

A Simple Scripture Theology for Families and New Christians

By Dr. Gary A. Furr

While Christians argue and debate the many particulars of how these things are so, the truth is that there are very simple affirmations which Christians of nearly every tradition agree. The Apostles' Creed, while containing language that is not as familiar to us who are Baptists, is in fact very close to these essential affirmations. It was one of the earliest formulations of Christian faith. Whether you understand everything about them or not, these simple statements below, taken from Scripture, provide a parent with a basic set of beliefs to teach as an outline of "core beliefs of the Christian faith." There is room for wide difference over interpretation of "how" in some of these matters, but for families and children, it is often enough to say, "God made the world" or "God is our Father," or "Jesus died for our sins."

With children, simpler is better. Let their questions come to you. Be concrete. But also be careful not to underestimate their ability to grasp, understand and explore questions of faith.

The list below is not something to force children to do, but a help in devotions, a starter to talk about faith, a set of "foundations" from scripture that is a way of gently sharing what is, basically, the outline of the most complex and deep theology you will find anywhere, yet simple enough for the most basic believer to comprehend. In the sections after, I have included Dr. Fisher Humphreys outline of Baptist Beliefs. It appears in his book, *The Way We Were* and his little pamphlet, *Baptist Theology: A Really Short Version*. (Very inexpensive. You can order it here <http://www.baptisthistory.org/humphreytheology.pdf> or purchase in the church office for \$2.50). As a starter, I invite you as a parent or teacher or leader, to familiarize yourself with these declarations of faith. The last two selections come from Gathering for Worship, a resource published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the final one including the Apostles' Creed.

Baptists do not use creeds to control people's thoughts, restrict the freedom of the Spirit in application of scripture or to exert power and control over one another in politics and church debates. We rather accept them as the testimonies and witness of the whole Christian church over the centuries. It is hoped that these resources can help us as we give children "a starting place for faith." While faith as trust is simple, it never leaves a person in simplicity. They must learn and ask and grow. Therefore, my recommendation that these are, first of all, for parents to know as a way of answering, guiding, and explaining.

1. God

Hebrews 11:6 **And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**

2. Father

Galatians 4:6 **And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"**

3. Trinity and Baptism

Matthew 28:19 **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,**

4. Revelation

Hebrews 1:2 **but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.**

5. Creation

Genesis 1:1 **In the beginning ... God created the heavens and the earth**

6. Providence

Isaiah 55:9 **For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

7. Suffering

Hebrews 2:18 Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, **he is able to help those who are being tested.**

8. Human beings

Romans 3:23 **since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift,** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

9. Jesus Christ

John 3:16 **"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life**

10. The Death and the Resurrection of Jesus

Corinthians 15:1-6 **Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, 2 through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you-- unless you have come to believe in vain. 3 For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.**

11. Salvation by Grace through Faith

Ephesians 2:8-9 **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God--** 9 not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

12. Ecclesiology

I Corinthians 12:27 **Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it**

13. Scripture and the word of God

John 5:39 Jesus said, **"You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf.**

14. Baptism

Romans 6:4 **Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.**

15. Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:26 **For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes**

16. Holy Spirit

Romans 8:14 **For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God**

17. Christian life

Ephesians 2:10 For we are what he has made us, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.**

18. Heaven and Christian Hope

I John 2:25 **25 And this is what he has promised us, eternal life.**

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, **"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live**

THE BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL TRADITION
Fisher Humphreys

The Majority Tradition

A. Beliefs Baptists Share with All Christians

1. There is one God.
2. God created the world.
3. The world is a fallen world.
4. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
5. The Father sent his Son into the world.
6. Jesus lived, preached, taught, loved, died, and rose again to save the world.
7. The Father and the Son poured out the Holy Spirit on the church.
8. The Spirit guides and empowers the church on its world mission.
9. The church carries out its work by Word and Sacrament.
10. God will complete this work in the future.
11. The Bible tells us this wonderful story.

B. Beliefs Baptists Share with Protestant Christians

1. The church must always seek to be reformed.
2. The Bible alone is the written Word of God.
3. Justification is by grace through faith alone.
4. All believers are secure in their salvation.
5. All believers are priests of God.

C. Beliefs Which Are Unique to Baptists

1. Only believers should be baptized.
2. Baptism is by immersion only.
3. The church consists of believers only.
4. Each congregation is self-governing.
5. All members share in the church's decision-making.
6. Congregations should cooperate with each other.
7. Church and state are to be separate.
8. Baptists have no creed but the Bible.

D. Beliefs Baptists Share with Revivalist Christians

1. Every individual must be converted.
2. All Christians should be sure of their salvation.
3. Evangelism is the primary task of the church.
4. Missions is a priority for the church.

From *Gathering for Worship*

Declaration of Faith

The responses may be as indicated below, or, more briefly, with such words as 'I/we do' or 'I/we will'.

A, do you believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

I do. This is the God in whom I trust.

Do you confess Jesus Christ
as your Lord and Saviour?

I do. He has redeemed me and called me by name.

Do you turn from sin, renounce evil
and intend to follow Christ?

**I do. Christ is my way,
he is the truth and now he is my life.**

Will you live within the fellowship of the church
and will you serve Jesus Christ in the world?

With the Spirit's help, this will be my witness.

Or

As the people of God in this place,
do you believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

We do. This is the God in whom we trust.

Do you confess Jesus Christ
as your Lord and Saviour?

We do. He has redeemed us and called us by name.

Do you turn from sin, renounce evil
and intend to follow Christ?

We do. Christ is our way.

**With the Spirit's help,
we will follow this Jesus
in the church and in the world.**

Another selection from Gathering for Worship

**As the people of God in this place,
we believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
We confess Jesus Christ
as our Lord and Saviour.
for he has redeemed us and called us by name.
Here and now we turn from sin, renounce evil
and intend to follow Christ,
who is the way, the truth and life itself.
With the Spirit's help,
we will follow Jesus
in the church and in the world.**

The Apostles' Creed may be said together
**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
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,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come 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.**