



## The Apostle's Creed - Week 6

### Belong

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can **belong** by sharing their lives with one another in genuine fellowship!

- Question #1 – How often would you say you attend church in a given month? Is Sunday morning your only time of fellowship with other Christians?
- Question #2 – If you miss church on a given week, what is usually the reason? Is that a valid reason to miss gathering with the church?
- Question #3 – Would you say attending church is central to your life, or do you fit it around other things? Would you say Church is a priority in your life?

### Believe

Move into the Apostle's Creed and read the related Bible passages. This is where the body of Christ can learn together to **believe** in Jesus more and love Him better!

### The Apostle's Creed – Part 6

The Apostle's Creed reads, "The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of the Saints..."

As Christians, we believe the Church is an essential part of the Christian faith. Far from being an optional component of Christian life, it is absolutely necessary!

Keep in mind we aren't talking about the Catholic Church as we know it today. Back when the Creed was written, the Catholic Church wasn't officially founded yet!

Fun fact: the Holy Roman Catholic Church wasn't founded until 590 AD. Biblical scholars believe the Apostle's Creed was written around 340 AD!

Rather, the word 'Catholic' in the Creed literally means 'universal' and 'according to the whole.' This is to say that the 'Catholic' Church is expansive, but also exclusive.

The Church is expansive because it includes any gathering of believers, which can be from any nation! Its exclusive because to be part of it, you must believe certain truths.

## Acts 2:42-47

<sup>42</sup>They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

<sup>43</sup>Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. <sup>44</sup>And all the believers were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

*Holy Bible: New American Standard Bible (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Acts 2:42-47*

### Who is the Church?

To know why the Church is necessary, we must know what the Church *is*. The book of Acts doesn't describe the Church as a location or a building. Rather, the Church is spoken of in personal terms. Luke describes the Church as *they*. This is because the Church is *people*, not a place!

Who are these people? The book of Acts describes this group as *believers*, those who believe in Jesus Christ and follow Him with their lives. In other words, *You* are the Church! Wherever the believers of Jesus are, there the Church is also.

### What Does the Church Do?

Luke lays out what this group looks like in practice. The Church *devotes themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.*

There are *four* major things here that are emphasized in the book of Acts:

1. The Church teaches the Bible (...*devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching...*)  
The Church proclaims the revelation of God which includes both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is the unique job of the Church to spread the message of God to the nations.
2. The Church does life together (...*to fellowship...*)  
The Church doesn't simply gather once a week, rather they do life together. They eat together, spend time in their homes together, and are generally involved in each other's life. Gathering on Sunday morning is the bare minimum of fellowship for the Christian.
3. The Church remembers Christ together (...*to the breaking of bread...*)  
This is a reference to the Lord's Supper. In the same way Jesus used bread and wine to describe to the disciples the significance of His death, the Church observes this as a tradition in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.
4. The Church prays (...*and to prayer...*)  
The Church regularly speaks to God, both as a corporate body and as individual believers. The Church is dependent on God for all their needs, and the Church worships God in everything, whether it be prayer or singing.

#### What Unifies the Church?

In the time of the early Church as spoken of in Acts, the Church was so unified they chose to share everything they have in common. What could create such unity among the people? The book of Acts points us to two things: *The Message of Christ* and *the Mission of Christ* unify the Church!

1. The Message of Christ  
The Church is unified because they believe Jesus is the Son of God who died on the Cross to save the believer from the penalty and power of their sin and rose from the grave three days later. This truth transcends race, economics, social class, and politics. It calls us together based on what we have in common through Christ rather than the lines we use to divide ourselves.
2. The Mission of Christ  
The mission is for the Church to proclaim the Message of Christ to bring about the salvation of others. In Acts, we see that *the Lord was adding to their number day by day*. The Church quite literally *lives* on mission and puts it as priority above all else. No perceived differences can distract from saving souls.

# Become

Wrap up the discussion by asking questions. We can **become** more like the people God is calling us to be by reflecting on what we've learned and applying it to our lives.

## Discuss:

Does the Church feel truly unified to you as God intended it to be? What are some things, if any, you think are causing disunity amongst the Church? How can those things be addressed?

Do you think the global body of believers has a good grasp of what the Church really is? How would the Church look different if these fundamental truths about the Church were more fully known and accepted?

Are there areas in your life, like reading/teaching the Bible, doing life together, remembering who Jesus is, or praying, that you struggle with? How can you be a more engaged member of the Church?

Is there anything you can think of that the Church does particularly well or not well enough as it pertains to accomplishing the Mission of Christ? What are areas the Church can improve on to be more effective in accomplishing its mission?