

The Apostles' Creed

I Believe

January 8, 2023—Sermon Discussion Guide

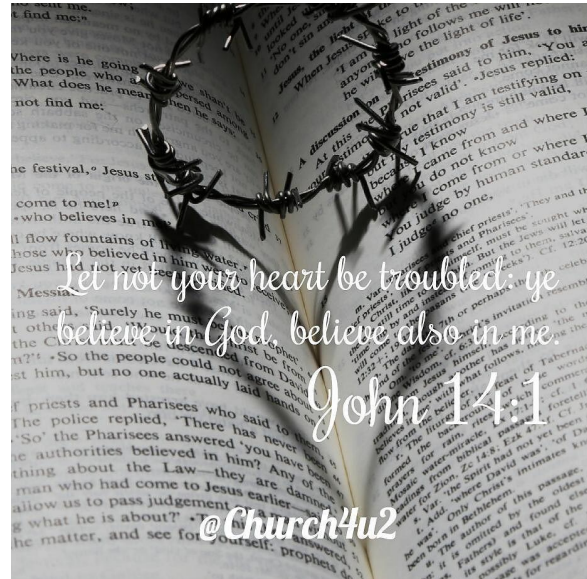
If you remember in last week's lesson we learned that the Greek word for believe is *pisteuo*. Literally translated it means "I am believing." It is a verb that suggests movement, activity, a continuing process. It infers taking action by consciously leading a life centered on what you believe and in whom you believe. It is a declaration that you are committed to trusting in and relying on the relationship you have with your God. The same Greek word is also translated as faith.

In Hebrew there are three words most often translated as believe. The word להמין (*lehemeen*) means to believe. The word אמונה (*emunah*) means belief or faith. The third is אמן (*amen*) which means "so be it." אמן (*amen*) is the primary root word with implications of building up, fostering, being firm or faithful, trusting, or being permanent, true, and certain. It also means to go to the right hand. This was the steadfast hand of assurance, the hand worthy of trusting and following. In the Old Testament when someone is declaring something significant and ends with the exhortation אמן (*amen*), it is translated "Believe it!"

I Believe

The Apostle's Creed begins with the words "I Believe." It doesn't say **we** believe, it is not a corporate declaration even though it is usually spoken during a worship service, it is a personal declaration of what an individual Christian believes.

- List some things that you believe. They don't have to be of a religious nature, just ordinary things about life, people, etc. What does it mean to you to say you believe in something?
- How does the way you live your life reflect the beliefs on your list?
- How difficult is it to believe something that you do not understand?
- People can believe things that are not true. Have you ever discovered that something you believed was untrue? How did that make you feel?
- Some beliefs we have cannot be proven true or false. How do we justify those beliefs?
- Why is the word "I" so important when we say the Creed?



Belief is an Action

J. I. Packer states in Affirming the Apostles' Creed, "Christian faith means hearing, noting, and doing what God says." Believing is not a passive verb, it is an action verb. Every day we are acting out what we believe in. Everything we do is broadcasting to the world what we believe. That is a mind boggling concept. It's very hard to demonstrate our Christian beliefs if we aren't sure of them. We need to be sure of what we believe and then our actions will reflect that belief.

Beth Moore says in her study of James, Mercy Triumphs, "Our human tendency is to figure out quickly what we believe then, from that point forward, stick to materials that affirm our early-determined belief system. We end up barely making it into our spiritual adolescence before binding our own systematic theology books in our heads." This often happens with Christians. We decide early on in our walk with Christ what we think is correct and what we want to believe, then we turn it into truth in our heads and don't bother to continue to grow and learn and study. But when we allow ourselves to break free of those early presuppositions and study, discuss, and dive deep into scripture those beliefs often change, mature, and become a rock on which to build our faith.

In this journey of discovery using the Apostles' Creed, you will discover the basic beliefs that the early church founders wanted to make sure you heard, understood, and lived. This study may change your mind about some things, confirm other things, and explain your faith in a way that makes it easier to live out every day.

- Use a dictionary to look up belief and faith. What is the difference between these words? How are they connected?
- Have you ever changed what you believed in as a Christian? What was the catalyst for that change?

Read Hebrews 11:1-16. Note that this letter was written specifically to Jewish believers to help them understand the Way.

- The author gives many examples of people's actions demonstrating their faith. Why do you think he used these specific examples?
- Why were these people able to trust? What did they all believe?
- Do you think it is easier or harder to have that kind of trust and faith in our society today compared to ancient times? Why?
- How would you explain to a doubter why you believe and trust in God?

My take away: Think of a difficult situation in your life right now where you would like God's direction or intervention. Write a prayer below asking God to give you the faith and trust to let him lead you, carry you, and protect you through this difficult time. Repeat this prayer daily this week.
