same numbers (this should be no surprise) reject what the Bible has to say on ethical issues. Well, of course they do. It has no authority. Then finally, the survey also revealed that many evangelicals in the United States feel that worshipping alone is just as valid as attending corporate worship in the church.

So again, these are muddy waters here. What you believe about God, what you think about when you think about God (this is A.W. Tozer), is the most important thing in the universe. What you think about when you think about God is the most important thing you'll ever think. What it seems

is that, by and large, American evangelicals are terribly confused about who God is, what he's up to, what he's like, what he's about. It seems like we've lost our way.

There are a couple of reasons we've lost our way. First, we ask the wrong questions all the time. I think pragmatism rules the day. Are you tracking with me when I say "pragmatism"? Like pragmatics, what I need right now. There's no real thirst or hunger for spiritual formation as God has designed it to be, which is you, by the power of the Holy Spirit of God, walking in growing obedience to the Word of God, or God as he has revealed himself in the Word, and through our highs and lows he shapes us and molds us.

What we've bought into is a really weird, over-romanticized, over-emotionalized version of Christianity that is no historic orthodox Christianity at all. We want to be fixed right now. "It has taken me 20 years to jack up my marriage. You tell me right now how to make it better." We want it now, and we're driven by that now.

We also...God help us...want to be entertained. We don't want to participate; we want to witness. "Hey, entertain me. Dance for me." I know this because of the things we say when we talk about church. I have a daughter who's in seventh grade. What do you think most parents ask their kids when they pick them up after Bible study? "Did you have fun?" As if fun rules and navigates our lives. I know the whole deal about, "Well, if they think it's fun they'll want to come."

Here's the thing. I don't think it stops with kids. I think adults are like, "Is it fun? Is church fun?" It's not meant to be fun. It's meant to be formative. That means there's a lot of joy there. I've worked hard for a decade with you to tease out the ideas of happiness and joy, because I love you, and happiness is cheap and fragile, and you'll break it just thinking about it. Joy is not like that. Joy is deep-rooted. It can't be pulled up very easily. Joy can't be jostled by circumstance like happiness can.

That's why the people of God need a rootedness in joy and not, "Did you have a good time?" I love to have a good time. Call me. I'll have a good time with you. But the purpose of the gathering of the children of God is to grow in rootedness. Let's laugh along the way, and let's experience joy, but let's not pretend and...God help us...let's not teach our children that it being fun is the bar that things must measure up on.

So you get clarity. You get symmetry. Then you get *community*. You probably noticed. We've been very purposeful with everything from the font we used for the Apostles' Creed to the images around it. Here's why. I'm trying so hard, and I don't know how to do it, so I'm just going to confess. I don't know how to dial you in to how big this thing is that you're wrapped up in. We're a part of a people that has been around for thousands and thousands of years.

We're a part of a people who go back to the beginning of mankind, where God has called people unto himself, and we're a part of that. We're a historic people. Throughout history, God's people, his elect, those he has called to himself, have thrived. They've worshiped him. We're a part of that tradition. We're a global people. People all over the earth this weekend will gather because they believe this, and they'll rejoice in it. They'll be shaped by it, and massive swatches of them will actually recite this together.

You and I have been woven into something so much bigger than us that that fabric created by God makes us stronger than any of us will ever be on our own. It's diverse. It's beautiful. It's global. The reason you're seeing some Gothic images and some images from the 50s is because when our brothers and sisters got together and read this out loud in the first, second, and third centuries... We're a part of them. This isn't new. It's just our turn to run a faithful race. It forms a community.

Here's something else I want you to think about. The other thing about the community the creed forms, being pulled from the Word of God, is as Christianity has enjoyed such favor the last 150 or so years in the US, and as it's now starting to fall out of favor, defining ourselves by secondary beliefs will, I believe, begin to fade away.

Here's what I mean by that. The creed shows us what's primary, and that if we are a creedal people, we believe the Apostles' Creed, we start, "I believe," and believe the things the creed says, that means our family is a lot bigger than we think we are. That means our family goes beyond the borders of Baptist. Some of you are like, "We're Baptist?" Surprise! You're like, "Wait, we're doing a creed in a Baptist church?" Yes.

Ultimately, the family is just bigger than we think it is, and that's what's happening in this community. It's historic. It's multiethnic. It's global. It's historical, and we're caught up in it. It's a really beautiful thing. So you have symmetry. You have clarity. You have community. Then finally you have *counsel*. When I say *counsel*, that the creed helps our counsel, what I'm saying is it affects how you counsel yourself and how you counsel others.

Again, from the creed let me give you some examples. If you believe that Christ will return to judge the living and the dead, that's going to affect how you counsel yourself. Remember, belief isn't "I know." It's not this kind of, "Yeah, I know Christ will return. He's going to bring judgment." It's not that. I believe it down in my gut, out of my heart, leading to confession of mouth. I believe that Christ will return to judge the living and the dead.

Now think of the ammunition that is against sin. Think about how you counsel yourself. Think about how you counsel others if you believe that Christ is going to return to judge the living and the dead. It's going to affect how you counsel yourself. It's going to affect how you counsel others. It's going to grow you in an understanding of the person of God and the work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, and you're going to counsel yourself differently.

Then how about... I think this is the easiest one. I think you can do this with any sentence in the creed. If you believe in the forgiveness of sins, does that change how you counsel yourself? See, here's what has happened this week. Are you ready? I'm just going to be bold. You've sinned this week. *We've* sinned this week. I've been right there with you. Varying levels, varying degrees, we've sinned. We've said cruel things to our spouse. We have not loved the Lord. We have given ourselves over to certain sins, maybe historic sins that we wrestle with.

If you're not a Christian in here, you're like, "That kind of sounds like my week too." Yeah, welcome. You should feel welcome here. Now if you believe in the forgiveness of sins, then you don't run and hide from the forgiver; you run to him. How you counsel yourself is not, "I've blown it. Let me run and hide. I don't want anybody to know that. Let me just pretend that didn't happen. Let me try hard not to do that again." No, no. You believe in the forgiveness of sins, so you run *to* him. "I failed you; forgive me," knowing that he'll forgive. You run *to* him, not *from* him.

If you believe in the forgiveness of sins, how will you walk with those who sin against you? More graciously, right? How about this one? How many of you feel like you've been sinned against this week? Really? I was expecting more of a unanimous one. There were like 12 of you. You guys must run in awesome circles, really godly circles. When we are sinned against and we believe in the forgiveness of sins, not only are we recipients of that forgiveness, but we begin to extend that forgiveness.

So as we look at what the church fathers and 2,000 years of Christian faith has recited and rejoiced in, pulled from the Word of God, we're going to pray that the Holy Spirit of God develops some symmetry in our hearts about how to think rightly about him, how to think about who he is, how to worship correctly. We're going to gain some clarity. Lord willing, we're going to understand and embrace the community, and we'll grow in our counsel both to ourselves and to one another.

Here's what I want to do now. I'd love for us to stand, if you're able, and we're going to quote the creed together. We're going to say this out loud. Our voices are what will fill the room. Even if you're in Fort Worth or Plano or Dallas, we're going to stand. We're just going to quote the creed together, like our brothers and sisters in Christ have done globally for close to two millennia. Here we go. We're going to quote it together.

"I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father almighty, from which he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting, amen."

Here's something to think about. When the early church recited this, it was simultaneously their greatest act of rebellion and their greatest act of allegiance. When the church gathered and they stood not in an air conditioned room, protected by rule of law, but when they stood, across the centuries, not knowing who would come in, being watched at who's reciting this, they rejected the popular narratives of their day, whatever their day was.

So in Rome they rejected that Caesar was lord. They rejected the narrative of the first century and said, "No, no, no. I reject that. I believe that Jesus is Lord." Simultaneously, they rejected the narrative of their day and embraced, put their allegiance upon, the God of the Bible. It's this beautiful moment when the people of God recited this creed. They said, "We don't believe the story our culture is telling."

That story has some similarities, but it has changed throughout human history. In our day, by reciting this, if we believe, we're saying, "We reject the narrative of materialism. We reject that stuff will satisfy our souls." We're saying, "We reject the notion that what I need to be physically satisfied

is more and more and more partners. I reject that there's not *a* way but everybody has their own." We just fundamentally reject that narrative. Our narrative is that we believe in the God of the Bible.

When the church recites this creed, distilled, pulled from, wrung out of the Word of God, we're saying, "We reject the modern narrative. We believe the historic narrative, the narrative that God has come into the world to save sinners, that Jesus Christ has died for our sins, and we believe and trust that he has made known to us the path of life."

Years ago, when I was in college, my brother-in-law was, I believe, in high school. (I'll get clarity on this story after this service.) My father and mother-in-law had bought a house. My mother-in-law is a realtor. My father-in-law is just cooler than all of us. They bought a house in I think it was called Whitehouse or White Oak or something like that in East Texas.

What they were going to do was Johnny was going to use his man skills on it and put in new floors and open up doorways. He was going to make it look amazing, and they were going to try to flip the house. Many of you watch this as entertainment now. I happen to be in town, and what I want is Johnny's daughter to marry me, so I'm like, "You need any help at the house?"

Now if you knew how impossible me helping with any type of skill... Johnny, God bless his heart, just gave me and my future brother-in-law this project. There were some really high hackberry bushes. They looked like they had been there since America was founded. They had used them right along their fence. Our job was to get those hackberry bushes up.

The tools of the trade were a shovel, an ax, some clipper things for the root, and we went to work. We worked and worked and worked, and those things weren't moving. They laughed at the ax. They laughed at the shovel. So what happens when you have a college student and a high school student and a Chevy Z71 with four-wheel drive and a chain on it? We very quickly put all that aside, and we got in the truck and backed it down the driveway.

We wrapped a chain around the hitch and then wrapped it around the bush. We didn't even think to drop it in four low yet. We tried to move, and they still kind of fought us. So then we had to put some slack in it and try to rip the things out of the ground. That was the only possible way to get them out of the ground. Probably not, but that's the way we did it.

Now the reason those bushes were near impossible to get out of the ground is because of how long they had been there and how deep the roots went. See, when there's deep-rootedness, hard freezes don't tend to kill and storms don't tend to uproot. Where there's deep-rootedness, there's stability and fruitfulness. When I talk about joy over happiness, that's what I'm talking about.

The opportunity we have for the next 12 weeks gathering together is by the grace of God (that's the only way it will happen: by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit) he might root us more deeply in who he is. See, the creed goes contrary to popular thinking. This isn't about you at all. It's all about him.

What I mean by pragmatism is people don't like that. They want the sermon to be all about them, but that's not how the people of God have ever been formed. They've been formed by staring at, marveling at, being blown away by who their God is. We have the opportunity for deep-rootedness. I'm hungry for it. Let's pray.

Father, again I thank you for these men and women, an opportunity to come tonight. Really all we've done today is we've talked about you. We've sung about you. We've considered you. We're going to respond to you. We pray over the course of the next 11 weeks you would help form us with greater symmetry, that we would see things we weren't as dialed into, and it would make us grow and grow in strength and grow in rootedness and depth.

We pray for clarity. There are some misunderstandings about who you are and what you're like. The culture is telling one story, and the Bible is telling us another, and I pray you would bring clarity to the greater story. When you grow our confidence in you, as you've created a people who have spanned through history, would you protect us from a type of weak progressivism that believes human history is always getting better, and would you root us deeply in your plan for mankind?

Will you help us as we seek to counsel ourselves and counsel others? Father, some of us sit in here week in and week out across these campuses, but we're verbally and emotionally abusive to our spouse. We're addicted. We're currently flirting with, if not full-on engaged with, another partner other than our spouse. I pray, Father, that the Word of God reflected out of the creed would help us run from sin and run to you, the better story. Help us. We need you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.