

CSF Weekly Gathering - September 16



*We're glad you're here! CSF's weekly gathering is intended to be a space where students can meet together, discuss scripture, pray and build relationships. Our vision is to **Make Disciples of Jesus on Campus**. We are a Christian organization, but wherever you are on your spiritual journey - lifelong Christian, uncertain believer, part of another faith, or unsure God even exists - you are welcome to here. We seek to interact, and even disagree, with kindness and respect.*

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Website – <https://www.csfpa.com/psu-berks>

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Upcoming Events:

Fall Retreat - October 8-10

This retreat is going to be AMAZING!

Register and pay (\$75) online: www.csfpa.com/fallretreat

Bible Reading Plan - From Acts to New Creation

Join us for our Fall Reading Plan on YouVersion -

<https://bible.com/p/45303139/c9a96cec15a932ba9c5b7c05a2240ba5>

Leadership:

President – Emily Clapper (ezc80)

Secretary – Ayomide Ogunleye (afo5187)

Pastor - Dave Hershey (dave@csfpa.com)

Vice President – Danny Frederick (dpf5238)

Treasurer – Nathan Bonslaver (njb5515)

Advisor - Sgt. Mark Groff (mdg116)

What is God Like? God is Jesus

What is God like? How we answer this foundational question will impact every single area of our lives. *What is the purpose of life? How do I make things right when I make mistakes? What should I do with my money? What career should I pursue?* We all have some assumptions about what life is about, whether we believe in God or not. These assumptions, if we think of them, are connected to our understanding of what is Ultimate Reality. “God” is simply the word we use for this ultimate reality. It begs the question - who or what is God? How do Jesus and the Holy Spirit relate to God? Is God far off or near? What does God desire of me? This semester we are going to investigate these questions.

Ice-Breaker Question: How would you explain the Trinity to someone? How do you understand it? Perhaps most importantly, do you see it as important for your daily faith or just a theological add-on to believe?

Bible Study

Read Philippians 2:5-11 and Isaiah 45:22-23

- 6 - What does this say about who God is in Jesus?
- 7 - What does this say about who God is in Jesus?
- 8 - What does this say about who God is in Jesus?
- 9 - What does this say about who God is in Jesus?
- 10 - (Read Isaiah 45:22-23) What does this say about who God is in Jesus?
- 11 - What does this say about who God is in Jesus?
*Should/shall/will confess/acknowledge

How would you sum up this passage in your own words?

Reread 2:5 - what does this passage mean for us?

A Brief Reflection

Have you ever heard someone say that the idea of Jesus as God was only invented centuries after his life? Maybe they need to meet Pliny the Younger. Pliny the Younger was the Roman governor of Asia Minor. Asia Minor was the location of many early Christian communities and by the early 100s they were getting noticed by the authorities. In 112 AD he wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan asking for advice on how to deal with these Christians. In his letter, he describes what he has learned Christians do at their meetings:

“They (the Christians) were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves with a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food – but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.”

We see from this letter that non-Christian observers were noticing, rather early on, that the Christians sang hymns to Jesus as if Jesus was a god. To the Roman mind, believing a human was a god was not that radical. Yet it was radical to people rooted in a Jewish way of thinking. Either way, what we see from **Pliny’s letter puts to rest the idea that Christians invented the idea of Jesus as God only centuries later.**

The actual question was, in a world of gods and goddesses, what does it precisely mean when Christians worshipped Jesus as God. Was Jesus just another Greek or Roman god? This is where those theologians and teachers come into the discussion. They studied scriptures in depth and attempted to formulate, in a more systematic way, the relationship of Jesus to God. Flowing from their Jewish roots (which we saw in Philippians 2), they affirmed Jesus was not merely a god of the Greco-Roman variety, but the one infinite God who took on human flesh. In the early years after the New Testament was complete, Christians continued to write, and these early church fathers testify to the continuing belief that Jesus was the one true God now taking on flesh:

Ignatius of Antioch (died 108 AD)

- Epistle to the Magnesians – “...there is one God, who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son, who is His eternal Word...” (ch. 8)
- Epistle to Polycarp – “I pray for your happiness for ever in our God, Jesus Christ”

Aristides (wrote 123-129 AD) - "The Christians, then, trace the beginning of their religion from Jesus the Messiah; and he is named the Son of God Most High. And it is said that God came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin assumed and clothed himself with flesh; and the Son of God lived in a daughter of man."

Polycarp (wrote 110-130 AD) – Epistle to the Philippians: "For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist" (ch. 7).

Justin Martyr (died 165 AD)

- First Apology – "The Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God" (ch. 63)

Athenagorus (wrote 176-180 AD)

- A Plea For the Christians – "Who, then, would not be astonished to hear men who speak of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and who declare both their power in union and their distinction in order, called atheists?" (ch. 10)

Irenaeus of Lyons – Against Heresies (Written about 180 AD)

- "Christ Himself, therefore, together with the Father, is the God of the living, who spoke to Moses, and who was also manifested to the fathers." (quoted from Hall, 34)

Key Points:

1. God is Love – for God to be love God must be a relationship
2. The New Testament includes testimony that Jesus is divine and God but also human and subordinate to the Father. Any understanding of Jesus' identity must include both.
3. Early Christian writers consistently affirmed Jesus' humanity and divinity.
4. It was not just studying scripture that led to this belief, it was daily worship and prayer which centered on Jesus in the Christian community.
5. While the Bible does not explicitly teach the Trinity, the seeds for that later theological conclusion are found there and we can say Trinitarian understanding of God is an accurate understanding of scripture.

Early Christians did not sit in academic study halls and discern through rationality that Jesus was God. The crucible for this doctrine was prayer and worship: they prayed to and worshiped Jesus. This prayer and worship (experience) impacted how they studied scripture.

What does this mean for the relationship between our own prayer and worship with our study of scripture? Read Philippians 2:1-4 and 2:12-18. Doctrine (who God is) is intimately related to how we are to live.