

WE BELIEVE

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- A stack of old newspapers and magazines, scissors, paper and glue
- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: VALUES POTPOURRI

Bring in a stack of old/unwanted newspapers and magazines. Invite the kids to cut them up and create a collage together of phrases that suggest beliefs or values of any sort. When they finish (or when the allotted time has passed), post the resulting work, and take a few moments to review the collage. Is everything on there true (that is, in the sense that it is consistent with what we believe)? (Probably not). Is some of it true? (Possibly). Where is the focus?

A SMALL GROUP MAY BE HAPPY WORKING TOGETHER ON A SINGLE COLLAGE. FOR LARGER OR MORE INDEPENDENT GROUPS YOU MAY WANT TO HAVE THEM WORK SEPARATELY AND THEN POST THEM TOGETHER AS ONE LARGER PIECE BEFORE REVIEWING.

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: WHAT MAKES ME WHAT I AM

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to read together the following quote, and then invite them to comment on it. Use the questions below to draw out further discussion as needed.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

"I believe what I believe is what makes me what I am. I did not make it, no it is making me. It is the very truth of God and not the invention of any man." - Rich Mullins (Christian songwriter) in "Creed"

- Do you agree that what we believe makes us what we are? Why or why not? Is it a good thing if it's true?
- What do you think the songwriter means by saying he did not make the creed, but it is making him?
- Brainstorm about some examples of how what we believe could change the way we live.

A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *What we believe – if we really do believe it – influences every aspect of our lives. In the Old Testament, the people were told to teach their beliefs to their children, to talk about them in all their interactions and to write them in their homes (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). The things they believed were supposed to change every single aspect of how they lived, so those words of belief were invited into every part of their lives. The power of belief is only a good thing if our beliefs themselves are good and true.*

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- *Our faith, passed down to us through generations of believing Christians, is not just something we made up for ourselves, instead it has the power to shape us and to help us to grow throughout our lives.*
- *What we believe changes how we see ourselves, and how we see others, so it affects our relationships. It forms our idea of what God wants our lives to look like, so it affects the decisions we make every day.*

THE LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 15

The first part of the lesson begins with a few notes about how and why the creeds developed in the early Church, followed by a brief introduction to the text. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

In the earliest days of Church history, the Christian creeds – or statements of belief – began to take form through the oral tradition of the teachings of Jesus and the writings of the apostles. Those converting to the faith were coming from diverse backgrounds, which was a great blessing as the Gospel continued to spread. However, some of the ideas being brought into the Church were incompatible with the Gospel and were causing widespread confusion and divisions.

In the history of the Church, many of the same false teachings (called *heresies*) have cropped up repeatedly, and this is still true today. The early Church tackled the problem of false teaching in two ways. First, it established a canon of scripture to form an authoritative group of writings (the Bible). Second, the creeds of the Church were written to set the record straight on what Christians believe. The scriptures and the creeds are a standard against which we can hold any new teaching to determine whether it is faithful to the Christian tradition or not.

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The Apostle Paul wrote many letters to the early churches, which are now a part of our canon of scripture. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul addressed some practices and teachings that were in need of correction.

Refer to 1 Corinthians 15: 1-8, 12-14, 58.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READING FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGE FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ IT IN ITS ENTIRETY: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-58.)

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS' NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What are some elements of the Gospel that Paul outlines as being especially important in verses 1-8?
- Based on verses 12-14, what false teaching do you think Paul was trying to correct?
- What exhortation and encouragement does Paul give at the close of his lecture?
- After looking over our lesson notes and reading this passage, why do you think we say the creed as part of our worship?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Paul outlines the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, placing special emphasis on all of the people who saw him after his resurrection.*

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- *It's clear from the passage that some people in the Corinthian church were suggesting that there was no such thing as resurrection from the dead – for Jesus or for anyone else. Paul goes to great trouble to correct and clarify this error.*
- *The Corinthians are told to stand firm numerous times throughout the passage. In the end Paul repeats this exhortation using the words “steadfast” and “immovable”, but he also tells them to carry on confidently doing the work of the Lord. They are not to get sidetracked!*
- *When we say the creed we are proclaiming our common faith as Christians. It doesn't necessarily mean that we understand everything perfectly! Reminding ourselves of the central beliefs we share can help us to recognize false teachings when they crop up.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

At home, find a quiet place...

Are there parts of the creed that you struggle to believe? Spend some time praying: “Lord I believe, help my unbelief”. (Mark 9:24)

Are there times when it seems like what you believe isn't changing you? Spend some time asking God to write his truth on your heart, and to cause that truth to transform you.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech thee, that this holy faith may evermore be our defense against all adversaries; who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen. (THE COLLECT FOR TRINITY SUNDAY, BCP PAGE 214)

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Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE “PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS” SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the “Grace”, the final prayer in the booklet.

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1 CORINTHIANS 15: **OF FIRST IMPORTANCE**

¹Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me... ¹²Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain... ⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.