

Believe It:
God The Father

The early Christian Church didn't have so many of the advantages that we have today. Christians didn't own complete copies of the Bible. The Hebrew manuscripts were mainly written on leather.

1QIsa^a is one of the most famous of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It's twenty-four and a half feet long and ten and a half inches high. It consists of seventeen pieces of sheepskin that have been sewn together into a single scroll. That's just one Old Testament book.

Much of the oldest New Testament books were written on papyrus, which was made out of the center of reeds that were stripped out and then woven together and glued on a board.

Texts of scripture were often bulky and hard to work with. Jews normally went to the Synagogue to hear the Bible read and in the very early church most people heard the scriptures read in church gatherings.

Gutenberg didn't even invent the printing press until 1439. Before that, all scripture was hand copied. Chapter divisions weren't added until the 13th century and verse numbering came along in the 16th century.

Now we just open up the YouVersion app on our iPhones and go right to the verses we want to read.

Another thing the very early church didn't have was centuries of biblical scholarship to look back on. Christianity is a historical faith. We have volumes of interpretive and exegetical work to help us understand the Bible.

They were like the first in line. That meant that the early church writers spent considerable time and effort trying to express the doctrinal truths of the Bible in the form of creeds.

Creeds were statements of faith that expressed the fundamental elements of Christianity. The Latin word *credo* means "I believe."

One of the earliest of the creeds is known as the Apostle's Creed. Some of you came from churches where you repeated the Apostle's Creed every Sunday.

That can be good or bad depending on how you process what your saying. If you just

mindlessly rattled off what you had memorized, you really missed a valuable theology lesson. But if you consciously and purposely said the creed you were reinforcing some powerful biblical teaching.

So, for all of you people who came out of churches who recited the Apostle's Creed, here's a test. What's the first line?

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

Today is week three in a series we're calling *Believe It!* What we're doing is studying through the creed of Faith Community Church. We call it our statement of faith. Our goal is to help you have a ready answer when people ask you what you believe and why you believe it.

Today we've come to point three in our articles of faith: **The Person and Work of the Father.** "God the Father is sovereign ruler over everything, and He becomes the believer's Father at the new birth. God the Father so loved His creation that He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to become our only means of salvation. Other works of the Father include the sending of the Holy Spirit to indwell the believer forever at salvation, and answering prayer."

When you say *Credo*, "I believe," what is it that you believe about God? As we said last week when we looked at the topic of the Trinity, what you believe about God has a profound effect on the way you live your life.

This morning I'd like us to use the opening statement of the Apostle's Creed (*I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth*) as the basis, or the outline for our study of what the Bible says about God. But I'd like to look at it from end to beginning. So we'll start with *maker of heaven and earth*.

I. God Is The Creator

Richard Dawkins is one of the new breed of atheist authors. His Richard Dawkins Foundation For Reason And Science promotes it's mission as: to support scientific education, critical thinking and evidence-based understanding of the natural world in the quest to overcome religious fundamentalism, superstition, intolerance and suffering.

In an interview with Salon.com Dawkins said: "There is just no evidence for the existence of God. Evolution by natural selection is a process that works up from simple beginnings, and simple beginnings are easy to explain. The relevance of

evolutionary biology to atheism is that evolutionary biology gives us the only known mechanism whereby the illusion of design, or apparent design, could ever come into the universe anywhere.”

Did you catch that? Evolutionary biology gives us the illusion of design. So when we see obvious design in creation it's only there by change. Sorry, I don't have that much faith.

As you read everyone of the popular atheist writers they all say the same thing. Materialistic evolution gave them the intellectual basis for rejecting the existence of God.

But now turn to **Genesis 1 page 1**

Read verse 1

The reason that atheists love materialistic evolution is because the Bible is crystal clear. In fact, it's almost like God anticipated our day and let us know in the very first verse that He is the creator.

Read verse 2-5

Throughout the rest of this chapter God says, “Let there be” and there was. And not only that, but He gave us a time marker for each of the six days of creation; *there was evening, and there was morning.*

If we're going to be intellectually honest with the Bible we're going to have to conclude that it teaches divine creation in six literal days.

Just so there wouldn't be any misunderstanding about the days in Genesis God put the specifics in the 10 commandments.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work... For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:9-11)

When I read Genesis 1, I see such a harmony with the evidence at hand. If evolution took place over millions of years then the fossil record would show that change. Not only should we have fossils of each fully functioning completed animal but we should have millions of fossils of the transition forms along the way. In fact we should have more fossils of the transitional forms than of the fully developed animal because it took so long for the changes to come about. But not only don't we have more, we don't have any in

between forms

The fossil record shows life at its beginning being abundant and developed in intricate complexity.

Along with that, the first and second laws of thermodynamics say that while the amount of energy in a closed system remains constant, its usefulness always decreases. The less useful energy you have the more randomness and disorder you have. Clocks run down, fires burn out, flowerbeds turn to weeds, hybrids go back to being wild.

In other words we have less and less useful energy. Things tend toward disorder not complexity. Our earth is slowing on its axis; our solar system is running down. Eventually the sun will burn out. Things aren't evolving, just the opposite is happening.

God created all that is. He set it in motion.

Eyes and ears and lungs didn't develop because creatures need to see, hear and breathe. That's like saying water will run up the side of a mountain because it needs to get to the top. There's no mechanism to make evolution take place.

The facts point to a special creation. But even if we didn't have the fossil records we still have the Bible and the Bible is as firm and trustworthy in Genesis chapter 1 as It's in John chapter 3.

Who is God? He is creator. What you believe about Him will impact how you live. Here's what the Bible boldly declares:

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you. (Nehemiah 9:6)

If you believe that God is creator you will worship Him and not the creation. You'll care for the creation, but you won't worship it.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. (Revelation 4:11)

And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay! (Revelation 10:6)

If you believe that God is creator then you believe He determines the fate of His creation. In the book of revelation, part of the great confidence we have that the Kingdom of God

will prevail comes from the fact that God made everything and therefore He ultimately controls everything.

Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools. (Romans 1:20-22)

If we deny that God is creator we lose objectivity and perspective. We end up believing anything and falling for the most far out stuff.

German scientist Ernst Haeckel, Darwin's staunchest supporter in nineteenth-century Europe, put out a series of drawings purportedly showing embryonic development of various animals including human beings.

The drawings supposedly proved that all species show the various stages of evolutionary development throughout their gestation.

In scientific jargon, ontology recapitulates phylogeny.

The problem was Haeckel forged the drawings. They weren't even remotely accurate. That was in the late 1800's.

Now listen to this: Steven J. Gould, who is an ardent evolutionist himself wrote in 2000, ... "[W]e do, I think, have the right to be both astonished and ashamed by the century of mindless recycling that has led to the persistence of these drawings in a large number, if not the majority, of modern textbooks!"

A hundred years later and they're still using drawings that everybody knows are fake as evidence for macroevolution in textbooks.

This quote is from Wikipedia. Michael K. Richardson, Professor of Evolutionary Developmental Zoology, Leiden University, while recognizing that some criticisms of the drawings are legitimate, has supported the drawings as teaching aids, and has said that "on a fundamental level, Haeckel was correct."

If we deny that God is creator we lose objectivity and perspective. Here's the real motivation.

If we deny that God is creator then we're free to set our own standards of personal

morality.

I. God Is The Creator

II. God Is The Almighty

The word “Almighty” is used 57 times in the Bible. In every case it refers to God and God alone.

Genesis 17 page 13

Our statement of faith says, “God the Father so loved His creation that He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to become our only means of salvation.”

The Bible is a development of that story from the first sin of humanity. Around 1900 BC God called a man we know as Abraham out of his homeland in Mesopotamia and gave him a set of promises.

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:2,3)

That was a promise that through Abraham would come the Jewish people and therefore Jesus Christ who would bless the world.

By the time you get to chapter 17, Abraham who was supposed to be the father of a great nation, was 99 and had no child with Sarah, his wife.

So here’s God’s promise, **Read verses 1, 2, 19**

That’s a formidable promise to make a couple in their 90s. It would take a mighty God to fulfill that promise. So just to give Abraham the encouragement he needed look what God calls Himself.

He says, *I am Almighty God*. This is the first time when the Bible uses this term. The Hebrew word is *Shaddai*. It’s usually coupled with the Hebrew word for God, *El*.

In the 9 New Testament references the word “Almighty” is a translation of the Greek *pantokrator* which comes from *pas* which means “all” and *kratos*, which means “strength.” God is *El Shaddi*, He’s the one with all strength.

But what I thought was really interesting was this, out of the 57 uses of “Almighty” in the Bible, 31 of them are in the Book of Job. There’s a practical message for us right there.

Job is a book about a man who suffers intently. He starts off with a real trust in God but as things drag on for him he starts complaining and gets self-righteous. Job begins to question God.

Finally God says this: *Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know!*

Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth and issued from the womb when I made the clouds its garment, And thick darkness its swaddling band. (Job 38:4-9)

For 80 verses God goes on to point to His power and His might. He doesn't answer Job's "why" questions. Those are the ones that get us all bent out of shape too. We want to know "why?"

Instead of God telling Job why the hard stuff happened in his life, God reminds Job who the Almighty is. God reminds Job that He's the creator, not Job. He's the all-powerful one, not job. He's the one full of strength and wisdom, not Job.

I believe the most important thing we can know is not all the stuff we usually think we need to know. What we really need to know is that our God is *El Shaddi*. Our God is the Almighty. He can handle our stuff, no problem.

Life might not always turn in the direction we'd like it to. Everything isn't going to be smooth sailing, pain free living. But we have an infinitely strong God who is sovereign ruler over everything.

Nothing catches Him off guard. Nothing jumps out and hits God by surprise.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I. God Is The Creator

II. God Is The Almighty

III. God Is The Father

We say, "God the Father is sovereign ruler over everything, and He becomes the believer's Father at the new birth."

The New Testament uses the phrase “the Father” 109 times referring to God. Jesus calls God “My Father” 57 times.

Now we know from the Bible that in reality God is spirit and doesn’t have gender the way we do. Jesus put it this way: *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.* (John 4:24)

And interestingly in the Greek text that verse begins with the word “spirit” not the word “God.” You can switch word order around in Greek for emphasis. The literal idea would be something like, “Absolutely spirit in His essence is God.” Kind of a Yoda rendering.

At the same time the Bible says we are all made in His image. *God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* (Genesis 1:27)

The image of God is male and female so there are times when you can sense the compassion of the feminine. At one point Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!* (Luke 13:24)

Here’s some statements God made in Hosea chapter 11... *When Israel was a child, I loved him... I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks, I bent down to them and fed them... How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? my compassion grows warm and tender...*

But the main way that God chose to reveal Himself as Father. That wasn’t because the Bible is sexist or anti-women. It wasn’t because that’s just the way everyone thought thousands of years ago. I believe the choice of the designation “Father” was chosen very carefully. Everything that God expresses is chosen carefully and purposefully.

Our earthly fathers might have failed us at times. Some of them might have failed us all the time. They weren’t around.

But God is the perfect Father who provides direction, teaching, love, discipline, protection, and shows the ultimate patience.

And so in a creative sense God is the Father of everyone in the whole world whether they recognize Him or not. The Bible says, *We are the offspring of God.* (Acts 17:29)

But the Bible moves quickly from the general to the specific. There's something within us that drives us to want to know our Father. I've watched kids whose father wasn't involved in their lives stand at the front window of our house for hours waiting because dad promised them he'd come pick them up.

It didn't matter that dad had broken that promise scores of times before. It didn't matter that they had felt let down, hurt, and rejected. It was dad and they were going to stand by that window until it got dark even though he told them he'd be there at 1PM just in the hope that this time would be different.

That's us without God in our lives. We long to know reality. We want unconditional love. We want that father who we can trust and depend on. But there's something wrong. There's a separation. There's a block between us.

This is the whole message of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We've chosen to go our way instead of God's way over and over again. God calls that "going our own way" sin.

The Bible says... *Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you.* (Isaiah 59:2)

Turn to Isaiah chapter 53 page 722

The message of restoration and forgiveness didn't begin in the New Testament. This was written 700 BC.

Read verses 3-6

The creator, the Almighty, the Father sent His Son to be our redeemer. We went astray, we transgressed, it was our iniquities. But the Father laid all those on His Son so that we could be justified.

Jesus put it this way... *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* (John 3:3)

Then He went on to explain how being born into God's family takes place... *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.* (John 3:16, 17)

How about you this morning? Can you call God Father? Not just in the creator sense, but in the most intimate and personal sense?

Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ? The best you know how have you believed in Him and received Him as your personal savior or are you still standing at the window hoping He's going to show up?

Here's the ultimate Good News. He already has shown up. He's here. He waiting for your response.