



believe.

*“The work
of God is this:
to believe in
the One he
has sent”
John 6.29*



**8 talks
to help you think
through your beliefs**

Autumn 2020

Does it matter what we believe?

The very idea of belief is under attack. Fake news, lies from those in authority and exposure to an ever greater range of personal beliefs all combine to make it hard to know what and who to believe. Or even if belief matters any more.

"It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are kind"

In our culture many would subscribe to this statement, but it contains two fundamental flaws:

1. If true, we can ignore this statement about kindness being important, because what the speaker believes about kindness doesn't matter.
2. If true, we can't know what kindness truly is. Judging behaviour as kind or unkind depends entirely on what you believe kindness is.

Beliefs do matter. Our beliefs determine all our behaviour. So what is distinctive about Christian beliefs?

What is distinctive about Christian beliefs?

Well..... pretty much everything! To be a Christian is to hold a radically distinctive set of beliefs about life, the universe and God. Because our culture has historic Christian foundations, we may not appreciate just how radical and exciting and transforming Christian belief is. We need to look again at our inheritance.

In times gone by, 95% of Christians subscribed to their beliefs without ever fully examining them. Today, the same can be said of many atheists. Whatever we believe, if we are wise we will invest time in working out what we believe because our beliefs really matter.

And there is no better time than now.

The Coronavirus pandemic is testing our beliefs to the limit:

- who can we trust?
- where are we placing our hope?
- who can secure the future for us?

To be a Christian is to be a person who – when it really matters – puts our trust not in governments, scientists or ourselves, but in a person – Jesus Christ. In these 8 talks we will explore what Christians believe about the world and why belief in Jesus is so central and life changing.

*"To believe in something, and not to live it, is dishonest."
Gandhi*

For a paper copy of this leaflet, please contact the Parish Office on 01628 481806

believe.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came
down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit
and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified
under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and
is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds
from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy
catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.

Who wrote it?

We will be studying the Nicene Creed, which developed gradually over the first 3 centuries of the church. It was not written or owned by any one group but grew out of early creedal formulas circulating in the churches. Some of the earliest of these are recorded in the New Testament (e.g. Romans 10.9, 1 Timothy 3.16 & Philippians 2. 6-11).

As the church spread into new places and languages, the need arose for people to be confident they were still following the original faith and not a distortion of it. This creed was agreed at the Council of Nicea in 325. Ever since it has been used across the worldwide church as a touchstone of orthodox, biblical Christian belief.

Did you know?

There are two other widely used creeds, the Apostles Creed and the less well-known Athanasian Creed.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/what-we-believe/apostles-creed>

believe.

Rooted and Growing

The world is now changing so rapidly that new belief systems appear and disappear with dizzying speed (remember the self-help movement?). Christian faith does not change with the latest fashionable ideology – it is rooted in a tried and tested belief system that stretches back unbroken for 2,000 years.

At the same time, Christian faith is alive and growing. Every generation of the church is called to reinterpret the faith afresh for a new generation, bringing life and growth. Today over 2.2 billion of us are engaged in this task!

Properly understood, Christian belief is like a tree: it has deep roots which do not shift and change, but provide a secure anchor for life. These roots do not need to be invented; they are given. We find them in the biblical texts and the historic Creeds which those texts shaped. Secure in these roots, the church is free to flourish and grow. The roots nourish a living, growing and fruitful faith that reaches out to new places.

What does “Creed” mean?

In Latin, these historic statements of faith begin with the word “credo”, which simply means “I believe”.

“We” or “I”?

Sometimes the first word of the creed is written as “We” and sometimes “I”.

Originally it was “I believe”, which reflects the importance of each taking responsibility for our own beliefs and actions. We can’t blame them on others but must own our choices.

But it is also important to say “We believe”, because the community of disciples down the ages, across all denominations, has always found unity in shared belief. We all believe in one Lord Jesus. We are not free to invent our own personal Jesuses. When we reinvent Jesus (and we do) he ends up looking a lot like us. “We believe” reminds us of the need to return to who Jesus really is and always has been. The Jesus we discover for ourselves is the same Jesus others have also discovered.

“These words are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”
John 20:31

If you don’t stand for something,
you will fall for anything. *Anon*

believe.

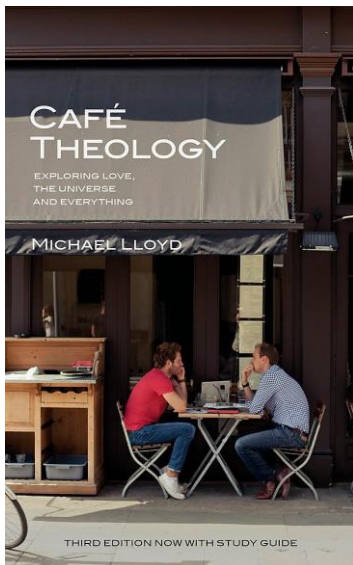
Exploring the meaning of the Creed week by week

4 th Oct	"We believe...."	Does belief matter? Isn't Dogma dead? Can we choose what we believe?	Romans 12:1-2
11 th Oct	The Father	What does it mean to call God The Creator, maker of all that is seen & unseen?	Genesis 1:1-5
18 th Oct	The only Son of God	How do we describe the identity of Jesus and why does it matter anyway?	John 1:1-14
25 th Oct	He died, was buried and rose again	Why did Jesus have to die? And what difference does belief in resurrection make?	Romans 3:21-26, 1 Corinthians 15.12-17
1 st Nov	The Holy Spirit	Does God give life? Does he speak? If so, how?	John 16.5-15
8 th Nov	The Church	What are the marks of a healthy church?	Ephesians 2.10-22
15 th Nov	One Baptism	How does belief lead to belonging?	Colossians 2.6-15
22 nd Nov	Christ the King	"He will come again in glory ... we look for the resurrection of the dead"	Matthew 6.19-24

Take your brain seriously!

Week by week, we will delve into scripture to understand Christian beliefs more deeply. I challenge you to properly think through your beliefs and seek "the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). To get the most out of this series, why not read the bible passage thoughtfully before Sunday? Ask yourself what it means. What questions does it raise for you? What would you really like to know? Don't settle for being taught.... be someone who wants to learn!

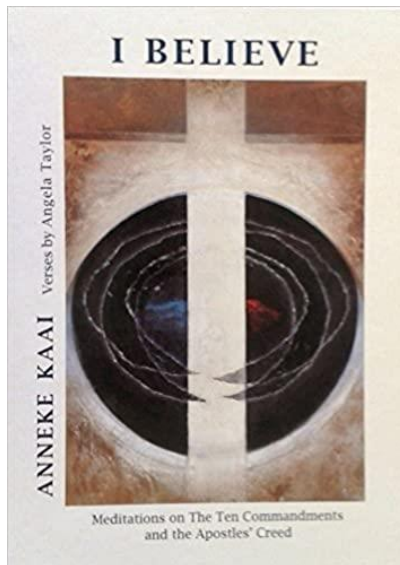
Recommended books



Café Theology

Michael Lloyd

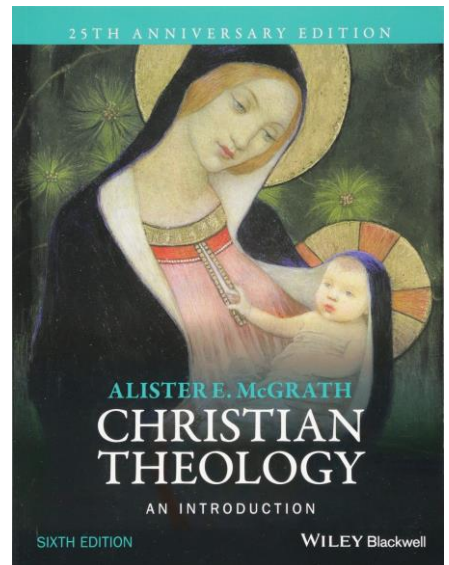
A brilliant introduction to Christian belief



I believe

Anneke Kaai

Meditations on the creed in word and picture



Christian Theology

Alister McGrath

Best selling textbook on Christian theology

Exploring your beliefs in more depth - GodPod

GodPod is a podcast produced by St Paul's Theological Centre in London. It discusses questions of life, theology and belief in a rigorous but accessible way. There are over 150 episodes and a searchable index (including "Dinosaurs" and "Brexit"!!) Why not give it a go?

www.sptc.htb.org/godpod

Talks 4U

All our sermons are available to listen to again on our YouTube channel (4U-Team Marlow)

Or you can listen on these podcast channels

[iTunes](#) | [Spotify](#) | [TuneIn](#) | [Podbean](#)



"Anyone who believes in me will live, even though they die.... Do you believe this?" *John 11:25*

believe.