

What Christians Believe

An overview of the Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

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



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Bringing the Word to the World

What Christians Believe

Living in Faith Discipleship Series

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What Christians Believe

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Getting Started

This book is about God the Apostles' Creed as a statement of faith. Where did it come from and how does it fit in your life? We will divide the section or articles of the creed to understand better what it tells us about God and our relationship with him. We will do this by studying his Word, the Bible.

READ THE TEXT

Each lesson is broken up into smaller sections with a review question after each section. Feel free to stop at any of the passages to make sure you understand them or to dig more deeply into what they are saying. Circle, underline, or highlight key words.

GRAPPLE WITH THE QUESTIONS

In this book there are also questions to start, review and end the lesson. If you are studying this on your own, think through the questions for yourself. If you are studying in a group, use the questions for deeper discussion. Designate someone as a facilitator. Allow each individual a level of comfort to ask questions and freedom to discover and grow.

PREPARE TO SUMMARIZE AND SHARE AT THE END

The lessons are not just about learning information but applying it to your life and sharing it with others. As you go through lessons prepare to summarize it at the end to be able to retell it. It might be helpful to underline or circle key phrases or passages.

NOTICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Each page also includes additional references on the sidebar for those who want to dig deeper (You will need a Bible or a Bible app to read those sections). They are available to use in group or in personal study.



= Location of Bible Story



= Search options – related passages

APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE & MAP OUT YOUR NEXT STEPS



After connecting the timeless truths to your life, make sure you map out Next Steps before ending the lesson.



Chapter One

WHY HAVE A CREED?



Many countries and cultures have unique stories that shape their identity. Some have songs or chants that bring them together. Despite other differences, they value something that unites them and declares to others, “this is what we are all about.”

1. What story, song, or chant can you think of that unites an ethnic group, a country, or a religious group?

The Apostles’ Creed is the most well-known expression of what Christianity is. Over many centuries Christians have used it to provide a united voice in what the Scriptures say about God and how he relates to us. It is often recited together during Christian worship services and

memorized by those new to the faith. In this book, you will learn about the Apostles' Creed. You will find out what its words mean. In this chapter, we will introduce you to the importance of the Apostles' Creed and where it came from.

A CREED EXPRESSES WHAT I BELIEVE

It is said that if you don't stand for anything, you fall for everything. There are so many opinions and perspectives of life, it often gets confusing. The internet hasn't made that easier. Who knows what to believe any more! But among all the topics, it is most important to understand what you believe about God. It affects your attitudes and behaviors. It shapes your decisions and relationships. It influences how you handle success or deal with struggles. But more importantly it affects your eternity. So, what do you believe? What do Christians believe?

A creed is a description of what you believe. The word "creed" comes from a Latin word "credo"

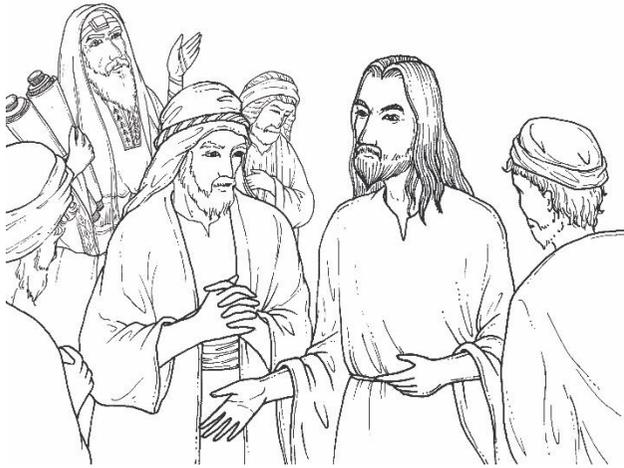
**A creed is a description
of what you believe**

which simply means, "I believe." A creed reflects the underlying basis of your values

and beliefs. It defines your identity. It serves as a witness to what is in your heart and the blueprint on which you build your life. Every person, every culture, and every country lives by some sort of creed. Sometimes the creed is written down, like a country's constitution. Other times it is unspoken and not formed into words.

The best known Christian creed is the Apostles' Creed. Who were the Apostles? In the days of Jesus, an apostle meant someone who was "sent out." An

apostle of a king, for example, would be sent out to tell people the messages of the king. We might liken them to ambassadors today who represent their country to others. The apostles of Jesus were ones specially chosen by him and personally trained by him. To be an apostle they first needed to be a disciple. The term “disciple” described a loyal follower of a great teacher or philosopher.



Disciples sought to be trained by that expert’s teachings and lifestyle. Not only were their lives modeled after his, but they were to accurately pass on his teachings to others. Jesus’ disciples were also to be eyewitnesses of his death and resurrection so they could be “sent out” to tell others what they had seen and heard (1 John 1:1-3).

When Jesus returned to heaven, he told his disciples they would now serve as his apostles to carry his message to the whole world. It is often called “The Great Commission.” Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to ensure they could accurately and boldly proclaim the message about him. Some of them



The Twelve Apostles

Matthew 10:1-8

Mark 3:13-19

Luke 6:13-16

Acts 1:9-13

And later... Paul

1 Corinthians 15:5-11

wrote down their witness in the part of the Bible we call the New Testament. It is Jesus words of truth passed down from generation to generation.

It is called the Apostles' Creed because it is a statement of the beliefs they taught in the Bible.

But the Twelve Apostles did not write the Apostles' Creed as we know it. It is called the Apostles' Creed

because it is a statement that summarizes the core beliefs taught by the apostles. As apostle Paul told his student Timothy,

“What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus”
(2 Timothy 1:13).

After the apostles were no longer around to serve as the eyewitnesses of the life and teachings of Jesus, simple statements began to emerge to clarify the key truths of the gospel message the Apostles proclaimed. Soon the Apostles' Creed took on the form we use today. It became a universal expression of the central teaching of the Christian faith to make sure that the Christian church is...

“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone... built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

2. Discuss the significance the title “Apostles' Creed.”



The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20

Acts 1:8

Acts 26:16-18

CREEDS TO SUMMARIZE THE SCRIPTURES

Once in a while, people question the value of creeds. They cry out, "Deeds, not creeds." Often their comment is a criticism of those who do not seem to live according to their faith - even though they claim

Faith needs to be solidly grounded on Scripture

to have a correct statement of faith. And yes, Apostle James says, "*Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead*" (James 2:17). But faith must come first and it will produce the proper fruit for "*without faith, it is impossible to please God*" (Hebrews 11:6). And contrary to popular opinion, it is not our deeds or experience that save, but the faith that clings to Jesus and who he really is. Jesus said,

"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

Apostle Paul states,

"For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Romans 3: 28).

If the Bible is not the anchor of faith, we end up just believing the popular opinions of the day and looking more at a person's lifestyle than on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. People begin to fashion their concept of God more in line with their own viewpoint or of the culture around them.



Faith alone in Christ saves (but faith is never alone)

Romans 4:1-8, 18-25

Galatians 3:6-14

Ephesians 2:8-10

James 2:17-18



It is with your mouth that you profess your faith

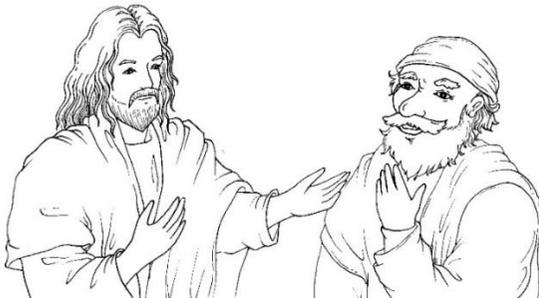
Matthew 10:32-33

Romans 10:9-11

The words we say identify who we are and what we really believe

The words we say in a creed can help express what the Bible says. When Jesus asked Apostle

Peter, “Who do you say I am?” Peter responded, “**You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God**” (Matthew 16:15-16). That was essentially a creed. Others responded with similar words elsewhere in the Gospels (John 6:68, 11:27).



The specific teachings we believe are often referred to as “the faith.” Paul refers to “*the deep truths of the faith*” (1 Timothy 3:9). And the writer to the Hebrews encourages, “*Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess*” (Hebrews 4:14). To the Romans, Paul wrote, that there was a standard example of what they were to follow and pass on to others:

“Thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance” (Romans 6:17).

Apostle Paul became more specific:



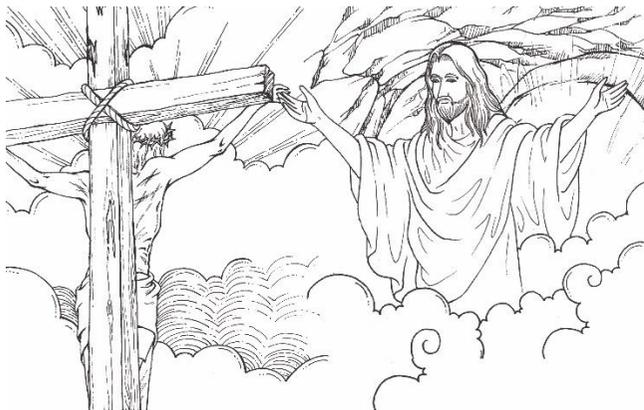
**“The Faith” –
teachings on
which Christian
faith rests**

Ephesians 4:13

1 Timothy 4:1, 6

“By this gospel you are saved...For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:2-4).

With that statement, Paul clarified the main biblical story that defines the faith of Christianity. It is the story of Jesus around which the Apostles’ Creed is formed and on which our faith depends.



To know what you believe about Jesus informs your heart and guides your life choices, your relationships,

To know what you believe informs your heart and guides your life choices

your worship. It determines what you will live for and what you will die for. This faith was so

important to the Apostles and what they lived for. Almost all of them were put to death as martyrs for standing strong and confident in their confession.

3. Discuss the importance of Creeds to believers.

THE HISTORIC USES OF THE CREEDS

We should seek to ensure we are understanding Scripture and aligning our faith to it. Many creeds and confessions have been written to state what a group believes from Scripture. Three historic creeds are considered “ecumenical” creeds or creeds accepted by Christians around the world. They are the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. These creeds were not intended to replace Scripture, but to clarify and confirm what Scripture said.

The Apostles’ Creed served the early Christian Church in several ways. Early in the development of the Christian Church, the Apostles’ Creed was used for those who were going to be baptized. It became part of confessing the faith into which they

**When we say the
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also expressing our
worship of God**

were being baptized. Today, reciting the creed shows we are bound together by our beliefs and part of the same spiritual family. And when we say the Apostles’ Creed we are also expressing our worship of God. That is why the creed developed an important place in worship services.

The creed also becomes a tool to give a clear witness to our faith. Peter tells us we should,

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).



Types of “creeds” in Scripture

Deuteronomy 6:4

Matthew 16:16

1 Corinthians 8:6

1 Corinthians 15:1-5

Philippians 2:6-11

Colossians 1:12-20

The Apostles' Creed is short and easy to memorize or rephrase as an answer to the question, "What do you believe about God?"



Creeds also have served as a "Rule of Faith" or "Rule of Truth" – a standard to identify between true and false teachings. The true Christian Church has always been a "confessional church" in the stand for truth.

The Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed unite us to the Christian Church of all times and cultures.

apostles set out a formal confession to address errors that undermined the beautiful truths of the gospel (Acts 15:1-11, 23-31). Creeds were formed to articulate the very truths of scripture that were under attack at that time. They became a basis for either Christian fellowship or to set themselves apart from

The Christian Church has always been a "confessional church"

Not many years after Jesus ascended to heaven, controversies hit the early Christian Church. At one of those times the

false teachings. One such time was an ecumenical council in Nicea in A.D. 325 that crafted the Nicene Creed. It is



Those who abandon "the Faith"

1 Timothy 4:1-3

1 Timothy 6:3-5

another universal standard from which unity of Christian faith is expressed and error tested. Those creeds anchor our faith in Scripture...

“so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God...no longer ...blown here and there by every wind of teaching” (Ephesians 4:12-14).



So we are not alone in what we believe. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed become a clear witness to the faith entrusted to us. They unite us the Christian Church of all times across many cultures.

4. Summarize how the Apostles' Creed served the Christian Church over the years?



CONNECTING TO YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. The early Christians used the Apostles' Creed in a way to express their faith that was based on the Bible. How does it inspire believers today?
2. Some reject any writings from other people, including the Creeds, because they say you should only believe the Bible. How do you respond to them?
3. Some believers say that they don't know how to share the Gospel. Create an outline of how you could share the gospel by following the content of the Apostles' Creed.
4. Pick out the one point that was most meaningful for you in this lesson.
5. Please pray to God based on this.



DEVELOP A SUMMARY OF THE LESSON – Write down and discuss a brief explanation of this lesson. Make it clear and simple enough to share with others. If possible, illustrate it with a drawing or diagram.



YOUR NEXT STEPS

Study it!

Read again more carefully the passages in this lesson to understand what God is saying.

Memorize it!

Identify a Bible passage in this lesson that is most meaningful for you and memorize it.

Apply it!

Discuss how you can put this lesson into your life this week.

Share it!

Who especially needs to hear this? Determine how you will share this chapter with others. (You can use this lesson to help you).

Go on to the next lesson to learn how the Apostles' creed distinguishes Christianity from the many other concepts of gods in the world.