

A-Z  
STUDY QUESTIONS  
July 2023 (2-29 July)



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're 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 unusual and everyday 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!

# A-Z

## STUDY QUESTIONS

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*...

**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.

*These discussion questions adapt our monthly themes for small Connect Groups or personal Bible study (look up **A-Z Resource Pack** for more information on this month's theme). The questions are divided into 4 parts to correspond with the 4 weeks of the Daily Worship theme. They are offered as a guideline and there is no need to go through all the given questions in a single session, or in the following sequence. Feel free to pick and choose, or adapt to what interests you or your group.*

# A-Z

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Part 1: ABCs

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...

Check out the **A-Z Resource Pack** to see all the letters A to F.

#### SEEDS TO SOW: WHAT DOES THE WORD ‘DIVINITY’ MEAN TO YOU?

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##### Read Psalm 107: 1-3

**A - Amen.** And so we begin at the end, with the last word of our prayers: ‘*Amen*’.

When we say *Amen* we are saying ‘it is so’ like the redeemed of the Lord in the psalm. We are underlining that we mean what we have just said or heard, that we are sincere and in earnest. A bit like saying ‘I mean it’, or ‘I’m not joking’, or ‘100 percent!’ after saying something to a friend.

How do you feel when you say “*Amen*” at the end of a prayer? What does the word mean to you?

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##### Read 1 Corinthians 11: 23-25

**C - Communion.** Timeless spine-tingling words that are woven into the fabric of our faith. How does it feel to hear these words read aloud? What words do you tend to associate in your mind with the word ‘*Communion*’? What comes into your head when you think about it?

If you have taken *Communion* before, look back over your life and consider: are there particular times that you can remember that have stood out for you for some reason? If so, why?

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##### Read Hebrews 11: 1-3

**F - Faith.** What is faith? Our final reading for the section offers us a definition. But how does having an “assurance of things hoped for” and “conviction of things not seen” influence how we live our daily lives? Day by day what does ‘*faith*’ mean to you?

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### Part 2: Ready, Steady, Go

The alphabet is picking up steam now as we go on in *Grace!* Nothing is possible in life without a little grace, it's grace that 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...

Check out our **A-Z Resource Pack** to see all the letters G to M.

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

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##### Read John 1: 1-18

**I - Incarnation.** "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (Verse 14.) *Incarnation* speaks of the compelling pull at the heart of our faith: that when Jesus came to live 'among us' he was somehow fully divine and fully human — *embodied* as one of us. In a supreme gesture of love Jesus got to know us on our terms.

What questions do you have about Jesus's humanity? What interests, puzzles or strikes you about the conundrum of Jesus being fully human and fully divine at the same time?

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##### Read Luke 17: 20-21

**K - Kingdom.** So what did Jesus mean when he said "the kingdom of God is among you"? In what sense can God's kingdom be among or in the midst of people? And how can we recognise the kingdom of God amongst us now?

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##### Read Psalm 150

**M - Music.** Is music just 'set dressing', a soundtrack for emoting in worship — or is music something more elemental — than somehow connects us to something much bigger?

What does music mean to you in worship?

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### Part 3: One, two, threes

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.

Check out our **A-Z Resource Pack** to see all the letters N to T.

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

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**Read Psalm 139: 1-12**

**O - Omnipresent.** Another hefty word! God is everywhere! So God has been with us through it all. *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? The fact that God has been with you every step of the way?

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**Read Matthew 11: 28-30**

**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 when many people are suffering from stress and burnout intensified by pandemic, conflict, and pressures from cost of living increases and climate change?

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**Read 2 Corinthians 13: 13**

**T - Trinity.** Do you think the Trinity is something we can ever get our heads around? How did you get on with the 'Seed to Sow' above? Isn't it weird that the word trinity never appears in the Bible?

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### Part 4: XYZ, from Alpha to Omega

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 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...) 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 the relationship we have with Christ — the love that changes everything.

Check out our **A-Z Resource Pack** to see all the letters U to Z.

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

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##### Read 2 Peter 1: 5-8

**V - Virtue.** Often in wider society when we think about virtue we think of being overly pious or sanctimonious, 'holier than thou'. But in our rich theological tradition we can rediscover a sense of virtue — not as a status symbol, but rather as an ongoing process of being shaped by God. Virtue is not an end in itself, rather it is allowing ourselves to be respond to Christ's compassion to become more compassionate ourselves through discipleship.

Our reading demonstrates a virtuous cycle where good habits help propel us onwards. We are not virtuous in order to achieve God's love, but out of God's love we can discover our virtuosity: a desire to model Christ's compassion for others. What are some virtues and good habits we could do with cultivating, not as an end in themselves to earn God's love, but to find new ways to thrive in the light of that love?

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##### Read Psalm 139: 13-18

**Y - You.** This reading is about you! You reading this now! Your very identity, your personhood comes from God and it is a reflection of the very person of God. Personhood cannot exist in isolation, we grow into who we are in the context of our relationships. As disciples we are becoming who we are in the context of our loving God.

What makes you — you? What does God delight in about you do you think?

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##### Read Romans 12: 9-13

**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 real zeal. It is the contagious, generous work of the Spirit, enthusing and empowering us in the midst of our lives. The root of the word *enthusiasm* means to be en-spirited, filled with the spirit.

How can love (verses 9-10) and rejoicing, patience and hospitality (verses 11-13) help us to discover a sense of zeal and enthusiasm?