

1. God

Objectives

The children will:

- learn about the Apostles' Creed.
- discover that Christians believe in God who created the world.
- explore why belief in God matters in their lives.

Theme

Christians believe in God.

Bible Verse

Heaven is declaring God's glory;
the sky is proclaiming his handiwork.
(Psalm 19:1)

Focus for the Teacher

What do Christians believe? The answer to that question will certainly differ when looking at various denominations of the Christian faith. Even within a denomination, individual Christians hold a variety of beliefs on many topics. Yet on certain fundamental things, Christians agree. Throughout history, groups of Christians have attempted to put their core beliefs in writing. These attempts have resulted in a number of creeds and affirmations of faith. This study will use the Apostles' Creed to examine what Christians believe and why these particular beliefs are important.

Each of the six lessons in this study will examine a section of the Apostles' Creed. The emphasis of the lessons will be on looking at what Christians believe and how those beliefs shape our actions. Each week children will have an opportunity to say words of the Apostles' Creed, adding sections of the creed as they are discussed. Although children may not understand all the wording used in the Apostles' Creed (nor do all adults, for that matter), they will become familiar with it and recognize the words when they hear the words in worship.

The study begins, as does the creed, with God. Christians believe in God. Specifically, Christians believe in a God who created the world and remains engaged with the creation, including us. The Apostles' Creed uses the term "God, the Father." "Father" was the term Jesus used to address God. It is a term signifying a relationship between God and humans. God did not create the world, set it in motion, and then sit back and watch what happened; God remains interested in the creation, including human beings. People are a small part of the vast expanse of God's creation. Yet God desires to be in relationship with us.

Christians
believe in a God
who created
the world.

Why does believing in God matter? How does such a belief shape our lives? Believing in a God who cares about us means we are never alone. God is always with us. This is a reason to praise God. Faith in God leads to an attitude of gratitude for the creator and all of creation.

Explore Interest Groups

Be sure that adult leaders are waiting when the first child arrives. Greet and welcome the children. Get the children involved in an activity that interests them and introduces the theme for the day's activities.

Word Web

- Show children the diagram you have drawn.
- **Say:** This kind of funny-looking diagram is called a word web. Word webs can be helpful to explore the meaning of words. You can see that the word *believe* is in the center of our word web. What words does *believe* remind you of?
- Write one of the words the children come up with in each of the six ovals connected to the word *believe*.
- Take a look at the new words one at a time.
- For each new word, **Ask:** What words come to mind when you think of this word?
- Write the words the children come up with for each word in the outermost ovals.
- Invite the children to spend a few moments looking at your completed word web.
- **Ask:** What does it mean to say, "I believe" something? (to think something is true, to hope for something)
- **Say:** For the next six weeks we are going to be talking about what Christians believe.

Nature Speaks

- Invite children to look through the nature pictures you have provided.
- Encourage each child to choose one picture they like and glue it on a piece of paper, cutting it to fit as needed.
- **Ask:** What do all these pictures have in common? (They all show parts of nature.) Who created all the things shown in your pictures? (God.)
- **Say:** God created the world and everything in it. There are several verses in the Bible that talk about parts of God's creation praising God. Of course, the things shown in your pictures can't speak. They can't praise God the way you and I can.
- **Ask:** How does nature praise God without words?
- Allow children an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas.
- **Say:** Right now you are going to use your imaginations to pretend that your pictures can speak. Imagine what words would be used by the things in your picture to praise God.

Prepare

- ✓ Cut a large piece of mural paper. In the center of the paper, draw an oval and write the word *believe* inside the oval. Draw six lines radiating out from the oval and draw an oval at the end of each line. Draw two lines from each of the new ovals and draw an oval at the end of each line.
- ✓ Display the mural paper where the children will be able to see it.
- ✓ Provide markers.

- ✓ Provide copies of **Reproducible 1a: Speech Bubbles.**
- ✓ Supply old magazines, paper, scissors, glue sticks, and pencils.
- ✓ Look through the magazines and tear out pictures of nature and nature scenes, such as mountains, trees, waterfalls, and sunsets.
- ✓ Option: If you have church members who take nature photographs, invite them to share copies of photographs for the children to use in this activity.

Prepare

- ✓ Provide a CD player and a CD of upbeat music.
- ✓ Set up a circle of chairs, facing the chairs to the outside of the circle and using one less chair than the number of children playing.

Prepare

- ✓ Provide recyclable materials (such as plastic bottles, plastic containers of various sizes, lids, cardboard, and newspaper), craft sticks, chenille stems, construction paper, scissors, tape, and glue.
- ✓ Spread the recyclable and craft materials out on a table.

- Invite children to cut out one or more speech bubbles.
- Have children write words praising God on each speech bubble.
- Let the children glue the speech bubbles to their pictures.
- Encourage children to share their pictures with one another.
- Create a “Nature Speaks Gallery” by displaying the pictures in your classroom.

Musical Creation

- Have the children form a circle around the chairs.
- Start playing music and have the children begin walking around the circle.
- **Say:** When the music stops, find a chair and sit down.
- Stop the music and have the children find seats.
- **Say:** You are not out of the game if you are left standing. Instead, you will tell us something God created.
- Invite the child who is standing to name something God created.
- Continue playing the game, removing an additional chair each round before starting the music. As the game continues, encourage children to share parts of God’s creation that have not been previously named.

Creation Station

- Invite children to create something out of the available materials.
- Encourage children to use their imaginations.
- If a child creates something and doesn’t like it, encourage him or her to take the item apart and make something else.
- **Say:** We are created in God’s image. That means we resemble God. We can be creators like God is a creator.

Large Group

Bring all the children together to experience the Bible story. Use a bell to alert the children to the large-group time.

Created to Praise

- **Say:** Our God created a wonderful world. If you were a coyote, you might thank God for creating the world by howling.
- Encourage children to give their best coyote howl.
- **Say:** If you were a penguin, you might thank God by proudly waddling around in your black and white suit.
- Encourage children to waddle like penguins.
- **Say:** If you were a rooster, you might give a fine “cock-a-doodle-doo” to say, “Hey, thanks, God!”
- Encourage children to say “Cock-a-doodle-doo!”
- **Say:** Since we are people, let’s clap our hands three times and stomp our feet three times to thank God for creating us.

Christians Believe in God

- **Say:** For the next six weeks we will be talking about what Christians believe.
- **Ask:** What’s a Christian? (a follower of Jesus)
- Recruit six volunteers to read today’s story.
- **Say:** As Christians we believe many different things. Some of them aren’t very important. For example, I may believe that blue is the best color. You may believe differently. But there are certain important things that Christians agree on. Those are the beliefs we will be talking about.
- Give each volunteer a copy of **Reproducible 1b: Christians Believe in God**, and assign each reader a part.
- Have the readers stand in front of the class to read the story. Encourage children to speak loudly.
- Thank your volunteers for sharing today’s story.

Prepare

- ✓ Provide copies of **Reproducible 1b: Christians Believe in God**.

Prepare

- ✓ Write the week's Bible verse on a markerboard or a piece of mural paper and place it where it can easily be seen. (Heaven is declaring God's glory; the sky is proclaiming his handiwork. [Psalm 19:1])

Prepare

- ✓ Write the first part of the Apostles' Creed on a piece of posterboard:
I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
- ✓ Display the poster where the children will be able to read it. Leave the poster up for the duration of the study.

Bible Verse in Two Parts

- **Say:** Our Bible verse for today is from the Book of Psalms.
- **Ask:** Is Psalms in the Old Testament or the New Testament? (Old Testament.)
- Show the children the Bible verse. Encourage them to read the verse with you.
- **Ask:** Who created the heaven and the sky? (God.)
- **Say:** Many people feel close to God when they are in nature. When we are surrounded by the beauty of God's creation, it can help us feel gratitude toward God for making such an amazing world.
- Divide the children into four groups.
- **Say:** We are going to say our Bible verse several more times. I will point to a group and hold up one finger. That group will say the first part of the verse, "Heaven is declaring God's glory." Then I will point to another group and hold up two fingers. That group will say the second part of the verse, "the sky is proclaiming his handiwork."
- Say the Bible verse several times, pointing to different groups.

I Believe in God

- **Say:** The first part of the Apostles' Creed says we believe in God.
- **Ask:** Why do you think belief in God is the first thing in the creed?
- **Say:** The Bible teaches us we are to put God first. Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your mind. The Ten Commandments tell us we are to worship only God. It is appropriate that God is first in the Apostles' Creed.
- Show the children the poster you have made.
- **Say:** I have written the first part of the Apostles' Creed on this poster.
- **Ask:** Have you heard or said the Apostles' Creed before? When have you heard it? (Some churches use the creed in worship.)
- **Say:** Each week while we are studying what Christians believe, we are going to use the Apostles' Creed during our large-group time just before you go to your small groups. Today I will ask you, "What do you believe?" and you will respond with the part of the creed shown on our poster. Each week we will add another section of the creed.
- **Ask:** What do you believe?
- Encourage children to respond: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
- Dismiss children to their small groups.

Small Groups

Divide the children into small groups. You may organize the groups around age levels or around readers and nonreaders. Keep the groups small, with a maximum of ten children in each group. You may need to have more than one group of each age level.

Young Children

- **Say:** As Christians, we believe in God and we believe God created the world.
- **Say:** Think of your favorite thing God created that makes you want to say, "Thanks, God, for creating that!"
- Allow children an opportunity to respond.
- **Say:** God created so many amazing things. God cares about creation, including us. God loves us and wants to be connected to us.
- **Ask:** How do we talk to God? (prayer) How do we find out what God wants us to do? (prayer, reading the Bible, talking to other people about God, going to church)
- Give each child a piece of paper.
- Have each child write the word *God* in the center of the paper.
- **Say:** God will never stop loving us and never leave us. God never forgets about us. Sometimes we get busy, though, and we forget about God. We have to work at staying connected to God. Some people feel connected to God when they pray or when they are in worship. Other people feel connected to God when they are in the mountains or beside a lake. Some people feel connected to God when they are with someone they love.
- Invite each child to draw several lines extending from the word *God* outward.
- **Say:** At the end of each line, draw a picture of something or someone that helps you feel connected to God.
- Invite children to share their drawings with one another.
- **Say:** Let's connect with God right now by praying.
- **Pray:** God, thank you for creating this amazing world and creating us. Thank you for loving us with a love that will never end. We believe in you and love you. Amen.

Prepare

- ✓ Provide paper and crayons.

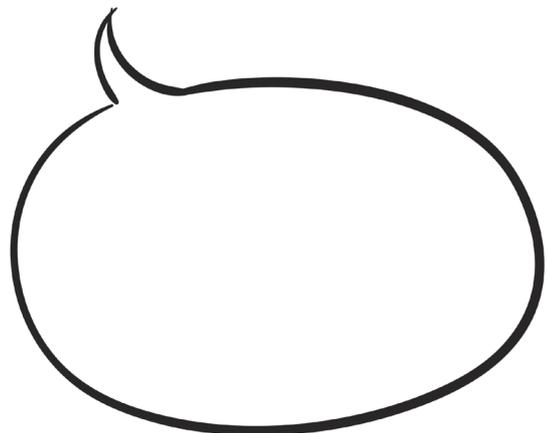
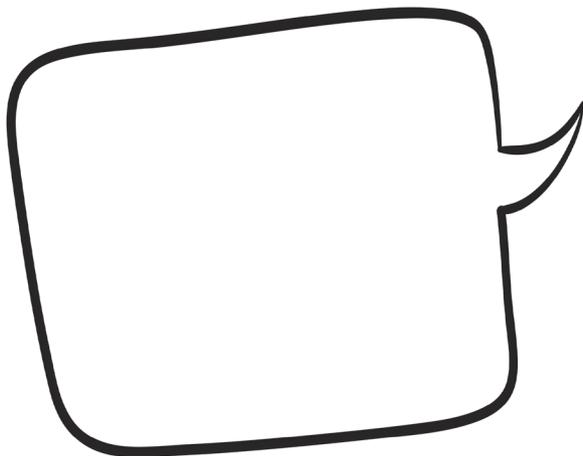
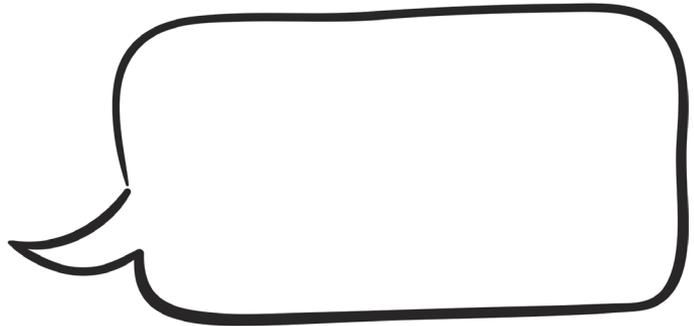
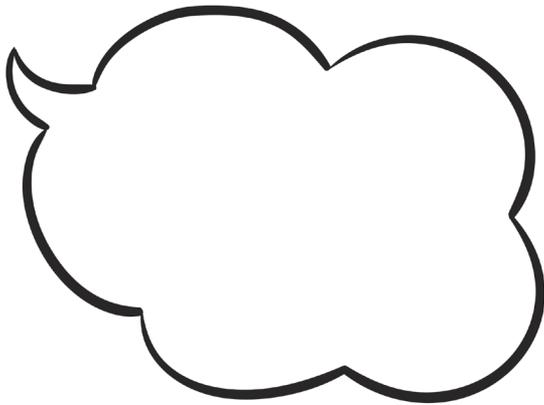
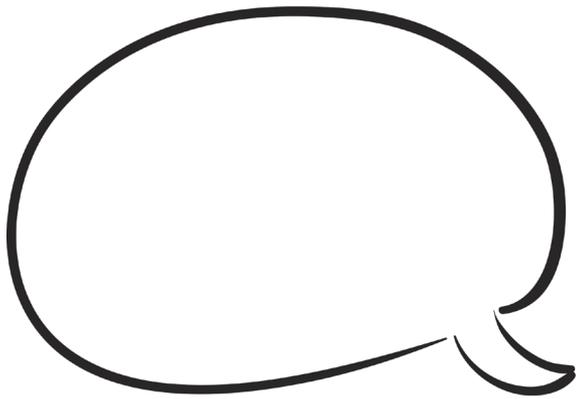
Prepare

- ✓ Find pictures of space in books or on the Internet. NASA has a lot of images from the Hubble telescope on their website (http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/hubble/multimedia/index.html).
- ✓ Provide paper and pencils.

Older Children

- **Say:** As Christians, we believe in God and we believe God created the world.
- **Ask:** How big is the world?
- Show the children the pictures of space.
- **Say:** These are some pictures that have been taken of the world beyond our planet. Scientists are continuing to explore and discover more about God's amazing world.
- **Ask:** How do you feel when you look at these pictures? How do these pictures make you feel about God?
- **Say:** God created many wonderful things in this world, including us. Even though we are only a part of God's creation, God loves us and wants to be connected to us.
- **Ask:** How does it make you feel to know that even though you are only a part of God's creation, God loves you and will never stop loving you?
- Allow children an opportunity to respond.
- **Say:** When we consider all the things God created and then know that God loves us, it is appropriate to feel gratitude.
- **Ask:** What does it mean to be grateful? (to be thankful, to give thanks)
- Give each child a piece of paper and a pencil.
- Invite each child to write a thank-you letter to God.
- **Say:** In your letter, tell God what it means to you to be chosen among all of God's creation to be loved by God.
- Let children know that their letters are between them and God and they will not be asked to share them.
- Allow children time to write. Have the children fold their letters and hold them while you pray.
- **Pray:** God, thank you for creating this amazing world that includes us. Thank you for your never-ending love for us. Help us to remember to show gratitude for all you have done. Amen.

Speech Bubbles



Christians Believe in God

Friend 1: Well, here we are at church.

Friend 2: Time to talk about church stuff.

Friend 3: So what are we talking about today?

Friend 4: Something called the Apostles' Creed.

Friend 5: What's the Apostles' Creed?

Friend 6: Well, an apostle is a follower of Jesus.

Friend 3: Also known as a Christian, right?

Friend 2: Right. And a creed is a statement of beliefs.

Friend 4: So the Apostles' Creed tells us what Christians believe.

Friend 5: Cool! Since we are Christians, we should know what we believe.

Friend 6: Exactly!

Friend 1: So what do Christians believe?

Friend 4: The Apostles' Creed begins, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth."

Friend 6: I believe in God. That seems important.

Friend 3: I know the Bible uses many different names for God. Why does the creed talk about God as our Father?

Friend 2: *Father* is the name Jesus used when he prayed to God.

Friend 1: Addressing God as Father shows we are in relationship with God.

Friend 5: God loves us and will never stop loving us.

Friend 3: What was the rest of that... creator of heaven and earth?

Friend 6: Yes, God created the world and everything in it.

Friend 2: God created mountains, seas...

Friend 1: rocks, trees, planets, stars...

Friend 4: animals, and people. God created it all!

Friend 2: What else do Christians believe?

Friend 5: Come back next week to find out!



2. Jesus Christ

Objectives

The children will:

- learn about the Apostles' Creed.
- discover that Christians believe in Jesus Christ.
- explore why belief in Jesus Christ matters in our lives.

Theme

Christians believe in Jesus.

Bible verse

"She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

(Matthew 1:21)

Focus for the Teacher

In this second lesson taking a look at what Christians believe, we will be focusing on Jesus. It seems rather obvious to say that Christians believe in Jesus Christ. After all, Christians are followers of Jesus. But there is more to it than simply saying we believe Jesus lived. After all, there is historical evidence for the existence of Jesus. What sets Christianity apart from many other world religions is how we view Jesus. By many other religions, Jesus is considered a prophet and an important teacher. Christians agree that Jesus was a prophet and a teacher. We believe Jesus is also the Son of God.

During Jesus' time on earth, Jesus did things ordinary people could not do. The Gospels tell of the miracles Jesus performed and the people Jesus healed. Additionally, people felt called to follow Jesus. When Jesus asked his original disciples to come and follow him, they did. These fishermen and tax collectors left behind the lives they had known and followed Jesus. They experienced something when they encountered Jesus that made them want to know more. They believed that Jesus was the Christ, God's only Son.

"God so loved the world..." These familiar words that begin John 3:16 tell us why Jesus, God's Son, spent time on earth. When God wanted to tell us how much we were loved,

God sent Jesus. Jesus was sent by God to show us how to live. Jesus showed us a better way—God's way. Jesus taught us about loving each other, caring for the sick and the poor, and working for peace. The name *Jesus* means "Savior." Jesus came to save us by showing us a better way to live and inspiring us to change.

Why does it matter that we believe Jesus is God's Son? Jesus' story is the defining story of the Christian faith. Following Jesus

is our purpose in life. We were born to follow in Jesus' footsteps and show God's love to the world. And because of Jesus' resurrection, we know that when our life on earth is over, it is not the end.

We believe
Jesus is the
Son of God.