

SECTION

7

MAJOR BELIEFS OF
CHRISTIANITY



RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, PRACTICES, MORAL VALUES AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The major beliefs of the three religions

Introduction

The aim of this section is to introduce you to the main beliefs of Christianity, namely, the Apostles' Creed, and how Christians express their beliefs in their day-to-day lives. The knowledge gained will help you to appreciate Christian religious traditions and practices, helping you to better understand the religion and how these values support individuals' growth and development.

At the end of this section, you will be able to:

Identify the main beliefs of the three major religions.

Key Ideas

- The Apostles' Creed as a declaration of Christians' core beliefs including the role of God as the creator of the universe, Jesus as the son of God, crucifixion, resurrection and salvation.
- How the beliefs of Christians are manifested through worship, prayer, songs, alms giving and evangelism.

CHRISTIAN BELIEFS: THE APOSTLES' CREED

The Apostles' Creed

The core elements of Christianity are spelt out in the Apostles' Creed. Whilst its name would suggest that it was written by the apostles, the Creed originated in the Catholic Church during the third and fourth centuries as a baptismal creed. It was then modified to serve as an overview of the apostles' teachings. Core Christian doctrines regarding God, Jesus, the Church, salvation, and other theological subjects are outlined in the Creed.

The concept of the Trinity is reflected in the Creed; the Christian belief that God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Apostles' Creed reads:

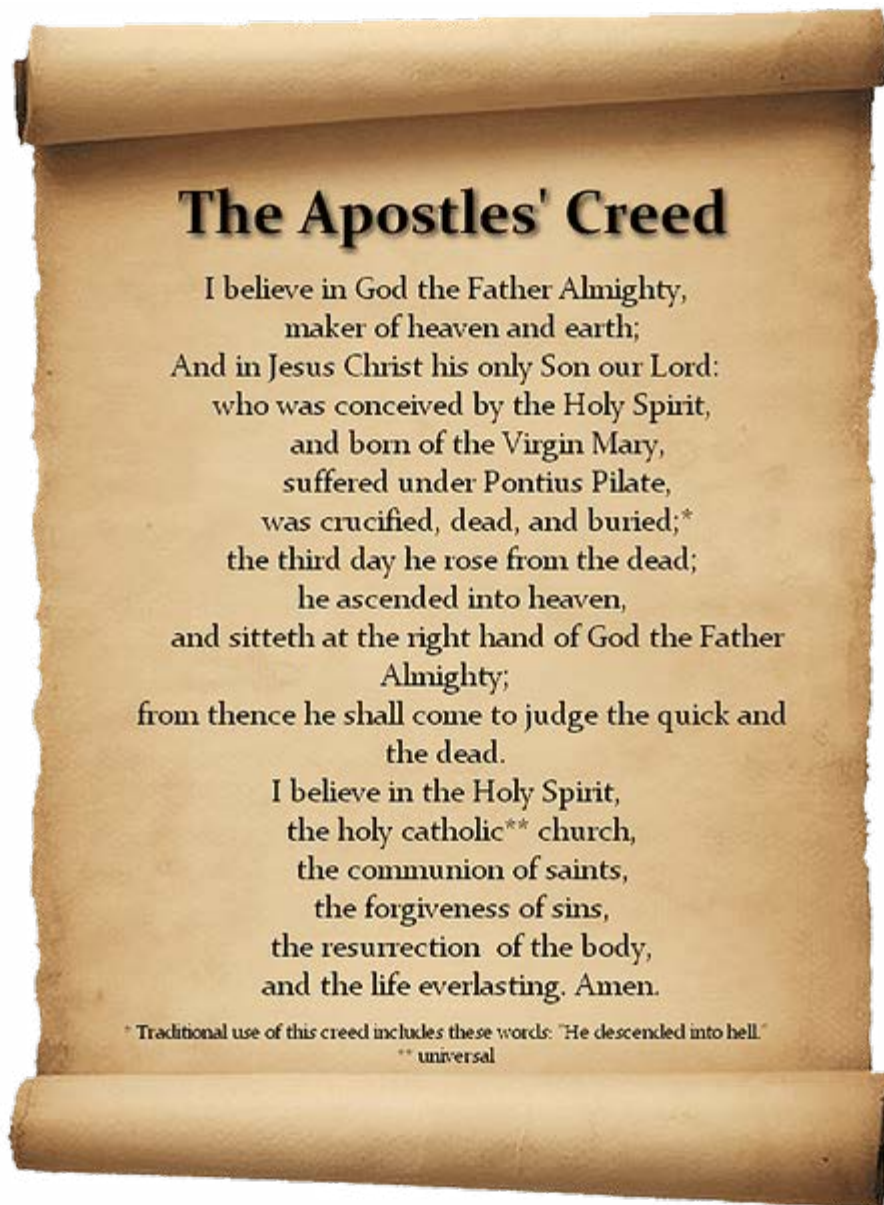


Fig. 1: Apostles Creed

Activity 7.1

Click the link below. Watch and listen carefully to the recitation of the Apostles' Creed.



Biblical passages that support the Apostles' Creed

The beliefs outlined in the Apostles' Creed are also described in the Bible. Biblical references for each element of the Creed are described below:

1. Belief in the oneness of God and the Trinity (Source: Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 12: 29-31; Matthew 27: 33-35; Acts 1: 1-11).
2. The belief in the oneness of God is affirmed in Deuteronomy 6:4 where Moses declares "The Lord our God, the Lord is one" and in Mark 12:29-31 where he responds to the question of which is the most important commandment. References to the Trinity can be found in Matthew 3:16-17 and Acts 1:1-11.
3. Belief that Jesus Christ was God, who took on human form to save the world (incarnation) (Source: John. 1: 1/14)
4. Incarnation: God becoming human is attested to by John in John 1:1-14 that begins by stating that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" before telling us that the Word became flesh and dwelt among humans. In this way the divinity (God's nature) and humanity (human nature of Jesus) are affirmed. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"
5. Belief that Jesus was crucified (Matthew 27:32-44; Luke 23:26-43)
6. The books of Matthew 27 and Luke 23 tell the story of the crucifixion confirms the Christian belief that Jesus was indeed crucified in order to save humanity.
7. Belief that Jesus was resurrected from the dead (Matthew 28:1-10)
8. That Jesus rose again is outlined in the belief that after the crucifixion, Jesus was resurrected to give Christians hope that there is victory after suffering, there is life after death.
9. Belief that Jesus Christ ascended to heaven (Acts 1:1-9)
10. Christians believe that Jesus appeared and reappeared to his followers for forty days before going to heaven body, soul and spirit. This phenomenon is known as ascension.
11. Belief in the second coming of Jesus (Source: John 14:1-3). Christians believe that Jesus will return to earth as he promised to His disciples at the start of John book 14.
12. Belief in the forgiveness of sins (John 20: 22-23). One of the central beliefs of Christians is that Jesus died to save sinful humanity from sin.
13. Belief in judgment (Matthew 12:36-37). Christians believe that there will be a day of accountability known as the judgment day.
14. Belief in an everlasting life. (1 John 5: 20). Another belief of Christians is that death does not end life of the human person but ushers him to a new life in the unseen world.
15. Belief in the church as a body of Christ (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Christians believe in the unity of the Church in line with the priestly prayer of Jesus that all may be one. This becomes the basis for communal worship.

Activity 7.2

Using the internet, search for Biblical quotations that support the contents of the Apostles' Creed. How do these verses support your understanding of Christian beliefs?

Make notes on your findings and be prepared to share in groups or with the wider class.

Activity 7.3

Your teacher may invite a lecturer of Christian Religious Studies, a Reverend minister, etc. to give a talk on the major Christian beliefs.

- a. Prepare a list of questions you would like to ask in order to better understand this subject. E.g. What are the major Christian beliefs that you will be discussing with us today?
- b. How do Christian beliefs positively impact on our daily lives and decision-making?

Table 7.1: Questionnaire

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Alternatively, you could arrange to visit and interview a person knowledgeable in Christian beliefs. Share your findings with a colleague or your Religious Studies teacher.

Activity 7.4

Your teacher may provide you with biblical quotations on the major Christian beliefs.

Alternatively, you may source biblical quotations from books or the internet. Consider how these passages support central Christian beliefs and the meaning of the messages in each verse. Be prepared to share your research with your class.

Examples of verses you may consider are:

- a. Matthew 28:16-20 (Great Commission),
- b. John 3:16-17 (Salvation)
- c. Romans 10:9-10 (Faith and Confession)
- d. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (Resurrection)

THE EXPRESSION OF THE MAIN CHRISTIAN BELIEFS IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

In this lesson you will be led to identify how Christian beliefs are manifested or expressed in the lives of Christians. The following are ways the major beliefs of Christians are expressed:

Worship:

Christians express their faith through various forms of worship, which can be either personal or collective. Many Christians begin and end their day with individual worship, while others seek solitude in serene environments like mountains or monasteries for quiet reflection. Communal worship takes place regularly in churches, auditoriums, or outdoor settings, often on weekends (Saturdays or Sundays). Some Christian denominations also gather on weekdays for Bible studies, group discussions, and prayer sessions, further enriching their spiritual practices.

Songs:

Songs, in the form of hymns, are a timeless form of expressing Christian beliefs. Various Christian denominations, including Catholics, Protestants, Methodists and Anglicans have compiled their own collections of hymns in hymnals. Examples of hymns from different hymnals include:

- *Abide with me* in Anglican Hymn 783
- *To God be the glory*, Methodist Hymn 313
- *God will take care of you*, SDA Hymn 99
- *Resurrection of the dead*, Presbyterian Hymn 313
- *Amazing Grace*, Catholic Book of Worship 480

In addition to hymns, Catholics and Protestants also sing canticles, kyries, and mass songs as part of their worship services. The entire congregation may join in singing, or the choir and other singing groups may lead the musical portions. Christians also sing a variety of songs beyond traditional hymns, including choral compositions like:

- “*Yesu ka wo ho*” by Osei Boateng
- “*Oye*” by James Varrick Armaah
- “*Sankudwom*” by Sam Asare Bediako
- “*Grace and Mercy*” by Newlove Annan

These songs add diversity and depth to Christian worship and gatherings. There are other Christian highlife songs and popular Christian folk songs such as:

- *Da no ase* (Composer unknown)
- *Yesu ye nkwa abodoo* – Koda featuring Nacee
- *Adom* – Diana Hamilton
- *Something new in my life* – Elder Collins Amponsah
- *Bo noo ni* – Joe Mettle
- *Agbelolo* – Celestine Donkor

All of these songs contain lyrics that manifest Christian beliefs.

Prayer:

Christians express their beliefs through various forms of prayer, including the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), meditative prayer, congregational prayer, and speaking in tongues. They may adopt different postures during prayer, such as kneeling, standing, sitting, or prostrating.

Evangelism:

Christians share their beliefs through evangelism to spread the gospel, for example through preaching or witnessing to others. Christian evangelism follows the command of Jesus to go out into the world and preach to all people (Matthew 28:19-20). Evangelism can occur in churches, open-air meetings, electronic media, Christian literature, and one-on-one witnessing.



Fig. 7.2: An act of Evangelism

Giving:

Christians demonstrate their beliefs through giving. The Bible encourages Christians to give to the poor (2 Corinthians 9:6-7), and to the church in the form of offerings (Malachi 3:10). Some denominations formalise giving by collecting resources from members and donating to those in need through Christian NGOs like Catholic Relief Services and World Vision International among others.

Activity 7.5

Visit a Christian religious site to observe the expression of Christian beliefs as manifested in worship activities. Take notes on your observations and be prepared to engage in a whole class discussion when you return to the classroom.

Activity 7.6

Search the internet for information on the expressions of the major Christian beliefs in religious life such as music, dance, prayer, etc.

You may ask for support from your classroom teacher on the relevant sites to search.

Examples include:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIy-2vLK_HY
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1fzm-iIS1w&list=RDD1fzm-iIS1w&start_radio=1&rv=ultRH9_9WT8
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAq6mUJxG5A>

Activity 7.7

Your teacher may invite a resource person, such as Cleric, an Elder of a recognised Christian religious denomination or a teacher/lecturer in Christianity to demonstrate the expression of Christian beliefs in religious life.

Alternatively, you may make an arrangement and meet one of them for the same purpose. Prior to the visit or meeting compose questions to ask the resource person as part of the discussion.

Activity 7.8

Look for colleagues and form a group of six or more people. Dramatise the expression of any major Christian belief you have learnt.

Share the roles among the groups' member, for example:

- Scriptwriters: Script the performance
- Actors: Act out in role-play or drama
- Director/Producer: Direct performance and critique their peers' performance

Perform your piece in class and ask for feedback.

Self-Assessment 7.1

Answer at least one of the following questions to support your review of this focal area:

1. Identify any four major Christian beliefs.
2. Explain, with relevant examples, four major Christian beliefs.
3. Justify four major Christian beliefs, with reference to the Apostles' Creed.

Self-Assessment 7.2

Answer any of the following questions to review your learning from this section.

1. Identify three Christian beliefs that are expressed in the life of Christians.
2. Explain three Christian beliefs that are expressed in the life of Christians.
3. Demonstrate through role play/drama three Christian beliefs that are expressed in the life of Christians.

Review Questions

1. Present a PowerPoint presentation on four major Christian beliefs and their implication for Christian living.
2. Analyse and evaluate the various ways Christians express their religious beliefs, considering the significance of each method and how they contribute to the development of a vibrant Christian community.

Answers to Review Questions

1. Your presentation should cover four of the core Christian beliefs and explain how these beliefs are expressed in Christian's everyday lives.
 - a. Christianity holds that there is only one God who exists in three persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit.
Implication: Acknowledge the deity of Jesus, the sovereignty of God, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in day-to-day living.
 - b. Belief in Salvation via Jesus Christ: Christians hold that salvation is obtained by having confidence in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
Implication: Live a purposeful life, accept forgiveness, and spread the gospel to others.
 - c. Belief in the Bible's Authority: Christians hold that the Bible is the inspired word of God, directing their beliefs and practices.
Implication: Learn from, live by, and respect the lessons found in the Bible.
 - d. Church as the Body of Christ Belief: Christians consider the Church to be a body of believers bound together by Christ.
Implication: Take part in Christian worship, companionship, and service, etc.
2. Ways in which Christians express their beliefs include:
 - a. **Worship and Music:** Singing hymns, canticles, and contemporary songs helps Christians connect with God and each other. Music goes beyond races, generations, cultures, and denominations hence foster unity and a sense of belonging
 - b. **Prayer:** Individual and communal prayer, including the Lord's Prayer, meditative prayer, and speaking in tongues, deepens personal faith and strengthens community bonds. Prayer fosters empathy, compassion, and support among believers
 - c. **Evangelism:** Sharing the Gospel through preaching, witnessing, and service projects spreads the Christian's message, attracts new members and strengthen the faith of the existing ones. Evangelism promotes spiritual growth, outreach, and community engagement
 - d. **Giving:** Tithes, offerings, and charitable donations demonstrate Christians' commitment to supporting the church, the poor, and global missions. Giving makes Christians to cultivate the virtues of generosity, gratitude, and a sense of responsibility
 - e. **Scripture Study and Fellowship:** Engaging with the Bible and participating in small groups, Bible studies, and fellowship activities promotes spiritual growth and accountability.

- 3.** The significance of the various modes of expression of the Christian beliefs includes:
 - a. Worship and music inspire and unite people.
 - b. Prayer deepens faith and fosters compassion.
 - c. Evangelism spreads the Gospel and attracts new members because they feel a sense of belongingness to the Christian family.
 - d. Giving demonstrates commitment and generosity.
 - e. Scripture study and fellowship promote spiritual growth and communal unity.

Extended Reading

- <https://billygraham.org/answer/what-is-the-apostles-creed/>
- <https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/Creed.htm>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jW2crIC8tNA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsvkQ2SBS-0>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ultRH9_9WT8
- <https://faithstrongtoday.com/robynroste/10-simple-ways-to-better-express-your-faith>

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Glossary

WORDS

MEANING

Apostles' Creed:	This is the summary of Christians' major beliefs
Evangelism:	Sharing the gospel of Christ in word and in action in order to win converts to Christianity.
Trinity:	The Christian belief that God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Acknowledgements



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