



Join us this July as we use the format of an A-Z to look at some of the core principles of our faith and what they mean to us today.

We are getting down to the grassroots, the building blocks, the starting blocks, and first steps of our faith — as we explore and unpack a mix of everyday and unusual words that shape our discipleship.

The list isn't comprehensive — how could it be! It's just a fun way to begin looking at some of main elements of our faith and how we live them out today.

ABC, 123... let's go!

From A-Z, *Amen* to *Zeal*, our four writers will unpack the everyday reality of our extraordinary faith, of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus today.

We began this theme trilogy **back in May** looking at key shapers of the early church and then **last month** we took a deep dive on the book of Ephesians to ask central questions about our identity as individuals and communities of faith. Now we end with an A-Z to consider how we respond to God today as inheritors of the rich traditions we have been exploring.

This list isn't exhaustive or definitive and it isn't trying to be. It's simply a fresh way of engaging some of the key facets of what it means to respond to God in our lives today.

Some of the words in the list will be very familiar, some more obscure, at least one that the person writing this sentence had to look up when a colleague first suggested it!

This summer as we conclude our theme series on identity we are excited for the time of discovery and rediscovery that awaits.

So, A is for *Amen*...

SETTING THE SCENE: A visual motif for each week. An optional additional focus point for preparing worship services or multimedia inspired by the material.

SEEDS TO SOW: Open-ended prompts to inspire creative responses to the themes. Perhaps a song, some drawing, or creative writing! They are short and sweet, simply a starting off place for you and your imagination. Expand, tailor and develop as suits you. Often they take the form of a question, to encourage reflection.

Each week of the 4 week theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and prompts for thought.

ABCs (2 July)

And so funnily enough we begin with A for Amen typically the last word of our prayers, blessings and benedictions. But actually this is appropriate because those two syllables — that mean in effect 'Let it be so' — are not in fact an ending with God. Amen is more of a comma than a full stop. We don't cease communicating with God at 'Amen', Amen is not a sign off, or a goodbye, it simply marks the resolution of one thing in the expectation of the next. A new beginning as it were. And so a rather apropos way to begin our series...

SETTING THE SCENE: **WATER, WINE, BREAD, HANDS**

SEEDS TO SOW: **WHAT DOES THE WORD 'DIVINITY' MEAN TO YOU?**

1. Isaiah 55
 2. Psalm 107: 1-3
 3. Romans 6: 1-4
 4. 1 Corinthians 11: 23-25
 5. Acts 17: 16-34
 6. Ephesians 1: 3-10
 7. Hebrews 11: 1-3
1. **ABCs An introduction.** Our lives are lived in the context of God's compassionate invitation, the loving words that shape us born on the breath of the universe. Let's prepare for 26 wonderful words...
 2. **A - Amen.** When we say Amen we are telling the story. What's your relationship with the word 'Amen', what does it mean to you?
 3. **B - Baptism.** What does it mean to walk in newness of life?
 4. **C - Communion.** What has this meal meant for you in your life?
 5. **D - Divinity.** Who is God?
 6. **E - Eschatology.** Our first eleven letter word! Getting our head around last things and what it means for everyday faith as people of a gospel of love.
 7. **F - Faith.** What is faith? As it is actually lived — day by day — what's it actually like? How can we capture that experience for people curious to know?

Ready, Steady, Go (9 July)

The alphabet is picking up steam now as we go on in *Grace!* Nothing is possible in life without a little grace, it's that grace gets us up in the morning, gets us through the day living lives jam-packed with other people, and lets us get to sleep at the end of it. Fortunately with God we get a lot more than a 'little grace', we get the game changing grace that supercharges the universe...

SETTING THE SCENE: **A MUSIC ROOM FULL OF INSTRUMENTS AND MUSICIANS TUNING UP**

SEEDS TO SOW: **IF YOU WERE DRAWING A PICTURE OF 'THE KINGDOM OF GOD' WHAT WOULD YOU DRAW?**

1. **Ephesians 2: 8-9**
 2. **John 14: 15-27**
[see also Romans 8: 22-27]
 3. **John 1: 1-18**
 4. **Matthew 1: 21**
 5. **Luke 17: 20-21**
 6. **Ephesians 5: 18-20**
 7. **Psalm 150**
1. **G - Grace.** None of us can get by without it, the complex nature of human relationships we live with rely on grace and so we are heartened by the endless reserves of grace God has for us.
 2. **H - Holy Spirit.** The root of the word enthusiasm is to *enthused*, 'inspired', fuelled spiritually. What has it mean to you to be *enthused* in your life?
 3. **I - Incarnation.** We come to another more unusual word. It may be semi-familiar to people who have spent time in churches but otherwise quite a mystery. What is 'incarnation' really, and could we communicate the idea to others better?
 4. **J - Jesus.** Later in the series we will also have an entry for *Christ*, but today we focus on Jesus's incarnation as a human being in human form, readying to live a human life.
 5. **K - Kingdom.** What is the Kingdom of God to you? How do you recognise it in your midst?
 6. **L - Liturgy.** The words we share together to form worship publicly. Liturgies can be ancient or modern — often they're a mix. *Liturgy* is sometimes used as a shorthand for 'old/traditional' but liturgy can be high or low, sombre or energetic, repeatedly weekly or a one off. Liturgy is really just a way of speaking about the shared vocabulary we use to participate in worship together. What has liturgy meant to you in your life?
 7. **M - Music.** Is music just 'set dressing', a soundtrack for emoting in worship — or is it something much more elemental than connects us to something much bigger? The mathematical vibrations that link us to our bodies, to one another, the world around us and the universe! What has music meant to you in worship?

One, two, threes (16 July)

One, two, three, one to three, this week we are waltzing in 3/3 time as we consider the fractal patterns, the unfolding stories, the continuing dance, the beautiful movement of the Trinity.

SETTING THE SCENE: **DANCE FLOOR**

SEEDS TO SOW: **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE 'TRINITY' TO SOMEONE WHO HAD NEVER HEARD THE CONCEPT BEFORE? (GOOD LUCK)**

1. **2 Corinthians 5: 16-21**
 1. **N - New Creation.** What does it feel like to be a new creation? Do you feel new?
 2. **O - Omnipresent.** Another hefty word! God has been with us through it all. God knows us deeply and loves us anyway. How do you tend to think about God's omnipresence in relation to your life?
2. **Psalm 139: 1-12**
3. **Matthew 13**
[Writer to choose verses to focus on]
 3. **P - Parable.** As the Daily Worship writer for this week, which of these parables stands out to you and why? Explain your choice and what the parables more widely mean to you.
 4. **Q - Quiet.** There is a long and rich tradition in Christianity of silence and quiet contemplation. How does 'quiet' factor in to your life and faith today? What does it mean to you to be still and know that God is God?
4. **Psalm 46**
5. **Matthew 11: 28-30**
 5. **R - Rest.** Do we place enough importance on rest in our contemporary faith and discipleship? How can we cultivate a wider culture of rest and compassion?
6. **2 Timothy 3: 16-17**
 6. **S - Scripture.** The Bible, not one book but an incredible library of books spanning thousands of years and countless genres. How has it woven through your live over the years?
7. **2 Corinthians 13: 13**
 7. **T - Trinity.** How do you personally get your head around the divine wonder and mystery of the Trinity? Is it something we *can* actually get our heads around?

XYZ, from Alpha to Omega (23 July)

U-Z is a famously tricky sequence in A-Zs as we get to some of the less common starting letters in the English language. Luckily in Christianity we have thousands of years to draw on and were surprised how easily we could fill it, we promise there won't be any Zebras or Xylophones! (Although if you want to bring in Zebras and Xylophones be our guest!) For X because we wanted to have separate entries for Jesus and Christ we have used the X for Xristos as 'Christ' via the Greek. Join us as we run the gauntlet of the alphabet's end thinking about how we ourselves factor into the unfolding story of our faith and then end on the central dynamic of our faith: the XYZ, Alpha-Omega at the heart of our faith — the relationship we have with Christ — the love that changes everything.

SETTING THE SCENE: A SMALL JAR OF OIL

SEEDS TO SOW: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE VIRTUOUS?

1. 1 John 2: 20

[Check out the KJV if you want to see 'unction' in action]

2. 2 Peter 1: 5-8

3. Proverbs 3: 13-26

4. Ephesians 1: 3-10

5. Psalm 139: 13-18

6. Romans 12: 9-13

7. 1 Corinthians 13: 13

1. **U - Uction.** An archaic word and probably the biggest curveball of the list, but one that speaks of a timeless practice — that of anointing someone. What does unction, or anointing mean to you in your faith?
2. **V - Virtue.** Virtue not in the sense of being 'holier than thou' but rather a gradual process of formation as we are shaped by Christ's compassion through discipleship. What could we regain from a new appreciation of the word virtue?
3. **W - Wisdom.** Wisdom is a gift rather than knowledge that you strive to earn. It is an ongoing revelation, gifted to us by the Holy Spirit. How has the wisdom of God's people helped you find the paths of peace?
4. **X - Christ.** We return to this reading we looked at in week one. This passage describes to us what it means to be in Christ — the Xristos in Greek — the fulcrum at the heart of God's vision of unity and restoration.
5. **Y - You.** This reading, written in the second person, is about you! Your very identity, your personhood comes from God and it is a reflection of the very personhood of God. Personhood cannot exist in isolation, we become who we are in the context of our relationships and we are becoming who we truly are in the context of our relationship with our loving God.
6. **Z - Zeal.** We've made it to the end of the alphabet! And what a word to end on: Zeal is the expression of the energy of the Spirit of God at work in our life. Zeal is not something that you own or can bottle. You can't just whip up zeal. It is the contagious, generous work of the Spirit, enthusing and empowering us in the midst of our lives.
7. **...XYZ Conclusion.** Drawing it all together with love. Thanks for journeying with us from A-Z!