

The Apostles' Creed

Lesson 2

God the Father

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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ABOUT THIRDMILL

Founded in 1997, Thirdmill is a non-profit Evangelical Christian ministry dedicated to providing:

Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.

Our goal is to offer free Christian education to hundreds of thousands of pastors and Christian leaders around the world who lack sufficient training for ministry. We are meeting this goal by producing and globally distributing an unparalleled multimedia seminary curriculum in English, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Our curriculum is also being translated into more than a dozen other languages through our partner ministries. The curriculum consists of graphic-driven videos, printed instruction, and internet resources. It is designed to be used by schools, groups, and individuals, both online and in learning communities.

Over the years, we have developed a highly cost-effective method of producing award-winning multimedia lessons of the finest content and quality. Our writers and editors are theologically-trained educators, our translators are theologically-astute native speakers of their target languages, and our lessons contain the insights of hundreds of respected seminary professors and pastors from around the world. In addition, our graphic designers, illustrators, and producers adhere to the highest production standards using state-of-the-art equipment and techniques.

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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (1:01)

II. God (4:04)

A. Singularity (5:53)

God is the only God that exists.

1. Polytheism (6:29)

Definition: Belief in the existence of multiple gods

In polytheism, no one god can claim to be the only supernatural being who exercises control over the universe.

In the world of the early church, most non-Christians were polytheists.

Reasons for polytheism:

- often required by law

- sinfulness of human beings

2. **Monotheism (11:45)**

Definition: Belief in only one god

Scripture asserts that there is only one God:

- 1 Kings 8:60 – The Lord is God ... there is no other.
- Psalm 86:10 – You alone are God.
- 2 Kings 19:19 – You alone, O Lord, are God.
- Romans 3:30 – There is only one God.
- James 2:19 – You believe that there is one God. Good!

Not all monotheistic religions worship the same god.

- Judaism: deny the Trinitarian God that the Bible reveals

- Islam: believe there is no “community of being” within God

- Christianity: believe one God exists in three persons

3. Christianity (18:20)

The Creed does not explicitly say that there is only one God.

The Creed is organized around a Trinitarian formula.

The Creed denies polytheism by using the singular form of the generic word “god” as a divine name.

Names of God:

- El Shaddai: Almighty God
- El Elyon: God Most High
- Adonai: Lord, Master, Ruler
- Yahweh: Jehovah, Lord, I AM

The Creed indicates that the God of Christianity is the only one who deserves to be called “God.”

B. Simplicity (25:45)

God's essence is not a composite of different substances, but a unified whole consisting of only one substance.

God's essence:

- fundamental nature
- substance that makes up his being
- not a composite of different substances
- unified whole consisting of only one substance

The Bible insists that there is only one God... one divine being, who exists in three persons.

III. Father Almighty (31:35)**A. Name (31:44)**

Father:

- Creator of all things
- Denotes relationship believers have with God as adopted sons and daughters
- Denotes relationship between Jesus and his Father

When God is called “Father” in the Old Testament, the reference is to the entire Trinity.

There are times when the New Testament refers to the entire Trinity as “Father.”

Scripture uses the word “Father” in another sense to refer to a person of the Trinity that is distinct from the Son and Holy Spirit.

B. Person (37:59)

Perspectives on the Trinity:

- Ontological Trinity
 - relating to being
 - essence

- Economic Trinity
 - relating to household management
 - how Father, Son and Holy Spirit relate to one another as distinct personalities

Father: “First Person”

- Ontological Trinity:
 - Son: generated by the Father (“eternally generated”)
 - Holy Spirit: proceeds from the Father (“eternally proceeds”)

- Economic Trinity
 - authority over the Son

 - authority over the Holy Spirit

C. **Fatherhood (46:24)**

1. **Creator (47:14)**

- Deuteronomy 32:6
- Isaiah 43:6-7; 64:8
- Malachi 2:10
- Luke 3:38
- Acts 17:26-28

God’s general fatherhood over creation motivates him to show great patience with our fallen world.

2. **King (49:57)**

Ancient Near-East:

- people referred to kings as their fathers
- kings referred to people as their children
 - David as father of Israel

God called “Father”

- great king that ruled over all the kings of the world
- ruled directly over his chosen nation Israel

Jesus instructed his disciples to pray to “Our Father in heaven.”

3. **Family Head (54:41)**

In the Old Testament God is portrayed as the family head of the nation Israel.

The description of God as the family head of his people also continues in the New Testament.

D. Power (1:00:20)

God has unlimited, matchless power: omnipotence

1. Unlimited (1:01:15)

The Father has power to do anything he wills to do:

- Create and destroy the universe
- Control the weather
- Defeat his enemies
- Rule and control human governments
- Perform mighty miracles
- Save his people

God's redemption of his people is an ideal demonstration of his power.

God never does anything that is contrary to his nature.

God will:

- Never cease to be eternal
- Never revoke his authority over the Son and the Holy Spirit
- Never do anything sinful
- Always keep his promises

2. **Matchless (1:09:14)**

God alone is omnipotent.

There is only one true God.

God has total power over evil.

IV. **Maker (1:12:39)**

A. **Work of Creation (1:13:00)**

Creation is the one work that the Apostles' Creed specifically attributes to the Father.

Theories about the creation account in Genesis 1:

- *ex nihilo* or out of nothing (theologians agree)
- Six days of creation (theologians disagree):
 - A single moment
 - Normal 24-hour days
 - Large stretches of time between days
 - Eras or epochs

The acts of creation involve the entire Trinity.

B. Goodness of Creation (1:20:22)

The universe is God's good creation that reflects his good character.

As a result of humanity's sin, God placed the entire creation under a curse.

God's world is still fundamentally good.

C. Authority over Creation (1:27:36)**1. Absolute (1:27:53)**

The Father has complete freedom to do whatever he wants with his creation.

2. Exclusive (1:31:32)

Absolute authority belongs only to the creator, and God is the only creator.

3. Exhaustive (1:33:35)

God's authority extends over everything he has created, in every detail.

- Everyone is under God's authority.
- Everything is under God' authority.

V. Conclusion (1:36:48)

5. Discuss the fatherhood of God as it relates to his roles as Creator, King, and family head over his people.

6. Define and describe God's unlimited and matchless power.

7. Discuss the Father's role as Maker in the work of creation.

8. How is the universe God's good creation that reflects his good character?

9. Explain God's authority over creation as absolute, exclusive, and exhaustive.

Application Questions

1. What things in your life tempt you to value them as highly as you value God?
2. How should Christians respond to Judaism and Islam?
3. In what ways is God the Father of all creation? In what ways is he the Father only of believers?
4. How might the Father's kingship and role as family head motivate us to obey him?
5. How can the Father's unlimited and matchless power comfort us as his children?
6. How does the beauty and goodness of creation help us see the goodness and beauty of God?
7. What effects of the curse are evident in the natural world and human society?
8. How does God's authority address the kinds of fears we address on a daily basis?
9. How might we improve our roles and positions in life in light of God's lordship?
10. What was the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

Adonai – Hebrew name of God meaning "Lord," "Master," "Ruler"

almighty – Adjective meaning "all powerful"; in traditional theological terms, God's almighty power is referred to as his "omnipotence," from the root *omni*, meaning "all," and the word "potency," meaning "power"

atheism – Belief that there is no God

El Elyon – Biblical name of God meaning "God Most High"

El Shaddai – Biblical name of God meaning "Almighty God"

Elohim – Hebrew term (sometimes shortened to "El") meaning "God"

ex nihilo – Latin phrase meaning "out of nothing"

henotheism – Belief in the existence of many gods, but offering special dedication to one primary god

human nature – One's fundamental character or the central aspects of one's being

monogenes – Greek word (transliteration) for "one and only"; often translated "only begotten"

monotheism – Belief in only one God

omnipotence – Almighty and unlimited power

polytheism – Belief in multiple gods

simple/simplicity of God – Theological term used to explain that God's essence is not a composite of different substances, but a unified whole consisting of only one substance

singularity of God – Theological term used in reference to God to mean that he is the only true God

Theos – Greek word (transliteration) for "God"

undifferentiated monad – Technical term for the belief that God is a single indivisible being with no distinction between his persons

Yahweh – Hebrew name for God that comes from the phrase, "I Am that I Am"; often translated "LORD"