

# Week 6

## the creed: i believe in the forgiveness of sins



- Welcome (5-10 minutes)

Read Max Lucado's 'You are Special' and feel good about yourselves!

- Worship (10-15 minutes)



**pray**

*Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who  
sin against us ...*

- Word (50 minutes)

We live in a blame culture. If something goes wrong, we feel that it is our right to have 'satisfaction' for that wrong. This has come to mean that we may expect financial recompense for even the most trivial of, what used to be called, accidents. Forgiveness is a gift that is bestowed as an act of grace, often on an undeserving recipient.

Read the Apostles' Creed together.

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our  
Lord.*

*He was conceived by the power of the  
Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.*

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.*

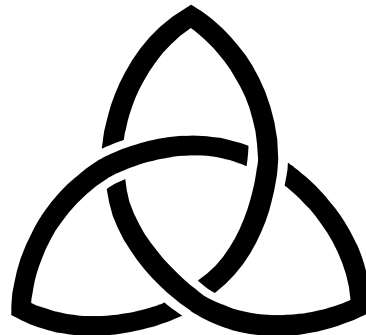
*He descended to the dead.*

*On the third day he rose again.*

*He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the  
Father...*

*...He will come again to judge the living  
and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
**the forgiveness of sins,**  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.*



Much has been made of the credit crunch in recent weeks ... there has been a weighing of what we are allowed to owe to credit companies (banks, lenders, mortgages, cards etc) which has been set against our new levels of ability to pay them back. There will be a rise in bankruptcy, repossession of homes and the use of loan-sharks.

The sin that is committed against God is stacked up against us as unpaid debt. Indeed, some translations of the Lord's prayer ask for the forgiveness of our 'debts as we forgive our debtors.'

Read the passage:

### *An Official Who Refused To Forgive*

21Peter came up to the Lord and asked, "How many times should I forgive someone who does something wrong to me? Is seven times enough?" 22Jesus answered: Not just seven times, but seventy-seven times! 23This story will show you what the kingdom of heaven is like: One day a king decided to call in his officials and ask them to give an account of what they owed him. 24As he was doing this, one official was brought in who owed him fifty million silver coins. 25But he didn't have any money to pay what he owed. The king ordered him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all he owned, in order to pay the debt. 26The official got down on his knees and began begging, "Have pity on me, and I will pay you every cent I owe!" 27The king felt sorry for him and let him go free. He even told the official that he did not have to pay back the money. 28As the official was leaving, he happened to meet another official, who owed him a hundred silver coins. So he grabbed the man by the throat. He started choking him and said, "Pay me what you owe!" 29The man got down on his knees and began begging, "Have pity on me, and I will pay you back." 30But the first official refused to have pity. Instead, he went and had the other official put in jail until he could pay what he owed. 31When some other officials found out what had happened, they felt sorry for the man who had been put in jail. Then they told the king what had happened. 32The king called the first official back in and said, "You're an evil man! When you begged for mercy, I said you did not have to pay back a cent. 33Don't you think you should show pity to someone else, as I did to you?" 34The king was so angry that he ordered the official to be tortured until he could pay back everything he owed. 35That is how my Father in heaven will treat you, if you don't forgive each of my followers with all your heart. **Matthew 18 (NCV)**



**Guilt can be one of the most debilitating states to live in. To be aware of your own failure, often at another person's expense can result in a brooding melancholy that eats away at your peace of mind, and in its more extreme forms can lead to sleepless nights, poor concentration and worse!**

- Talk about things that have left you 'feeling guilty', even if they were just trivial. Why is guilt so powerful?

**Being on the receiving end of someone's wrong-doing can be horrible. The effects of the person's actions can have long-lasting repercussions for you to deal with and recover from.**

- Would you describe yourself as a person who forgives ...

Never ----- rarely ----- now & then ----- sometimes ----- often ----- always

- Is it a quality that you wish you were more accomplished in?

- Talk about situations in which being ready to forgive would help you to function more effectively?
- Share thoughts and ideas about how we might find it easier to forgive.

*We have no resources with which to repay what we owe. All that we could give to God is already part of what we owe. Our only hope is mercy. The only way the debt can be removed is if God graciously cancels it. One day we shall all stand in the debtors' court, where our arrears will be revealed, our bank balance will be examined. Our only hope is the mercy of our Creditor. (p.164 Chester)*

**Understanding how difficult it can be to forgive those who do wrong towards us can help us to appreciate the magnitude of God's grace in forgiving our sins.**

- Spend some time in prayer as a group, listen to the CD if it helps, and thank God for his gracious forgiveness towards you. Bring to mind any sins that you have not confessed to him and do it now. Focus on the cross of Jesus and bring to mind the line from the hymn, "There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin ... He only could unlock the gates of heaven and let us in ..."



*Eternal Father, in whom mercy is endless,  
And the treasury of compassion – inexhaustible,  
Look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy on us,  
That in difficult moments we might not despair  
Nor become despondent,  
But with great confidence  
Submit ourselves to your Holy Will,  
Which is Love and Mercy itself.*

St Maria Faustino

**Look at the Bible passage. The king is merciful but expects those who have known his mercy to show it to others.**

- Underline the relevant parts of the passage. Talk about your feelings towards the unmerciful servant.

**Chester describes God's response to our sin in terms of a court appearance.**

- Look at who has authority to judge and condemn in the passage. Talk about the two people whose roles we most often occupy. What might God expect of us?
- Compare the scale of forgiveness which the king offers with that asked of the official. Why do the 'small things' present us with difficulty in letting them go?



- **Witness (20 – 25 minutes)**

Being holier-than-thou is a charge levelled at Christians. Talk about what this means 'in the wider world.'

No sin is worse in God's sight than any other as every sin results in separation from God. Every sin finds forgiveness through the cross of Jesus. Bringing ourselves to the point of repentance is the big stumbling block ... a person close to Jesus has a different responsibility for their conduct than the person who does not yet know Him.

**pray** Pray for those who suffer through an unequal sharing of human grace in the world.

- **Time for refreshments, you've earned them!**



Bibliography

Tim Chester, *The Message of Prayer*, BST, IVP, 2003  
Max Lucado, *You are Special*, Candle Books, 1997

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Dear Leaders

Welcome to week 6 of the Apostle's Creed!

*You are Special* is a children's book. The Tab bookshop will probably have it. I have one copy. It can also be found in video form on youtube!

You will need a simple focus for prayer during the session. I imagine this being a quiet time, but there is no reason why, if you feel it appropriate, that it shouldn't be spoken, at least in part.

You will need a copy of a CD with 'when I survey' or similar that focuses on Jesus' gift.

Housegroups' Party is on 12<sup>th</sup> December ... please ask members to put the date in their diaries.

Also, please remind group members about the reading rota at church which is now on a 'sign-up' basis. New voices would be much appreciated!

Have a great time and enjoy your group this week

Every Blessing

catherine