

***I BELIEVE***  
**The Apostles' Creed – Week 1**  
**By Andy Manning**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. According to a 2022 study (Ligonier, “The State of Theology”)
  - i. 70% of evangelicals believe that Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God.
  - ii. 38% of evangelicals believe that Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God.
  - iii. 51% believe that the Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being.
2. In other words, a lot of Christians have unbiblical views about God. They are confused, unclear, or simply mistaken about what the Bible teaches.
3. And it is so important that you believe the right things about God. Why? Because your spiritual beliefs greatly affect your life. Your beliefs determine your behavior. If you believe that heaven and hell are real, that Jesus is the only way to heaven, that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant word of God, that prayer works, that God is always watching and will hold you accountable for your actions, then those beliefs will change the way you live.
4. So, there is an urgent need for churches to teach sound doctrine. To help Christians understand the basic, essential doctrines of the faith.
5. So, how do you do that? If you wanted to teach someone the basic, essential doctrines of Christianity, what would you say? For almost two thousand years, Christians have turned to a piece of literature called the Apostles' Creed to do just that.
6. What is a creed? A creed is a brief summary of Christian doctrines. In the early centuries of Christianity, Christian leaders developed creeds for two reasons: To correct error, and to teach doctrine.
7. The Apostles' Creed is the oldest Christian creed. It is affirmed by Christians of all denominations – Protestants and Roman Catholics. It provides an outline, or a syllabus, of basic, essential Christian doctrines. And for the next several weeks we are going to study it to deepen and clarify our understanding of Christian doctrine.

8. Before we begin, it is important that you know that the Apostles' Creed is not the Bible. The Bible is our only authority for what to believe. The Apostles' Creed is just a helpful summary of the Bible. A good analogy is the relationship between the moon and the sun. The moon doesn't produce any light of its own; it only shines because it reflects the light of the sun. In the same way, the Apostles' creed is not the Bible. It has no authority in and of itself. It is only helpful to the degree that it accurately reflects the Bible, and for centuries, Christians from all denominations have agreed that it does.
9. As well, it is important to understand that Christians do not believe in incantations. Reciting the Apostles' Creed is not going to get you to heaven, it is not going to give you good luck, it is not going to help you win the girl or get a good grade on your test. Reciting it is simply a reminder of basic Christian doctrine, and an affirmation that you do believe it.
10. Let's begin by reading it together. (This version of the Apostles' Creed comes from the website of the [Episcopal Church](#).)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth; I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

## **II. WHAT IS THE APOSTLES' CREED?**

1. The Apostles' Creed goes by several names. It is called the Symbol of the Apostles, the Rule of Faith, the Twelve Articles of Faith (because it can be divided into twelve doctrines), and sometimes it is simply referred to as "The Creed."
2. Where did the Apostles' Creed come from?
3. There are a couple of legends that have circulated over the years, but both of them are rejected by most scholars today. According to both legends the Apostles' Creed was composed by the twelve apostles.

- i. The first legend says that before Jesus ascended, He commanded them to split up and go to different countries to preach the gospel. Before they split up, they all assembled in one place and drafted the Apostles' Creed and decided that this would be the core message of their preaching and teaching, since they didn't want to preach contradictory messages.
  - ii. A second legend divides the Apostles' Creed into twelve statements, and supposedly each one was written by a different apostle. Again, both of these legends are rejected by modern scholars.
- 4. So what's the true story? As early as the second century, churches would use creeds to teach new converts the basic doctrines of Christianity. After several weeks of study, the new converts would recite the creed to affirm their faith and then get baptized. It is possible that each church had its own creed, but eventually some creeds became more popular and were adopted by more and more churches. This is likely the origin of the Apostles' Creed, which grew in popularity over time until all the churches were using it. The Creed as we have it today goes back to the eighth century AD, but there are versions of it that go all the way back to the second century.
- 5. Originally, then, the Apostles' Creed served a two-fold purpose: Teaching and baptism. It was used to teach new converts the basics of the faith, and it was recited by new converts at their baptism as a way of affirming their faith in the core beliefs of Christianity. Eventually Christians also started reciting it in worship. In this series, we're going to use it as a teaching tool to learn basic Christian doctrine.
- 6. Why is it called the Apostles' Creed? It is not because it was written by the apostles, but because it is a summary of their teaching. The word "creed" comes from the Latin word "credo," meaning "I believe." The Apostles' Creed was originally written in Latin, and the opening words are "Credo in Deum," or "I believe in God."
- 7. The Apostles' Creed has played a massive role in Christian history.
  - i. It is an ecumenical creed, which means it is affirmed by all Christians of every denomination – Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox.

- ii. Saint Augustine wrote a book on the Apostles' Creed (*Of Faith and Creed*).
- iii. John Calvin's famous book – *The Institutes of Christian Religion* – follows the structure of the Apostles' Creed.
- iv. Some of the most famous Protestant catechisms are rooted in the Creed – the Heidelberg Catechism, and Luther's Small Catechism.
- v. Many of the most important Protestant confessions (doctrinal statements) are rooted in the Apostles' Creed, including The Augsburg Confession, the Helvetic Confession, the Gallican Confession, the Belgic Confession, The Westminster Confession, the Second London Baptist Confession, and the Canons of Dort.
- vi. For almost two thousand years – and still to this day, Christian churches from all denominations have been teaching, memorizing, and reciting the Creed in church.
- vii. In other words, if you want a brief summary of what Christians believe, if you want to learn what the Bible teaches, then a great place to begin is the Apostles' Creed.

### **III. I BELIEVE**

- 1. Today we're going to start with the first two words of the creed – "I believe."
- 2. This important phrase is found three times in the creed.
  - i. I believe in God, the Father
  - ii. I believe in Jesus Christ
  - iii. I believe in the Holy Spirit
- 3. The Biblical word "believe," or "faith," is central to the Christian life. Today we're going to learn what it means.

### **IV. WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT FAITH**

#### **1. Biblical faith is not a force.**

- i. In the 1960s, a preacher named Kenneth Hagin started the Word Faith Movement. It has also come to be known as the Prosperity Gospel, or the Gospel of Health and Wealth. Hagin's followers include Kenneth Copeland, Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, T.D. Jakes, John Hagee, Benny Hinn. The Word Faith Movement teaches three main ideas about faith:

- ii. First, God wants you to be healthy, wealth, and prosperous all the time.
  - 1. I heard about a new church that was coming to town, so they put up a billboard that said, “Always wealthy, never poor; Always health, never sick – Guaranteed.” (Roger Olson, *Counterfeit Christianity*, 155.)
  - 2. One time a popular prosperity preacher was preaching in chapel at a Christian college. He was talking about God’s promise of health and wealth. He shouted, “You can’t be a witness for Jesus from a wheelchair!” Several of the students in chapel that day happened to be in wheelchairs. It was clear that the audience was not accepting his message, so he said, “Well, am I not right?” One theology professor stood up and shouted, “No!” (Roger Olson, *Counterfeit Christianity*, 155.)
- iii. Second, to receive health and wealth, you must have faith. If you are not healthy and wealthy, then it’s your fault. You don’t have enough faith. In other words, it resorts to victim-blaming and shaming.
- iv. Third, there are several ways to exercise faith:
  - 1. First, name it and claim it. Blab it and grab it. Sometimes called positive confession, the idea is to claim the health and wealth that are rightfully yours by speaking positive confessions such as, “I am wealthy. I am completely healthy. I am super successful at work. I’m a straight-A student.” At the same time, you must avoid negative confessions. Don’t say, “I’m sick. I’m dying. My business is failing. I’m struggling in school.” According the Gospel of Health and wealth, faith is a force, and words are like containers that release faith to do its work. If you speak positive confessions, they will come to pass; and if you speak negative confessions, they too will come to pass. Many Christians have bought into this mindset and don’t even realize it. If you say something negative, such as, “It looks like I’m going to fail chemistry,” or, “My marriage is

headed for divorce,” they will correct you. “Don’t say that! You gotta have faith.” According to them, faith is expressed through positive statements, and negative statements are a sign that you lack faith.

2. Second, act as if. Fake it until you make it. In other words, if you have true faith, then you would act as if the promise was already fulfilled. Some Christians throw away their badly needed glasses, crutches, and medicines, because to use them is a lack of faith. Other Christians have purchased expensive cars and houses – beyond what they can afford – because acting as if they are rich is the way to exercise faith.
  3. Third, sow a seed of faith. Word Faith preachers say that to exercise your faith, you must give financially to their ministry. The more faith you have, the bigger and more sacrificial your donation will be. I once went to hear a Word Faith preacher, Morris Cerullo, in Dallas. At the end of the service, he said he was about to lay hands on people for healing. But first, he passed the offering plate. He said to sow a seed of faith, and your miracle will be based on your seed of faith. If you sow a small seed, you will get a small miracle. If you want a big miracle, you must sow a big financial seed. At one point he asked, “Do you want a \$1 miracle, or a \$1,000 miracle?”
- v. The Word Faith Movement is a dangerous heresy for several reasons.
1. First, God doesn’t guarantee health and wealth in this life.
    - a. Just read the stories of the great Christians who have lived through the centuries and learn about all the suffering they endured. To say otherwise is to give people false hope and set them up for disappointment with God.
  2. Second, sickness and poverty are not always the fault of the victim.
    - a. There are a host of causes of sickness and poverty, and often they have nothing to do with the victim.

- b. There are millions of Christians in other countries that live in abject poverty. They love Jesus as much as you do, but they don't have running water, or air conditioning, or electricity. They are lucky if they eat once a day. Why are they so poor? Is it because they don't have enough faith?
  - c. I heard of a Pentecostal preacher who had a terrible blood clotting disease that threatened his life. He and his church prayed fervently for healing, claiming it as God's promise. His entire denomination prayed for him. When the healing didn't come, he began doubting his salvation altogether (Roger Olson, *Counterfeit Christianity*, 159).
- 3. Third, faith is not a force.
  - a. Faith is not a force that you activate by positive confessions, or acting as if, or sowing a seed.
  - b. What is faith?
  - c. **Hebrews 11:1** "Now faith is the assurance of what is hoped for, the conviction of what is not seen."
  - d. In other words, faith is confidence in God, that He is who He says He is, and that He will do what He says He will do (Heb 11:1).
  - e. Notice that it is rooted in what God says. You can only have faith in what God has said He will do. You can't have faith in what you want God to do, or in what you hope God will do, because He hasn't promised those things. You can't have faith that God will heal you, or make you rich, or help you get pregnant, or help you pass the test or make the team, because He hasn't promised you those things. You can only have faith in what God has promised.
  - f. Imagine this scenario. A promotion opportunity opens up at your job and your friend asks you, "Are you going to apply?" You say, "No. I probably wouldn't get it anyway. Other people are more

qualified than me, and I'm pretty sure the manager doesn't like me." Your friend says, "What? You should apply! You gotta have faith!" What's wrong with that statement? Well faith in what? You can't have faith that will give you the promotion because He didn't promise it to you. You can only have faith in God's word.

- g. In the Bible, the way that faith is demonstrated and exercised is not by positive confessions, or acting as if, or sowing a financial seed. It is demonstrated by obedience (Heb 12:17). True faith obeys God -- even when it's hard; even when nobody's watching; even when everyone else around you is sinning; even if it costs you everything; even if it's painful; even if you don't have all the answers.

## **2. Biblical faith is the instrument of salvation.**

- i. The Bible is very clear that faith is the way to receive the salvation that God offers.
- ii. **Acts 16:31** Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.
- iii. What do you need to be saved from sin and go to heaven? Believe in, or have faith in Jesus.
- iv. When the Bible says that salvation is by faith, it means that it is by faith and not by works.
- v. **Ephesians 2:8-9** 8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—9 not from works, so that no one can boast.
- vi. In other words, biblical faith not merely the instrument of salvation; it is the only instrument of salvation.
- vii. The gospel of Jesus Christ says this: God created you to have a relationship with Him, but you have sinned against God. Your sins are so grievous that you deserve hell. Not only that, but you can't do anything to save yourself. You can't earn your way to heaven by doing good works, or by being super active in church. However, God has provided a way for you to be saved. He sent His



Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross and pay for your sins.

Through Jesus, God offers salvation as a free gift. To receive the gift of salvation, you have to believe in, or have faith in Jesus.

viii. That leads to an important question. What exactly does it mean to believe in Jesus? The Protestant Reformers thought deeply about this and explained that there are three elements to biblical saving faith.

1. Knowledge. You must know and understand the gospel, for the gospel is what must be believed in order to be saved (Rm 1:16-17).

2. Assent. You must agree that gospel is true.

3. Trustful commitment. Saving faith goes beyond mere comprehension and consent to commitment. For example, you can know and agree that certain things are true, and they have no affect on your life. You can know and agree that cigarette smoking leads to lung cancer but continue to smoke. You can know and agree that exercise will improve your health but neglect to exercise. Saving faith affects the way you live. It involves treating Jesus as trustworthy and committing yourself to Him. It's saying, "Jesus, I ask You to save me from my sins, and in return, I commit myself to living according to Your will."

ix. There are two kinds of false faith that you must watch out for. In other words, there are a lot of people who think they have faith in Jesus, but they don't. It's not saving faith.

1. First, believing in Jesus but relying upon good works.

Acadiana is full of people like this. Do they believe in Jesus? Yes. But what are they relying on, or trusting in for salvation? Good works. How do I know? All you have to do is ask them why God would let them into heaven, and they'll say, "Because I'm a good person."

2. The second kind of false faith is believing in Jesus but living in sin. Acadiana is full of people like this too. They understand the gospel, and they believe it is true, but it has

no impact on their life. They lack commitment. They lack repentance.

3. **Alister McGrath** “Faith is our commitment to God, our decision to allow him to be present with us, to guide us, to support us, to challenge us and to rule over us in every aspect of our lives. It is a joyful and willing self-surrender to God. It is a throwing open of the doors of our life and inviting God to enter, not merely as our guest but as our Lord and master. God’s commitment to us demands a commitment from us in return. Just as God humbled himself on the cross to meet us, so we must humble ourselves in repentance to meet him (McGrath, *I Believe*, 21).”

**3. Biblical faith is required for the Christian life from start to finish.**

- i. While faith is the instrument of salvation, it would be a mistake to think that faith is only needed for salvation.
- ii. Exercising your faith is like drinking water. You need to drink water to live. But you don’t just need to drink it once. You need to drink water all your life.
- iii. Faith is needed not only to start the Christian life, but to successfully live the Christian life. Faith is not only required to get you to heaven, but to follow Jesus every day on earth.
- iv. **2 Corinthians 5:7** For we walk by faith, not by sight.
- v. We don’t just get saved by faith; we walk, or live daily by faith.
- vi. Four Reasons You Need Faith Every Day
  - 1. Faith is required for obedience.
    - a. Obedience can be hard because it can cost you money, friends, comfort, and pleasure. Think about the command to tithe, for example. That’s hard.
    - b. Where do you get the strength for obedience?
    - c. Faith. You obey God because you believe there is a God, and He deserves your obedience, and He will reward you for it (Heb 11:6).
  - 2. Faith is required for prayer.

- a. Prayer can be difficult because you are talking to someone you can't see, hear, or touch. Often God doesn't answer prayer in the way you want, or according to your timeframe.
  - b. So why pray?
  - c. Faith. You pray because you believe that God hears you, and God cares about you, and God will answer your prayers in the way that is best for you.
- 3. Faith is required for temptation.
  - a. The devil will tempt you throughout the day to sin. He does so by lying to you. He says, "No one will know. There won't be any consequences. You need this to be happy. You need to sin to stay afloat financially."
  - b. Where do you get the strength to resist temptation?
  - c. Faith. You resist temptation because you believe God's word instead of Satan's lies. Satan says that no one will know, but you believe that God will know. Satan says that there won't be consequences, but you have faith that God will hold you accountable. Satan says that sin will make you happy, but you believe that sin only leads to sorrow and suffering. Satan say you need to sin to stay afloat financially, but you believe that God will provide for your needs.
- 4. Faith is required for endurance.
  - a. God allows bad things to happen to good people. When that happens, a lot of people get angry with God and turn away from Him.
  - b. How do you keep serving and obeying God when it seems like He has abandoned you?
  - c. Faith. You believe that even though life is bad, God is good. Even though you don't know why, you know God, and believe He loves you because He proved it on the cross.

- vii. Faith is not just something you need to start the Christian life. You need it every single day as you follow Jesus.
- viii. And that's why you have to nurture your faith. You can't neglect it. You have to nourish it and feed it so it grows and doesn't become weak.
- ix. How do you nurture your faith? You have to practice the spiritual growth habits. There are certain habits that you need to practice to keep your faith healthy and growing. I'll give you the five most basic. (1) Gather with other believers for worship every Sunday. (2) Go to a Home Group (a small group Bible study). (3) Get busy serving in church. (4) Give a tithe of your finances to God. (5) Guard your daily quiet time.
- x. If exercising your faith is like drinking water, then the growth exercises are the way that you fill your cup. Many Christians have weak faith and they struggle to faithfully follow Jesus because when they go to drink the water of faith, their cup is empty. They haven't been practicing the growth habits. When it's time to obey, they need faith, but their cup is empty. When it's time to pray, to resist temptation, to endure hard times, they need faith, but their cup is empty. You need faith every day, and the only way to nurture and grow your faith is with the growth exercises.

## V. CONCLUSION

1. What have we learned today?
  - i. The Apostles' Creed is a great way to learn Christian doctrine.
  - ii. The first words are "I believe."
  - iii. Faith is not a force.
  - iv. Faith is the instrument of salvation.
  - v. Faith is needed for the Christian life from start to finish.
2. **Albert Mohler**, in his book on the Apostles' Creed wrote, "I believe. These two words are among the most explosive words any human can utter."
3. How is your faith? Are you one of those people who has false faith?
  - i. Maybe you believe in Jesus, but you've been relying on good works to get you to heaven. If that's you, then you need to realize that you don't deserve and can't earn heaven. If God gave you

what you deserve it would always be hell. Your only hope is Jesus. Today, I'm going to give you an opportunity to cast all your hope and faith in Jesus alone.

- ii. Or maybe you believe in Jesus, but it hasn't affected your life. You haven't made the decision to hand the steering wheel over to Jesus. If that's you, then you need to realize that that's not real faith; that's not real Christianity. True faith obeys. True faith turns from sin. Today I'm going to give you an opportunity to surrender all to Jesus.

- 4. How is your faith? Is it real? How can you tell? Let me ask you a question: If you died today, are you sure you would go to heaven? Here's another question. If you aren't sure, then I encourage you to start over with God today. Invite Jesus Christ into your life today. How do you do that?

- i. A – Admit that you are a sinner.
- ii. B – Believe in Jesus Christ.
- iii. C – Call on Jesus to be your Lord and Savior.