

We Believe...

What is the purpose of a creed? Why do Christians use them?

From the earliest iterations of the Christian church in Acts, the people of God have employed the use of creeds. A creed is a statement of belief - a confirmation of truths held by a group of people. Creeds are not formulated to invent fundamental doctrines, but rather to defend them. Creeds are not designed to replace the Scripture, but to reflect it. One of the first of the Christian creeds is the Apostle's Creed. It was developed as a simple and concise statement, rooted in Scripture, that distinguishes Christianity from other popular religions and worldviews of its day. It serves the same purpose today and is, therefore, as beneficial for Christ's church today, as it was over 1000 years ago.

By summarizing the beliefs of the church into a clear and memorable format, all people in the church are able to profess sound doctrine, present their faith clearly to the outside world, and correct misinterpretations of the scripture. Creeds also provide unity between the present church and the church of the past. Through profession of faith in the context of a creed, we claim as Christians that what was once true for the church in the past, remains the truth that we celebrate today.

How can you use Romans 10:9-10 to talk to non-believers?

Paul teaches us here what looks like to be saved from our sins. By confessing faith in Jesus as the Lord of our life, and believing that he was raised from the dead, we may live in the presence of God for eternity, because we are forgiven our sins. There are no magical words or actions we must complete to be saved. It is a free gift from God. We confess and believe in what has been done for us through Christ, and that is all that is required for a non-believer to come to faith.

What would you say to a friend who wants to believe but is filled with doubt?

Personal reflection. Consider your conversion story. What helped you to truly trust in God's promises.

What experiences have led you to believe that God is real?

Personal reflection. Spend some time thinking through circumstances where you've seen God's hand at work in your life. Write these down in a place where you can recall later. Just as God calls for Israel to build monuments to remember His faithfulness to them, we should mark occasions when we've seen God's hand at work. These can comfort in times of doubt. (Read: Joshua chapter 4)

In what way is faith like an anchor in life? Give examples.

Personal reflection. Remember that faith is not just a mental assent to the truth, but trust and hope found within the truth.

God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth...

What does it mean to see God as a heavenly Father? Do you often think of Him in this way? If not, why?

God is not some abstract, impersonal force in the world. The image of God as Father may sound simple, but actually conveys important, profound truth about God's character. He knows our strengths and weaknesses (Isaiah 41:10); He has profound love for us (Eph 2:4-5); God is the ultimate source of our existence, and we are reflections of Him (Gen 1:26); and God has authority over our lives (Psalm 135:6). God used this imagery specifically to help us understand Him.

For some, the word father brings back negative memories. How can we help them appreciate the fatherhood of God?

While some people find peace in the notion that we have a father in heaven, we need to remember that the image of a father is painful to some. This is an unfortunate truth in a world marred by sin. It is pertinent to remember that our Father in Heaven is the perfect image of what a father on earth should be. The earthly, biological father is the broken imagery of God - not the other way around. Even if we have been hurt by our fathers here on earth, the love of God the Father is perfect. He is the true representation of a father's love - filled with compassion, care, and commitment.

What do we mean when we say God is almighty?

It is easy for us to underestimate the ultimate power of God, but the bible teaches us that all things are possible to God. (Luke 1:37) He is above all things and has complete rule and authority over everything.

Consider the implications this has for your prayer life. God is able to do all things, which gives us the trust in Him to ask for that which we desire. But just as a loving father does not give his young son a real sword, no matter how badly the son wants it, Our Father gives us that which He knows is good for us. We can pray knowing He both has the power to make it happen and the wisdom to know what's good for His children. (Luke 11:11-13)

In your own words, describe the creation story. What attributes of God are explained through it?

In the creation story, we see God's power revealed in the fact that he creates ex nihilo (out of nothing). Through His word alone, God made everything exist. God didn't rearrange the atoms of the universe to His liking, he told the atoms to exist and they appeared.

We also see God's love and intimacy with man. While everything else in creation is spoken into existence, God lovingly shapes man with his hands. He forms him from the dust and breathes life into him. The Almighty bends his knee and digs in the dirt for relationship with us - and how much further He would sacrifice to maintain that relationship with us is unfathomable. Though his later sacrifice would shadow the love showed to us in creation, let us not forget His love for us displayed even in the means he used to create us!

What implications come from the understanding that we are created in the image of God?

Of all creation, mankind is the only one created in the image and likeness of God. In that, we reflect His beauty and are able to glory Him. We are also given dominion over the earth. When we begin to recognize that ALL people are created as image bearers of God, we can begin to understand the true value, dignity, and equality that every person should be treated with. CS Lewis says it well in his book The Weight of Glory:

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously—no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption.

Man and woman were created good. We reflected God exactly as He intended. We were mirrors of the most holy, but that mirror was shattered when sin entered the world. Now mankind still reflects God, but not perfectly. That is - not until Christ comes back to restore all things to the original goodness.

And in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord...

Define the word "Christ." Why is Jesus often referred to as "Jesus Christ?"

Christ is used so often with Jesus' name that people sometimes confuse it as part of his name. The term Christ is actually a title given to Jesus and comes from the Greek word "Christos" which is translated from the Hebrew word for "Messiah." In the Old Testament, God promises the coming of a messiah, or "anointed one." When we refer to Jesus Christ, we are in all practicality stating he is "Jesus, the Messiah, the anointed one."

Anointing was a common practice for prophets, priests, and kings in the Old Testament (see 1 Kings 19:16, Ex 28:41, and 1 Sam 10:1). But Israel did not long for people who had been anointed to offices; they longed for the one who God promised - THE anointed one. The messiah. Jesus.

How does the truth that Jesus is the Son of God help us understand and explain more clearly what God is like?

Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15) and the exact imprint of His nature (Heb 1:3). From the life of Jesus, we are able to visibly see God's character displayed in humanity. God is not a set of abstract rules, but incarnates the second person of the trinity. By humbling himself to the role of servant and dying our death so that we may live, God displays his love and glory to the whole world. (Phil 2:5-11) But Jesus' life also shows us the authority and dominion God maintains over all creation. By simple touch or word, Christ restores sight in the blind, heals the sick, and raises the dead. This broken world, affected by sin, awaits his return when he can and will restore all things.

It should be noted that though we are all adopted children of God, our relationship to God is different than that of Jesus. In 1 John, Jesus is directly called "the Son of God," while in Romans and Ephesians, Paul separates out the idea of believers being adopted into the family as children of God. We should not get confused with this language, or we risk convoluting the true nature of ourselves or our savior.

What does it mean to call Jesus "our Lord?"

To recognize Jesus as Lord of our lives is to seek and do His will. At the same time, acknowledging that Jesus is the complete and absolute authority of our life.

Have you served Jesus as Lord? In what areas are you struggling?

Personal reflection. Take this time to think about the different ways in which you could better show Christ's preeminence in your life.

Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Jesus is the "exact imprint of [God's] nature." What do you think this means?

Even the best counterfeits always have flaws. We all know this. Paintings, money, etc. If it's a fake, there's something slightly off to the trained eye. Only the exact imprint is the real thing; Christ is the only exact imprint of God's nature because he is God incarnate! As we better understand the trinity, we begin to comprehend even more deeply the beauty displayed in the life of Christ. When we see the life of Jesus, we are able to glimpse into the eternal beauty, majesty, and joy that awaits us in the world to come.

Who Was Conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary

How do you respond to the simple question, "who are you?" Think of a few different answers to explain yourself. I am...

Personal reflection. Consider here how Jesus would respond to the simple question asked of him his entire life. This is what the authors of this creed are trying to clarify - who is this Jesus?

Why is the virgin birth of Jesus as a true historical event important in the Christian faith?

The virgin birth is truly significant for the Christian faith. The prophet Isaiah had foretold of the miraculous nature of the Messiah coming from a virgin (Isa 7:14). Though we do not fully understand the implications of or the reasons for the virgin birth, we can trust the Scriptures and find significant theological implications derived from the doctrine.

Throughout history, people have tried to argue that Christ was either a man, or he was God - missing the truth that he is both! The virgin birth points to the unique nature of Christ in humanity and affirms that our salvation could not come from man alone. In order for our sins to be forgiven, in order for us to have eternal life with a holy God, God himself would need to act on our behalf. The virgin birth shows how much of the plan he controls - all of it.

How is Jesus similar to us? In what ways is He different?

In theology we call this idea the hypostatic union of Christ - Jesus was both fully man and fully God. In the ways that Jesus was fully man, we are similar to him. He was tempted with sin (Heb 4:15), He was a child (Luke 2:40); He got physically tired (John 4:6); He craved food (Matt 4:2); He even felt emotional pain (Heb 5:7) - I think you get the picture here. Jesus was man!

But Jesus is also God, and in some ways was different than us. Though he was tempted with sin, Jesus NEVER sinned! Look back at Hebrews 4:15. Jesus was tempted just as you and I are, but Jesus knew no sin. He led a completely perfect life in order to earn our salvation for us. This is only possible for God.

Jesus is also unlike us in the miraculous nature of his being. Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and was born of a virgin, and then three days after his death resurrected himself from the dead. Though we will share in his resurrection, as the bible teaches that we will be raised and given everlasting life, our resurrection comes from Jesus and his power and authority, not our own.

When we struggle with sin, how does it help to know Jesus was fully man?

Read Hebrews 4:14 - 5:10. Jesus, our great High Priest, understands our pains, our struggles, and our needs. He can relate to our lives, and in that, we are able to approach the throne of God knowing that Christ is our mediator and he relates to us.

What reasons do people give for denying the virgin birth? What do these reasons reveal about the people who claim them?

Many people point to the virgin birth as an impossibility because they have never experienced something like it before. Because it does not fit into their understanding of the way the world works, they deny its possibility and claim it must

be a myth. This reveals that they deny the reliability of the bible and do not trust that God can do anything according to His will.

Suffered Under Pontius Pilate; Was Crucified, Dead and Buried...

Who was Pontius Pilate, and what role did he play in Jesus' death?

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from 26 A.D. to 36 A.D. After Jesus was accused in the counsel of the Sanhedrin, he was handed over to Pilate to be slain. After some questioning in private, Pilate deemed that there was no guilt, and offered to release Jesus, according to the custom of releasing one prisoner during Passover. The crowds roared that they would rather release the robber, Barabbas, but Jesus they desired crucifixion - the most gruesome death sentence.

Pilate indicates that there is no guilt in Jesus and that he does not deserve death, but fearing a Jewish uprising and the threat that not putting someone who they claimed to be a king to death was an attack against Caesar, Pilate hands a guilty man over to the crowds for death. Pilate is more concerned with his safety than with justice and truth.

Many people may wonder why Pilate is mentioned in the Apostle's Creed. By acknowledging him in the creed, Christians are stating that these events happened during a specific, verifiable time in human history. Christ was led to his death during this time, in this place, by this man.

In what ways did Jesus not match the expectations the chief priests had for a king and savior?

As modern day Christians, it's easy to wonder why the whole nation of Israel did not rejoice when they saw Jesus. Shouldn't they have recognized their king and savior?

Many Jewish leaders at the time (and to this day) taught that the Messiah, being a descendant of David, would be a great ruler with authoritative power, and that he would be a conquerer, a great military man. As Christ was on the cross, they even claimed that the Messiah would come down from the cross and prove he was who he claimed to be. (Matt. 27:42)

Compare these images to Jesus' depiction in the bible. He was born in a manger, washed the feet of his disciples, ate with the tax collectors, and rode into town on a donkey. This is not the typical image of a king or great warrior. But He is our King. He has conquered sin and death on our behalf. He is exactly who the prophets of Israel depicted, but the preconceived notions of what the Messiah would look like got in the way of seeing the truth. We should be grateful that it was not man who revealed this to us, but God the Father. (Matt. 16:17)

How can Christians still have wrong expectations of Jesus?

Personal reflection.

Does your life reflect the King you serve? Are you striving for honor, power, or influence, or are you sacrificing for others?

Personal reflection.

What is the significance of the torn curtain? How should it impact the way we pray?

From the times of the Old Testament, the center of the temple was separated out by a large, thick curtain. Behind this curtain was the Holy of Holies - the dwelling place of God on earth. Some historical accounts state that the curtain was 60' tall

and 4' thick. The curtain was to separate the holy God from sin tainted man. Only the High Priest was able to enter this area, and even then, he was only able to come into the presence of God once a year! (Heb 9:1-9)

When Jesus cries out on the cross in death, this veil between man and God is split in two. Through Christ's death, he was able to break the barrier of our sins, and act as the Greater High Priest, allowing us to approach God anytime with confidence. (Heb. 4:14-16)

He Descended to the dead, the Third Day He Rose Again From the Dead...

What does it mean that Christ "died for our sins?"

When God created the heavens and the earth, he made everything in it's perfect form. He created it "very good." (Gen. 1:31) He walked with Adam in the cool of the day, and they had a perfect relationship together. But through the act of sin - the disobedience of God - man was separated from God. The cost of sin were more than separation, sin brought death into the world. The wages of sin are death! (Rom. 6:23)

Because all men and women have sinned, all are destined for death and separation. But Christ, being bountiful in love for us, paid the price for us. He lived the life we couldn't - a perfect one - and died the death we deserved for our sin. Because he took our place in death, we are able to accept eternal life through belief in him. He died for our sins. (1 Cor. 15:3)

Why is the resurrection central to Christianity?

The resurrection singles out the unique nature of Christ and identifies Christ's power and authority over creation. Though there are a few people in the gospels that Jesus raised from the dead, none did it through their own power. They were raised by Jesus himself. But Jesus raised himself from the dead after three days! He must truly be the Son of God to have such power over death. It is precisely because of this authority that we are able to trust in his promise of eternal life freely given to us - he has already proven His Word is all that's needed to conquer death, so we are able to trust completely.

How would things be different if Jesus was not raised from the dead? (See 1 Cor 15:12-19)

Think through all the different ways Paul explains the impact of the resurrection on the Christian life. Our preaching and faith would be useless (v14). Paul would be a liar (v15). Either Jesus was not God, or God died (v16). We would still be condemned to death due to our sin (v17). Ultimately, denying the resurrection is denying our salvation in the work of Jesus. If we remove the resurrection, everything unravels.

There are many views today on what happens after death. What is the Christian's response? How is that more thrilling and credible than the alternatives?

Spend some time in your group to discuss the different views of death. You'll notice that there is a wide range, but the Christian view of death is very different than the rest of the world. Christians believe that there will be a bodily resurrection one day and we will live with God as his people - holy and blameless. We find credibility in this because God promises this to us in scripture, and Christ already went before us. He showed us a glimpse of what is to come.

As you compare the different views of death, think about how much more thrilling it is that Christians are the only ones who think we will retain our unique selves while still being made perfect. We can still enjoy those we know and love on this earth, but the stains of sin will be washed away and we will live in perfect bodies with perfect relationships together.

How should the truth about resurrection affect our attitude toward difficulties in life?

While we still mourn difficult times, we can do so with a hope and knowledge that things will be mended in the future. This life, this time, this struggle is fleeting. It does not need to and should not consume us. We will be brought through any difficulty because God has promised us that he will restore all things, including our bodies and relationships, to a perfect state. Christ is our hope and in Him we can find rest.

He Ascended to Heaven, and Sits on the Right Hand of the Father...

Jesus' Ascension took place 40 days after the resurrection (Acts 1:3). What happened during those forty days?

During the 40 days between Jesus' resurrection and ascension, Jesus appeared to various groups of disciples, ate and drank with them, and also appeared to more than 500 people, most of whom were still alive during the time of Paul (1 Cor 15:6). All of these actions proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God.

What promise is made during the ascension? What response does this elicit in you?

During the ascension, we see a promise from Jesus - that he would send the Holy Spirit to be with us forever (John 14:16). Now, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to live our lives on mission for the Kingdom here on earth (Acts 4:31), and we are being transformed into the likeness of our Lord (2 Cor 3:18).

Personal reflection. Think about the power that is bestowed upon you as a believer. If this does not lead you to a response, ask why.

What is the significance of Christ seated at the right hand of the Father?

The Heidelberg Catechism tells us that Jesus is stated to be at the right hand of the Father to show that Jesus is the head of the church and the one through whom the Father rules all things. The right hand of a ruler is the place of highest honor. Jesus' power and authority over creation are without question.

At the right hand of the Father, Jesus is able to plead our case as the Great High Priest (Heb 7:25).

Have you ever considered why we pray "in Jesus' name?" Does this impact the way you pray now?

Personal reflection. When we pray in the name of Jesus, we are acknowledging that the effectiveness of our prayers is based solely on the work of Christ in past, present, and future. Without him as our savior, we have no merit to plea to a holy God. He opens that door for us freely. Now, we may stand boldly before a perfect Father (Eph 3:12)

Ephesians tells us that the church is Christ's body. What does this mean, and how should it impact our view of it?

Personal reflection.

From Whence He Shall Come to Judge the Living and the Dead...

What do we mean by the "living and the dead?"

At the second coming of Christ, we are saying that both the people who are alive at the moment and the people who have already passed away will be subject to his judgement. He has complete authority and dominion.

Jesus' first coming was that of a servant. How will his second coming look?

Unlike the image of Christ in the gospel accounts, Jesus' second coming will not be that of a gentle servant. When Christ returns for the second time, there will be angels and trumpet calls (Matthew 24:30-31). He returns as one with power and glory. He returns as a judge.

Though we do not have a perfectly painted picture of what the second coming will look like, the bible does give us an understanding that Jesus is not returning to make friends with his enemies. There will be destruction (Luke 17:28-30; Matt 24:37-39)

See Matthew 25:31-46.

Do you find the prospect of Jesus as the judge disturbing or comforting? Why?

Personal reflection. For the Christian, we have no need to fear. We should eagerly await the return of our king who will make all things perfect.

What would people assume you thought about life after death if they looked at how you lived your life today?

Personal reflection. Are you living for the moment, or are you living with an eternal focus?

In what ways can we be living our life today for the life to come?

Personal reflection.

I believe in the Holy Spirit...

In your own words, describe who the Holy Spirit is and what He does?

The first and most important point is that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the trinity and therefore God. Though much more could be said of the Holy Spirit's role within the trinity, here are a few main points.

The Holy Spirit dwells within the believer as a comforter and counselor; He helps to convict us of our sin so that we may continue to be refined into the image of Christ; He is an assurance of our salvation - as only believers are dwelling places of the Holy Spirit - as a taste of the glory and eternal communion with God to come.

What does it look like to be living in the Spirit?

As the Holy Spirit convicts the believer of sin, the Christian will begin to bear fruit. Just as one should expect an apple tree to produce apples, a Christian's life should be one with the fruits of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Gal 5:22).

Much like an orchard has some trees that bear much fruit and others that bear few, so it is in the church. Some Christians who have walked with God longer or more closely will show these personality traits more naturally than Christians who are new to the faith. The Holy Spirit is helping to shape the believer into a reflection of the Lord they serve.

Imagine your friend doubts he is a Christian because of sin in his life. How would you respond to him?

The response to our friend will differ depending on his relationship with God and his reason for the guilt in his sin. If he is a man who has believed in God and shown fruits of the spirit, we should encourage him that this is the Holy Spirit reminding him of who he is in Christ. His sin, no matter how large it may seem, has already been paid for through Jesus' death, and he should turn from the sin knowing he is already forgiven. He already realizes the sin is against God, otherwise he would feel no guilt. But when we think about ourselves in sin, we need to remember that God does not look down from heaven with anger or judgement. If you picture the Father's face as anything other than loving, there is a misunderstanding of God's sight of us through Jesus. Our friend is saved; he is a Christian; he just needs to repent and ask the Holy Spirit to empower him to defeat this sin in his life.

We should also consider the idea that this friend never showed any indications of being a Christian in his life. Perhaps this is his stumbling block for coming to Christ in the first place - "but my sin is so big. How could a person like me be saved?" If this is where our friend is coming from, now is the perfect opportunity to lay out the gospel. Help him to understand that we all stand in the same position; no matter what our sins may look like to the world, they all demand the same penalty - death. But God being full of mercy and love for us bore the weight of all our sins. Living the life we could never live and dying the death we all deserve, Jesus took our sins upon himself and gives us his perfect righteousness. Believing in this truth is the only thing we need to do to be saved from our sins - past, present, and future. It's free and it gives us an eternal life with Him.

What gifts has God given you? How do you use them for His glory?
Personal reflection.

If the Holy Spirit dwells inside us, how then can we live?

We have the Holy Spirit living inside of us, and with this amazing blessing, we have been set free from the slavery of sin. Before conversion, we were controlled by the sins of our flesh and hostile to God (Romans 8:5-8). Now that we are Christians living with God indwelling us, we are free to live a life pleasing to God. We are able to put sin to death through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of Sin...

What is implied in the words "catholic church?" How should this affect the way we look at the church?

First of all, we should note that the word catholic is not capitalized here. We are not speaking about the Roman Catholic church - here the word catholic means the universal church of Christianity. There is no specific ethnic or cultural background for the Christian church. We are all reconciled to God and each other through Christ Jesus (Eph 2:11-18)

When we begin to understand the implications of a church universal, we can now see that our congregation is not alone in the world or in history. We come together to worship an eternal God with people of all nationalities, tribes, and cultures throughout the ages. The church is more than a meeting in your building on a Sunday morning - we believe that all Christians belong to one holy catholic church.

How can you more fully belong to and get involved with your church?

Personal reflection.

First of all, membership may be a great next step for you. As a member of a church, you are declaring ownership in the mission and vision of that congregation and you're vowing to empower that organization by partnering with it. You also develop connections as part of the body, helping the whole church become more effective by using the talents God has given you.

Secondly, joining a Grace Community. These are smaller gatherings in people's homes that help people take their next steps towards Christ through friendship, care, and practical growth.

Third, you can serve on a ministry team. There are many places you can plug in and use the skills, talents, and gifts that God has given you. The church body is made up of people with all kinds of talents. By not using them for the kingdom, you are depriving the whole church of your potential, but by pressing into one of the teams, everyone makes the church stronger and better.

Who are the individuals who have really helped you in your faith? How?

Personal reflection.

Why is real forgiveness so difficult both to offer and to accept? How does that apply to our relationship with God?

Personal reflection.

Often, we have a hard time truly forgiving others. And when we're pressed by other people to forgive someone we respond with something like, "but you just don't understand how badly they hurt me." We may want to forgive, but the pain is too deep. Or maybe someone is offering you forgiveness but you don't want to accept it - "I don't need forgiveness. What I did wasn't a big deal."

Now imagine our sin against God. He made everything perfect and loves us as his people. Even knowing that, we have all made choices that drive a wedge between us and Him and have said with our actions, "God, you're not enough for me. I can find better." But instead of holding a grudge or making us pay the consequences of our sin, He paid the consequences for us. He died so we wouldn't have to. Because of Jesus' loving sacrifice, now God can throw our sins as far as the

west (Ps 103:11-12) and completely forgive us. There's nothing for us to do but receive it freely.

We've all heard people say "I'm ok with Jesus; it's the church I can't stand." How would you respond to someone who claims that?

Loving Jesus and hating the church is not a possibility. That's not to say that we can't find fault in the church, or we need to completely love every aspect of it, but we can't be apart from it. The bible regularly refers to the church as the bridegroom of Christ. Christ gave up his life for the church to present her as radiant and holy (Eph 2). The church is the means that God has ordained to save the world, so we cannot hate his plan to save the world.

When most people say they hate the church, they do not look at it in this way. Instead, they are honing in on the individual sinners sitting in the pews. They call them hypocrites and point out all the ways they fail to live like the Christ they worship. But Christ did not come to earth to hang out with the pharisees, he came forgive the sins of all who should believe in him. Just as we have been graciously forgiven, we should be gracious to others. The church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints.

The Resurrection of the Body, and Life Everlasting.

If God is going to renew our physical bodies in a renewed physical earth - how should the affect our attitude to our bodies here and now?

God's plan is not that we are going to be some disembodied spirits hovering around for all of eternity - as some people think. God has promised us a physical resurrection, and by doing so, he is showing us that he finds importance in it. As Christians, we can find hope in this renewal. Though our bodies suffer age, disability, sickness, or don't live up to our expectations here, we can trust that God will make all things perfect - including our bodies - in the world to come.

What is God's plan for Christians? How can we be confident?

Christians will be made perfect and share in the glory of Christ for all eternity. This is no small thing. Unlike other world religions that say you can be more or slightly better after death if you're a good person, Christians know that there is nothing better or more perfect than what God will make us after death. We call this glorification. We trust in it because God has promised us in His Word, and God is not a liar. That which He promises must come true. Out of His love for us, He also has given us a foretaste of what is to come when He gave us the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:23). And nothing can remove us from his love (Romans 8:38-39).

How can the truth about heaven help those who are suffering now?

In heaven, all things will be brought back to their perfect intended state. Whatever illness or issue we face in this world is not waiting for us when we get to heaven. We will be made perfect and we will live for eternity as such.

What do you imagine Heaven and eternal life to look like?

Personal reflection. See 1 Corinthians 2:9.

What aspects of eternal life are you experiencing right now? What aspects are you most looking forward to?

Personal reflection. You have relationship with God that will only be strengthened and deepened when we experience physical death. You also have community with other believers, but that will be more glorious when we get to heaven, too.