



**KING'S
CHURCH** (<http://kingschurchedinburgh.org/>)
EDINBURGH

One Faith

What does “*Jesus is Lord*” (**Romans 10:9**) mean? Jesus Himself taught us that this matters by asking a question to His disciples: “*Who do you say I am?*” (**Mark 8:29**). This question has been given a variety of answers, and not all of them can be right. This matters more than anything else because it is a matter of life and death (**John 14:6, 1 John 4:2-3**).

We are saved by putting our faith in the original apostolic message of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection (**Jude 1:3**) but that doesn’t mean that we have a full or even accurate understanding of what the faith that we have been saved into is. The earliest Christians formed short summaries or explanations of the key points of their faith (**1 Timothy 3:16** is an example of this). These later developed into a statement known as the *Rule of Faith*, and over the following few centuries the church produced a series of creeds which give definition to key issues of Christian belief about the nature of God (particularly the *Apostles’ Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, the *Chalcedonian Definition*, and the *Athanasian Creed*). *Creed* comes from the Latin “*credo*” meaning, “*I believe*”: they are about “*the faith*”. They aren’t the Word of God like the Bible but they perform a very helpful function of explaining to us some of what the Bible teaches. They aren’t comprehensive: there are many other important things that need to be said, but they are sufficient for marking out what is Christian truth about God.

When we say the Nicene Creed, we are joining with millions of Christians from around the world and throughout the centuries, in a statement of the faith we all have in the one, true God. If you are a Christian, you have far more in common with any fellow believer than with your unbelieving neighbour who comes from the same town as you, or colleague who does the same job as you, or that person who enjoys the same incredibly niche hobby as you, or an identical twin who doesn’t believe.

Paul uses some of the facts of this faith described by the Nicene Creed, to make the case for unity in his letter to the Ephesians:

- “*We believe in one God... maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.*” (God being the Creator is assumed by Paul, and he mentions God being Master of us all and having no partiality in **Ephesians 6:9**.) Every person you have ever seen or spoken to

was made by God, in the image of God, and is the object of God's love, care, and attention. For God's sake, we should make every effort to treat them well.

- *"For us and for our salvation [Jesus] came down from heaven... and was made man."* (See **Ephesians 2:17**) We should make every effort for the sake of others because that is what Jesus did in His incarnation because of His love for us.
- *"For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried."* (See **Ephesians 5:2**). He died a disgraceful death on a cross because of His love for wretched and rebellious sinners like you and me.
- Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit, *"the Lord, the giver of life"*, the presence of God on Earth today, has been given to every person who puts their trust in Jesus (**Ephesians 1:13**). We're not united by a list of good deeds to get done, which could create a divisive hierarchy, but by each of us carrying the very presence of God in us.
- He says that God *"the Father"* adopts every Christian into His family (**Ephesians 1:5**). We have been profoundly united to Him and each other.
- He says that all believers belong to one body, of whom Christ is the head **Ephesians 1:22-23**, *"the holy catholic [universal] and apostolic Church"*.
- And climactically Paul declares that God's eternal intention has been to "unite all things in Him", that is, Jesus (Ephesians 1:10). This will begin when "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His Kingdom will have no end." All the division that sin has caused will be removed and all Christians will be gathered to God's one throne to sing praises to Him with one voice (**Revelation 7:9-10**). This is *"the life of the world to come"*.

The creed also helps us keep unity by showing us what matters the most, what unites all believers, and what doesn't. The truth of what we believe is of the utmost importance to our salvation but all of what we believe and do isn't at exactly the same level of importance. We can consider some things to be written in **blood** (essentials which cannot be changed), some are written in **ink** (very important and not changed without difficulty), and some are written in **pencil** (preferences which can be changed). Because all Christians can say the creed together, we are united by what matters most (blood) and should therefore be able to challenge each other and disagree strongly without violating our essential unity in Christ.

Questions:

- What is it about Christianity that makes unity so important?
- What is it about Christianity that makes unity so difficult?
- Why is it important to be clear about what the Christian faith is?

- What is your experience of using a creed? How did you respond to seeing it and saying it and singing it on Sunday morning?
- What do you think is helpful about the blood / ink / pencil distinction illustration? What could be unhelpful?
- How can you use this illustration to work out how to respond to people in the church who you have disagreements with?

Resources:

- **Text of the Nicene Creed**
(<https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/churchhomeleadership/nicene-apostles-creeds.html>)
- **Video of Nicene Creed by Hope Church Richmond**(<https://vimeo.com/160494511>)
- **Article describing blood / ink / pencil differences: “My own faith meltdown story” by Keith Drury** (<http://www.drurywriting.com/keith/faith.meltdown.story.htm>)
- The Creedal Imperative, by Carl Trueman (Crossway)
- “The Role of Creeds and Confessions in Doing Theology” by R. Scott Clark
(<https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2018/02/role-creeds-confessions-theology/>)
- “God’s Strangeness” by Wesley Hill
(<https://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/01/gods-strangeness>)
- Mere Christianity, by C.S. Lewis (Collins)



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