Question 31

What do we believe by true faith?

Answer

We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his 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 into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. We 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.

Big Idea
There is one true faith that was handed down by the apostles.

Aim
To help the children embrace and defend the one true faith as taught in the Apostles' Creed.

Bible Passage
Jude 1–4

Memory Verse
"I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

Virtue
Awe

Notes

Leader's Notes

The Apostles' Creed is a historic statement that contains the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. It has been used for centuries to inform and equip Christians. Children living in a pluralistic world will be encouraged to believe that there are many faiths and many ways to God. This lesson will help the children understand that there is one true faith that has been taught from the time of Jesus until now, and it is encapsulated in the Apostles' Creed. By memorizing the Creed, the children will be able to easily recall the essential doctrines of the true faith. This lesson aims to give children confidence in the historic Christian faith and the ability to contend for it.

Things to remember when planning and teaching:

- The answer to this question is long! Be patient with the children as they endeavor to learn the Creed.
- It's important for the children to understand as well as learn the Creed. Carefully engage with the children to ensure that they understand each statement in the Creed.
- Remember to mix and match the activities in the lesson to fit your time frame (see p. 12 for some sample outlines). You won't have time to do them all. Feel free to adapt each activity based on your class's strengths and weaknesses.

Leader's Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for revealing yourself and your great plan of salvation in and through your Word. I praise you for the courage of the men and women who have contended for the Christian faith all through history. Thank you for the historic creeds of the church, and for the way they clearly articulate biblical doctrine. Grant understanding to the children who will read this lesson. May they be equipped with a knowledge of the true Christian faith, and may they be made ready to stand for you. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Leader's Tool Kit

- A selection of numbers one through thirty-one, printed and cut into individual pieces of paper
- Q31 Martyr Illustrations (RB)
- Q31 Creed Matchup (RB)
- Envelopes

- Q31 Apostles' Creed Bookmark (RB), one per child, printed on cardstock and cut out
- Stickers
- Markers
- Glitter glue
- Cards with the words of the memory verse printed on them

Notes

(10) Catechism Recap

Print a selection of numbers one through thirty-one and cut them up so that they are on individual pieces of paper. Place them upside down on the floor around the classroom. Use two fewer numbers than the number of children in your class. For instance, if you have eighteen children, use sixteen numbers; if you have ten children, use eight numbers, etc.

Have the children line up against the wall and tell them that when you say "go," they should run and stand on a piece of paper. The children who don't find a piece of paper to stand on should move to the side of the room. Ask the children to look at their paper and see what number is written on it. If they think they can remember the question and answer, they should stand still, but if they are unsure of the question and answer, they can invite one of the children at the side to switch in for them. Invite a few of the children to recite the question and answer that goes with their number. Play a few rounds of this game, reducing the pieces of paper each time.

(5) Introduction to Question 31

Show the children the pictures The Burning of Latimer *and* Ridley *and* Cranmer's Martyrdom *from Q31 Martyr Illustrations (RB).*

Ask the children to describe what is going on in these two pictures. Let them look carefully at the pictures and notice the details.

Tell the children that these pictures are of three men known as the Oxford martyrs. The first picture shows Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley being burned at the stake on October 16, 1555. Thomas Cranmer was burned five months later. Each of these men died because he contended for and defended the true Christian faith during a time when the Queen of England wanted her people to follow doctrine not taught in the Bible.

Introduce the children to Question 31: "What do we believe by true faith?" Explain to the children that this question will help them to consider what true Christian faith is and what it means to contend for the faith.

Notes

Activity

Print a copy of Q31 Creed Matchup (RB). Cut up the verses and phrases from the Creed. Put the twelve pieces of paper in an envelope. Make several sets of the puzzle, each in its own envelope.

Introduce the children to the Apostles' Creed by reading it to them. Tell the children that a creed is a statement of Christian beliefs. All through history people have had to contend (fight) for the true Christian faith, starting soon after Jesus's death and resurrection.

Tell the children that Christians in the fourth century were facing great opposition from a group called the Gnostics, who taught that Jesus didn't really die and rise again. (You may want to write out the word for them and explain that the *G* is silent.) In response to the false teaching, the Apostles' Creed was formulated as a statement of true Christian faith.

This Creed is named for the apostles. Tell the children that it wasn't written by the apostles, but it contains the things the apostles taught.

Divide the children into small teams. Give each team an envelope with twelve slips of paper in it; there should be six Bible verses and six points from Apostles' Creed. Explain to the children that everything that is written in the Apostles' Creed is found in Scripture. Challenge the children to link the statement from the Creed with the Bible verse it's derived from.

Teaching Outline

You will need Q31 Apostles' Creed Bookmark (RB), one per child.

Begin the teaching time by asking for God's help. Ask that the lesson would be taught faithfully and that the children might listen well.

Read Jude 1–4. Provide Bibles for the children to read along with you. Point out to them that the book of Jude is one of the shortest in the whole Bible. It has only one chapter!

Tell the children that in this small passage, Jude calls Christians to contend for the faith. He wants to make sure that they fight to defend the true Christian message and to maintain the biblical faith that has been passed down from generation to generation.

For some Christians, defending the true faith still involves risking their lives, as Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer did, but for the millions and millions of others it means knowing all about the faith and being able to tell others why you believe it. It involves

resisting people who teach false things about the faith. Everyone who knows and understands the true Christian faith does so because of a long, long line of believers who contended for the faith!

Ask the children what soldiers do before they go into battle. They train and equip themselves in preparation to contend! Inform the children that knowing and understanding the Apostles' Creed is one of the ways God's people can prepare themselves to contend for the true Christian faith.

In verse 3, Jude calls Christians to defend the faith that was "once for all delivered to the saints." Tell the children that the Apostles' Creed contains the core doctrines that Jude is referring to. It communicates the truth of the gospel as understood by the apostles, who learned it from Jesus himself and who taught it to God's people in the church. All but one of the apostles were put to death by people who opposed the message they taught.

Jude also highlights that the Christian faith was handed to the saints "once for all"; the message was given to the church once for everyone, for all time.

The final point to draw out for the children from the passage is that sometimes those who threaten the church and the understanding of the true Christian faith are those who are already inside the church, not simply outsiders.

Close by explaining to the children that in many churches around the world, the Apostles' Creed is said collectively each week. Saying the Creed together is a good way to remind each other what the true Christian faith is as we prepare to contend for it.

Give the children a copy of the Apostles' Creed in a bookmark format. Invite them to read it with you and to take it home and place it somewhere they will see it regularly, like in their Bible or by their bed.

Conclude the teaching time by helping the children commit Question 31 and the answer to memory.

(These notes are just for guidance. Please expand or amend them to suit your own children and context. Write out your talk in your own words and include illustrations and applications that you know will connect with your children.)

Notes

(10) Activity

Designate one side of the room as "True" and the other as "False." Read out the statements below. Have the students move to one side or the other depending on whether the statement is true.

1. The Apostles' Creed is found in the Bible word for word. FALSE
2. The Apostles' Creed was written by the apostles. FALSE

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3. The Apostles' Creed is a summary of the true Christian faith. TRUE
4. Everything written in the Apostles' Creed is taught in the Bible. TRUE
5. The Apostles' Creed refers to all three persons of the Trinity. TRUE
6. Jesus is seated at the left hand of the Father. FALSE
7. Only the dead will be judged. FALSE
8. Jesus rose from the dead after two days. FALSE
9. The Apostles' Creed says that Jesus didn't suffer. FALSE
10. The Apostles' Creed declares that Jesus is the Son of God. TRUE

(5) Discussion and Question Time

Some questions that might arise include:

? Do I just need to know the words of the Creed to be a Christian?

> No! Explain to the children that these words are helpful and historically important because they summarize the Christian faith well, but that a Christian is someone who has been redeemed and reconciled to God through the death of Christ.

? Why does the Apostles' Creed say we believe in the catholic church?

> Today we often use the word *catholic* to refer to the Roman Catholic Church, but that is not the meaning of the word used in the Creed. *Catholic* here means "universal." When we say we believe in the holy, catholic church, we mean that there is one true church made up of people all over the world who believe in Jesus.

? Did Jesus literally go to hell?

> The Bible teaches that Jesus bore the full wrath of God, and thus those who trust him do not have to experience hell—eternal separation from God. We know that Jesus was separated from his Father when he was on the cross (see Matt. 27:46, in which Jesus cries, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). In that sense, he experienced hell for us. But the Bible doesn't clearly teach that Jesus went to a physical place called hell. When we affirm, "he descended into hell," most people take that to mean that Jesus bore the full wrath of God.

Also use this opportunity to help the children to think about their own lives and how this question and answer affects them personally.

- Ask the children if they're prepared to contend for the faith.
- Ask the children how they would feel if they faced losing their life in order to contend for the gospel.

(10) Virtue Vision

Notes

You will need stickers, markers, and glitter glue to decorate the bookmarks.

Awe

Let the children read and decorate the bookmarks.

While they work on their bookmarks, ask the children what happens to people when they do not have awe for God. Help them see that people who deny the truth given to us in the Bible demonstrate that they have a small view of God; they do not hold him in awe.

People who are willing to die to preserve the faith have a great deal of awe. Their view of God is so big that they will not betray him, even if it costs their lives.

Ask the children if they feel a sense of awe when they think of those who have given their life for the faith.

(10) Memory Activity

Today's lesson includes two different memory activity options.

To help children learn the memory verse: *Print each word of the memory verse onto a card. You will need one full memory verse set of cards for each team.*

- Separate the children into two teams.
- Read the memory verse out to the children.
- Read the memory verse, inviting the children to repeat each word after you.
- Read the memory verse again, inviting the children to say the entire verse with you.
- Hand out a full set of memory verse cards to each team; make sure they're not in order! Ask the children to put the words in the correct order. Points can be given to the winning team that first completes the verse correctly.
- Practice the memory verse one final time.

To help children learn the catechism answer: *Find Q31 on the Songs from the New City Catechism album (available at newcitycatchism.com or on the NCC app). Because this answer is longer than most, the song will be helpful in memorizing the Apostles' Creed.*

Play "Q31 What do we believe by true faith?" for the class. Encourage the children to make up motions that correspond to the song. Play it as many times as necessary, then invite the children to try to sing it with their motions without the recording.

Notes

Closing Prayer Time

Give each child a partner, and invite the children to offer prayers of praise with their partner.