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JESSIE SCHUT

I BELIEVE

GETTING READY
TO PROFESS MY FAITH

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Grand Rapids, Michigan

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CONTENTS

STUFF YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW	5
SESSION 1	
BEGINNINGS	13
SESSION 2	
I BELIEVE ... in God	21
SESSION 3	
I BELIEVE ... in Jesus	29
SESSION 4	
I BELIEVE ... in the Holy Spirit	35
SESSION 5	
I BELIEVE ... God Gives Me a New Life to Live	47
SESSION 6	
I BELIEVE ... the Church Will Help Me Grow	57
SESSION 7	
I BELIEVE ... Holy Habits Will Keep Me Growing	65
SESSION 8	
I BELIEVE ... I Want to Belong to the Body of Christ	73

STUFF YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW

You've read the Bible, heard the stories, been part of a congregation. You've prayed and confessed your sins to Jesus. You believe in your heart that he is your Savior and Lord. Then one day you decided you wanted to tell the world: I believe! You asked your church leaders about professing your faith, and they've asked you to take this course called *I Believe*. What's it all about?

This is a program where you and one other person will sit down for eight sessions to figure out what you do believe and what it will mean for the rest of your life. (If you're taking this course as part of a small group or class, ignore the comments about mentoring that follow.) This other person, an adult, is a mentor. You are called a mentee—OK, it's a weird name but there really isn't any other word for it!

Mentors and mentees have been around a long time. The first mentor was a person named Mentor! He is mentioned in a book written by Homer thousands of years ago. In the story, Odysseus, a Greek warrior, is heading off to war, and he appoints a guy named Mentor to watch over his son Telemachus while he is gone, to be his teacher, guide, and friend.

So a mentor is someone who agrees to walk alongside another person as that person learns and grows. A mentor is someone who will listen and answer questions, who will be a friend and support you as you figure things out for yourself.

Here are some FAQs to help you learn more about *I Believe*:

1. WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS COURSE?

- You'll meet with your mentor once a week for eight weeks.
- You'll talk about the topic of the week and work through questions about it in this notebook.
- You'll work on your own "holy habits:" daily Bible reading and prayer.
- You'll create a personal expression of what you believe: something that will tell your congregation about your faith. It could be a written statement, a

song, a piece of art, a dance. It will be your own—nobody else can do this for you.

- You'll decide whether you wish to make profession of faith. If you do, you and your mentor will meet with your church leaders to tell them so. Then you'll participate in a ceremony to celebrate your profession.
- Other things might also happen. You might sit together with your mentor in church and discuss the service afterward. You might get together with your mentor on a social visit. You might decide to do a service project together. Those are all decisions you and your mentor can talk about once you've gotten together.

2. WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO IN THIS COURSE?

You will be asked to commit to

- meeting with your mentor for eight sessions.
- completing the work in this *I Believe* notebook.
- creating your own personal expression of faith.
- being sincere about exploring and thinking about your faith.
- being honest with your mentor.

At your first meeting, you and your mentor will talk about these commitments, and you and your mentor will both sign a covenant—a promise that tells what you have agreed to do.

3. WHAT'S MY MENTOR'S JOB?

Your mentor will commit to

- meeting with you for eight sessions.
- completing the work in his or her copy of this notebook.
- creating a personal statement of faith.
- being sincere about helping you explore your faith.
- praying for you regularly.
- being the best kind of mentor God has given him or her the gifts to be.

As you can see, a mentor is learning and growing along with you. You may ask your mentor questions, share concerns and problems, talk about your doubts and fears, and ask for advice.

4. WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T GET ALONG WITH MY MENTOR?

Remember, mentors are volunteers who sincerely want to be your friend. Your church wants to make this a great experience for you, so they've tried their best to match you with someone they think will be a good fit.

But sometimes, especially if you and your mentor are complete strangers to each other, you just don't click. There are a number of things you can do if you aren't connecting:

First, pray about it. Ask the Lord to give you ideas about how to improve the relationship. Second, if there is something specific that your mentor is doing that bothers you, talk about it. You might say something like, "When I tell you something, you sometimes interrupt me," or, "It seems to me you don't think my problems are very important." It takes a lot of courage to do this; sometimes, writing down your concerns in an e-mail may be easier than saying it in person. Third, discuss the situation with a parent or other adult you trust, asking for advice. Sometimes they may be able to help you see a different side of the problem.

Last, talk to your church leadership (pastor, youth leader), asking if they will step in and help. They may hook you up with a different mentor.

5. I'M REALLY, REALLY BUSY ALL THE TIME. I MIGHT NOT HAVE TIME TO READ THE BIBLE OR PRAY, OR CREATE MY PERSONAL STATEMENT OF FAITH. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I CAN'T FIND TIME TO DO THE ASSIGNMENTS?

Life can be crazy busy, it's true—homework, sports, music lessons, friends, chores, school projects, part-time jobs, youth group outings, TV, the Internet, and video games all take time. And now, with *I Believe*, you've got a new commitment. Can you do it all?

Maybe not. You have to decide what's most important in your life. If you believe it is important to spend time on your walk with God, you will have to make time for it. Maybe you will have to drop something else that's less important, like TV or video games. Maybe you'll have to spend a little less time with your friends, or listening to your favorite music.

When you really think about it, is there anything more important than God and your relationship with him? Make time—you'll be glad you did.

6. CAN YOU GIVE ME SOME IDEAS ABOUT HOW I SHOULD CREATE MY PERSONAL "I BELIEVE" STATEMENT?

A statement of beliefs is called a "creed." For many years, the church has recited the Apostles' Creed. It's a statement of what the church believes, composed of words, sentences, and ideas. That's one kind of creed—spoken and written. You may wish to write your own series of statements about your beliefs about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the church, and so on. This notebook

has an “I Believe” section (starting with session 2) that will help you write your own statement of faith.

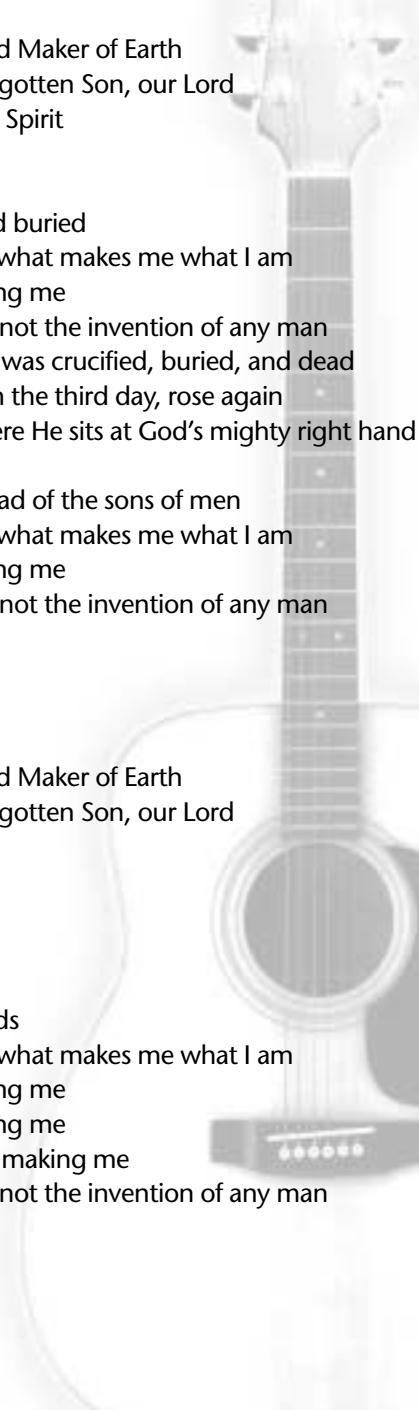
There are also songs that express a creed. Your church’s hymnal may have such songs. A singer named Rich Mullins wrote a song based on the Apostles’ Creed called “Creed.” (You can hear it on the CD *Offerings II* by Third Day—see the words on the next page.) Other singers have done their own songs, each of them thinking about what they believe and writing it down in a song. So writing your own song is another way of expressing your beliefs.

Other people with God’s gift of creative arts have expressed their creed in beautiful artworks that tell the world about their beliefs about God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. If you enjoy drawing or sculpting, you could express your beliefs by creating a piece of art. Or if you enjoy movement, liturgical dance is another way you could express your faith.

Often, symbols can express big ideas. For instance, the cross is a symbol of Christ’s salvation; the dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit; and the light of a candle can symbolize Christ as the light of the world. Your personal creed could be a banner that uses symbols to express what you believe. If you choose this to express your faith, you could write an explanation of your banner to accompany it.

There are many ways to create your own creed. Talk it over with your mentor at the first session. Do a little at a time and work on it week by week—you’ll be using your gifts. You may also be asked to share your creed with the church during your profession of faith. That’s a good thing—your gifts will help God’s people to grow and celebrate.

CREED



I believe in God the Father
Almighty Maker of Heaven and Maker of Earth
And in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, our Lord
He was conceived by the Holy Spirit
Born of the virgin Mary
Suffered under Pontius Pilate
He was crucified and dead and buried
And 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
I believe that He who suffered was crucified, buried, and dead
He descended into hell and on the third day, rose again
He ascended into Heaven where He sits at God's mighty right hand
I believe that He's returning
To judge the quick and the dead of the sons of men
And 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
I believe it, I believe it
I believe it
I believe it, I believe it
I believe in God the Father
Almighty Maker of Heaven and Maker of Earth
And in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, our Lord
I believe in the Holy Spirit
One Holy Church
The communion of Saints
The forgiveness of sin
I believe in the resurrection
I believe in a life that never ends
And I believe what I believe is what makes me what I am
I did not make it, no it is making me
I did not make it, no it is making me
I said I did not make it, no it is making me
It is the very truth of God and not the invention of any man
I believe it, I believe
I believe it, I believe
I believe it, I believe it
I believe it, I believe it
I believe it, I believe it
I believe it

7. CAN I “FAIL” THIS COURSE?

There is no test at the end of this course to see if you have “passed” your profession of faith. You won’t get graded or have a report card to show your family. Church leaders will not check your notebook to make sure you know all the right stuff. So no, you can’t “fail” this course.

If you are sincere about professing your faith, understand what it means, do your best to complete the assignments, and keep your appointments for meetings (unless you have a good reason for missing and let your mentor know ahead of time) your church will joyfully invite you to meet with its leaders to share your personal testimony, and welcome you to a celebration of your profession of faith.

However, it’s also possible that these things might happen:

- You might say, “I would like more time to think and pray and study before I make profession of faith.” That’s not failing. That’s admitting you are not yet ready to take this step.
- On rare occasions your mentor might say, “I’m not sure that my mentee really understands what she believes. I hope she’ll spend a little more time thinking about this before she does profession of faith.” And that’s not failing either. Someone who cares about you and wants the best for you is helping you not settle for second best.

Anyone who takes the time to study God’s Word and to think about their faith and their place in God’s world is loved and accepted in God’s eyes.

8. WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THIS COURSE?

Your church leaders will meet with you and you will participate in a ceremony to profess your faith.

Every church has different traditions for this celebration. Perhaps your mentor and your parents will be asked to participate in the ceremony. Perhaps you will have a chance to share and talk about your personal statement of faith. Perhaps the church leaders will present you with a devotional book or invite you to make a public commitment to a ministry in the church. Whatever happens, it will be a great celebration.

However, just because you have made profession of faith does not mean that you are all done learning about your faith, the Bible, and the church. Christians never stop growing. You should continue to attend church education classes, worship with your congregation, and get involved in serving God. All of these things help you grow in your faith.

And someday, hopefully, someone may ask you to become a mentor. You'll remember how your mentor helped you better understand what faith was all about. And we hope you'll say, "I believe . . . and I'd love to help others grow too." That's what this course is all about!

DO . . .

- be honest with your mentor.
- keep your appointments for your meetings (or let your mentor know if you have a good reason for not keeping it).
- complete your assignments.
- be willing to grow and change.
- share your experiences with your parents and friends.
- ask questions (no question is a stupid question!).
- pray for your mentor, yourself, and your church.
- be yourself.
- think about and express what you—not your parents, teachers, friends, siblings or anyone else—believe.
- be a good listener.

DON'T . . .

- be afraid . . . remember, you're walking with God.
- keep your doubts inside.
- try to cram your assignments into one evening's work.

That's it! Be sure to ask your mentor if you have other questions we haven't answered. And enjoy your time together.

GOALS

- Get acquainted with my mentor and this program.
- Begin a personal timeline.
- Commit to completing this course with my mentor.
- Begin practicing “holy habits” at home this week.

I BELIEVE

PERSONALITY PLUS

Circle five words in each column that best describe you.

Strengths

- Outgoing
- Calm
- Loyal
- Confident
- Productive
- Sensitive
- Talkative
- Strong-willed
- Gifted
- Carefree
- Perfectionist
- Humorous
- Warm
- Practical
- Dependable
- Leader
- Easygoing
- Idealistic
- Enthusiastic
- Independent

Weaknesses

- Restless
- Selfish
- Inconsiderate
- Negative
- Stingy
- Weak-willed
- Bossy
- Impractical
- Slow
- Hot-tempered
- Loud
- Self-Centered
- Teaser
- Cruel
- Impulsive
- Critical
- Proud
- Exaggerates
- Stubborn
- Lazy

Count up your scores:

:

x:

:

:

This simple personality test can't begin to tell everything about you, so don't take it too seriously. However, you will likely score more highly in one category than in the other three. Here's what your highest score suggests about you:

- ♫: You are fun-loving, enjoy being with people, enthusiastic, and energetic.
- x: You are quick to act, determined, practical, and like to organize things.
- 👁️: You are easygoing, like to please others, consistent, and a good listener.
- 👉: You are creative, faithful to your friends, dependable, and don't like to be in the limelight.

—adapted from *Successful Youth Mentoring*, Group Publishing, Inc.

© 1998, pages 32-33.

WHICH WOULD YOU RATHER DO?

If you had two choices, which of these would you rather do? Circle your choice, then compare with your partner. Are you more alike or different?

- A. read a good book **OR** go for a run
- B. get together with your friends **OR** watch a video at home
- C. have a hamburger and fries **OR** have a veggie stir fry with rice
- D. play video games **OR** play a sport
- E. sing **OR** paint
- F. go camping **OR** stay in a fancy hotel

MY FAVORITE . . .

Music: _____

Book: _____




Movie: _____


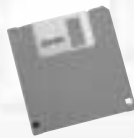
Game: _____

Color: _____

If I could be any animal I wanted to be, I would be a _____
because _____

WORLD AND PERSONAL TIMELINES

<p>First movie with sound.</p> 	<p>Germany defeats Denmark, Belgium, Holland, France; England declares war on Germany.</p>	 <p>First atomic bomb falls, ending World War II; first digital computer invented.</p>	<p>Rosa Parks arrested for sitting in bus seat reserved for whites; polio vaccine discovered; Disneyland opens in Los Angeles.</p>	<p>First man on the moon.</p> 	<p>Donald Duck created; Monopoly invented.</p>	<p>Martin Luther King jailed for civil rights march; Russian astronaut takes first walk in space; first snowboard invented.</p>	<p>End of Vietnam War.</p>
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<p>1924</p> <p>Celluwipes—now known as Kleenex—hit the market.</p>	<p>1927</p>	<p>1930</p> <p>Plastic invented; first analog computer.</p>	<p>1934</p>	<p>1939</p> <p>Hitler invades Poland and Czechoslovakia.</p>	<p>1940</p>	<p>1941</p> <p>Japan bombs Pearl Harbor—U.S. enters the war.</p> 	<p>1945</p>	<p>1950</p> <p>Korean War begins; first transcontinental TV broadcast; first jet service from London to Paris.</p>	<p>1955</p>	<p>1960</p>	<p>1965</p> <p>First felt-tip pen sold; JFK becomes youngest president of U.S.</p>	<p>1968</p> <p>Martin Luther King killed.</p>	<p>1969</p>	<p>1970</p>	<p>1975</p> <p>First Earth Day celebrated; IBM introduces floppy disks for the computer.</p> 	<p>1980</p> <p>IBM markets first personal computer.</p>
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PERSONAL TIMELINE

- What was happening in the world when you were born?
- What was happening in the world when your parents were born? Your grandparents?
- What world events have had an impact on your life?
- On your personal timeline, mark important events in your life. Label them in the space **above** the line. For instance: the date of your birth; arrival of siblings; moves from one home to another; arrival of pets; graduations; achieving goals in sports, music, school.
- The space **below** the personal timeline is for important milestones on your faith journey. If you can fill in some of those, do so now. For instance: when you were baptized; when you first remember thinking about God; a special time when God answered your prayer or you felt very close to God; a hard time when you wondered why something happened or you doubted your faith; when you decided you would like to make profession of faith.

COVENANT

This *I Believe* course asks you to make a commitment to get ready for making profession of faith. Read through this covenant (promise) and sign it to show that you understand what your commitment is.

A covenant of commitment
between _____ and _____.

We promise to

- meet together once a week for eight weeks.
- complete the work in the *I Believe* notebook.
- be sincere about exploring and thinking about our faith.
- pray for one another regularly.

We will try to meet at a regular time and place:
_____.

If an unexpected event interferes with this plan, we will tell each other and make plans for another date. I can contact my partner at:

_____.

Together, we will try to reach these goals:

Other details:

Signed: _____

and _____

Date: _____

HOLY HABITS

BIBLE READING FOR THE WEEK

“Holy habits” help Christians grow. Prayer and Bible reading are two very important holy habits. Choose five days out of the next seven to read a Bible passage; answer the question after each passage, or just write down your own ideas, then pray.

Day 1: Read Luke 2:41-52.

Jesus grew in wisdom and stature. In what ways would you like to grow?

Day 2: Read 1 Timothy 4:8-12.

How does your church show (or not show) that it values your faith?

Day 3: Read Psalm 119:97-105.

How can God’s Word help keep you on the right path?

Day 4: Read Colossians 3:12-17.

How can God’s people help keep you on the right path?

Day 5: Read 1 Corinthians 13.

How does love keep you on the right path?

PRAYER PATTERNS

For your prayer time each day this week, try using a style called ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Many Christians find that praying this way helps them focus.

- **Adoration** (I worship you, Lord, for . . .)
- **Confession** (I’m sorry, Lord, for . . .)
- **Thanksgiving** (Thank you, Lord, for . . .)
- **Supplication** (I ask you, Lord, for . . .)

In the “supplication” part of your prayer, please pray for your mentor (as he or she will pray for you), and pray that God will bless the time you spend together. Believe that God will honor your request and use your relationship with your mentor to prepare you for professing your faith.