

SELECTIONS FROM THE  
NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

LIVING THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

# BELIEVE

STUDENT EDITION



RANDY FRAZEE  
GENERAL EDITOR

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LIVING THE STORY OF THE BIBLE  
TO BECOME LIKE JESUS

GENERAL EDITOR  
RANDY FRAZEE

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*Believe Student Edition*

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# Introduction

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

*2 Timothy 3:16*

## Book Sections

As you journey through *Believe: Student Edition*, you will read three ten-chapter sections:

**THINK.** The first ten chapters of *Believe* detail the core **Beliefs** of the Christian life. Together they answer the question, “What do I believe?”

**ACT.** The second ten chapters discuss the core **Practices** of the Christian life. Together they answer the question, “What should I do?”

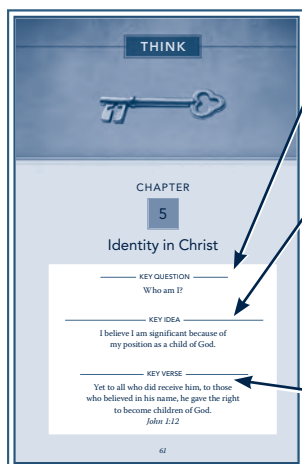
**BE.** The final ten chapters contain the core **Virtues** of the Christian life. Together they answer the question, “Who am I becoming?”

## Scripture

*Believe: Student Edition* includes the actual, God-breathed words of the Bible. This is not one person’s or one church’s words on these important, life-altering topics. The Bible text alone is our source of teaching on each of these truths. *Believe: Student Edition* contains portions of Scripture that were thoughtfully and carefully excerpted from the Bible because they speak directly to the core belief, practice or virtue. You will read an Old Testament story, a New Testament story and several supporting texts from throughout the Bible. The Scripture text used in *Believe* is taken from the New International Version (NIV).

## Chapter Structure

Each chapter contains several elements to guide you through your *Believe: Student Edition* journey.



## The Keys

### Key Question

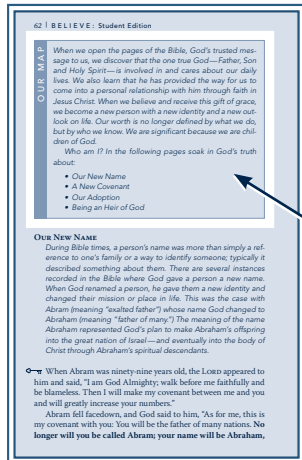
The key question poses the problem or issue that the chapter will grapple with.

### Key Idea

The key idea gives you words to use to express your beliefs. Try memorizing the key ideas so you “know that you know” what you believe!

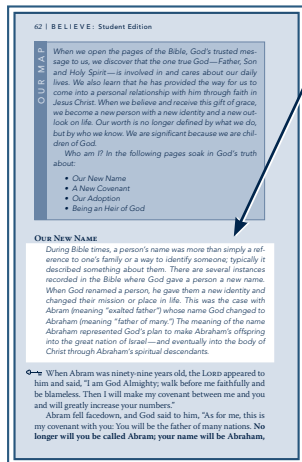
### Key Verse

The key verse for each belief is the most important Scripture about that subject. The 30 key verses are also important to commit to memory, so you have the power of God’s Word at the ready when you need it.



## Our Map

This section orients you to the belief, practice or virtue you are about to explore. You will get the big picture of what the chapter is about and see a preview of the topics to be covered.



## Transitions

The transition paragraphs between the Scripture text appear in *italic*. They were written to guide you through the chapter and connect the dots between each story. The transitions have been carefully crafted to avoid telling you what to believe; it is important that the Scripture itself be the driver of what you decide to believe. These segments aid you in digging into the meaning and significance of the Scripture.



## Chapter 5: Identity in Christ | 65

Before reading this section on spiritual adoption,  
think about what it means to be adopted.  
What does adoption tell us about the one doing the adopting?  
What can the idea that God adopted us teach us about ourselves?

➤ Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacheus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacheus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter: "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

But Zacheus stood up and said to the LORD, "Look, LORD! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham."

The people in the early church were living examples of the changes that resulted from following Jesus. The letter to the Romans was written by the apostle Paul to present the full scope of the transaction of the new covenant—its cost, the payment exacted for it and the promise it holds for those who agree to it. Follow along as Paul starts with our position in sin and the payment required and then finishes with a glorious description of how our adoption into God's family gives us a new identity.

As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one;  
there is no one who understands;  
there is no one who seeks God.

## Key Stories

Look for key story symbols at the beginning and end of one Old Testament and one New Testament story in each chapter. The Bible characters in these stories best exemplify that belief, practice or virtue.

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there is no one who seeks God.

## Core Truths

As you read the Scripture, you will see core truths in **bold text**. The core truth is the essence of the message of that Scripture and helps you understand why that particular passage was selected to convey that truth.

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## Reflection Questions

There are five reflection question sections embedded in each chapter. These questions and suggestions are there to help you get the most out of your reading. When you come to a question, pause and reflect. You will grow to understand the Bible better if you take the time to explore the issues raised by these questions. You can record your answers and observations in a journal or jot notes right in your book. Then talk about your discoveries with a friend or a group. Sharing your thoughts with others is a great way to dig deeper into what you've learned.





## ***What We Believe***

At the conclusion of each chapter, the What We Believe section wraps it all up. The big ideas of the belief, practice or virtue are recapped in a helpful summary so you can recall everything you learned in the chapter and put it all together in a cohesive way.

## **Back of the Book**

At the back of the book, the epilogue gives you an idea of the global impact this story has had on the world. You'll also find the Chart of References, listing every Scripture passage in the book.

*Believe* is a full Bible-engagement campaign with resources for an entire church, school or group to experience together. Check out [www.believethestory.com](http://www.believethestory.com) for more information.

# THINK



## What Do I Believe?

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

*Luke 6:45*

**W**hat we believe in our hearts defines who we become. God wants you to become like Jesus. This is who God created you to be. It is the most truthful and powerful way to live. And the journey to *becoming* like Jesus begins by *thinking* like Jesus.

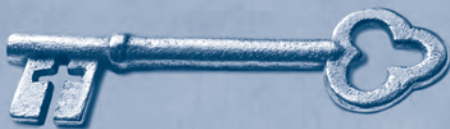
The following ten chapters are about the key beliefs of the Christian life. These beliefs were not only taught by Jesus but also modeled by him when he walked this earth. Because we live from the heart, embracing these core truths in both our minds and our hearts is the first step to truly becoming like Jesus.

Each of the following chapters contains Scripture passages which focus on a particular belief. You are about to discover what God wants you to know and believe about these important topics. Begin each chapter with a passion to learn and understand. Then prayerfully ask, “What do *I* believe?”

Fully adopting these fantastic truths in your heart may not come by the end of reading each chapter. If you are honest, it may take a while, and that’s okay. The Christian life is a journey. There are no shortcuts. As each of the key concepts takes up residence in your heart, they will, with the amazing help of God’s presence in your life, change your life in a most positive way.

When you start *thinking* like Jesus, you are well on your way to *becoming* like Jesus.

# THINK



## CHAPTER

### 1

## God

### KEY QUESTION

Who is God?

### KEY IDEA

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God —  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### KEY VERSE

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God, and the fellowship  
of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

*2 Corinthians 13:14*

*Belief in God is the very foundation of the Christian faith. Christianity is the only spiritual belief system based on a Creator-God who had no beginning, who interacts with his creation as a plural being and who actively demonstrates his superiority over all other gods and beings.*

*You will be reading Scripture passages in this chapter that describe how we know about God, the aspects of his character and what that means to us:*

- *God Reveals Himself*
- *The One True God*
- *God in Three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit*
- *The Trinity in Our Lives*

## GOD REVEALS HIMSELF

*Everything begins with God. The Bible never tries to defend the existence of God—it is just assumed. God has revealed himself so powerfully through his creation—both at the most grand and most microscopic ends of the scale—that at the end of the day, no one will have an excuse for not putting their trust in him.*

 **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**

GENESIS 1:1 

The heavens declare the glory of God;  
 the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
 Day after day they pour forth speech;  
 night after night they reveal knowledge.  
 They have no speech, they use no words;  
 no sound is heard from them.  
 Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
 their words to the ends of the world.  
 In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

PSALM 19:1–4

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, be-

ing understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

ROMANS 1:20

---

In what ways do you see the invisible qualities of God revealed in nature? In other words, what does creation tell us about our Creator?

---

## THE ONE TRUE GOD

*From beginning to end, the Bible reveals that there is only one true God. But who is he? The book of Deuteronomy looks back at how Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. During that time God, through the ten plagues, had revealed himself as the one true, all-powerful God over Pharaoh. Now a new generation had grown up in the wilderness and was poised to inherit the land God had promised Abraham. Moses offered the second generation a series of farewell speeches to remind them to choose, worship and follow the one true God—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If they did, all would go well for them.*

These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.** Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

DEUTERONOMY 6:1–9

---

What are some of God's requirements for his people?  
Which of these requirements do you think  
God would like you to improve on?

---

*After Moses died, Joshua became the next great leader of the Israelites. He was charged with leading the people into the promised land. God was with them and fought for them as they began conquering the land. Under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites remained steady in their devotion to God. Before Joshua died, he gathered the people together and issued them a stiff challenge to choose to serve the Lord, the one true God.*

Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods.'"

JOSHUA 24:2

"When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen as far as the Red Sea. But they cried to the LORD for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

"I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land. When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you. But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

"Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands. I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you — also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow. So I gave you a land on

which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’

**“Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.”**

JOSHUA 24:6–14

*Unfortunately the Israelites failed to keep their promise to follow only God. Instead they followed the poor examples of their kings. King Ahab was a particularly wicked king, as he introduced Israel to the worship of the pagan god Baal. But God dramatically proved through the prophet Elijah that he, not Baal or any other “god,” is the one true God.*

**Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”**

But the people said nothing.

Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire — he is God.”

Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”

Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” So they took the bull given them and prepared it.

Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” So they



shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which had been torn down. Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.”

“Do it again,” he said, and they did it again.

“Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

**At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”**

Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

**When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The LORD — he is God! The LORD — he is God!”** 1 KINGS 18:21–39

---

Why did God have to prove over  
and over that he is the one true God?

Do people today have the same  
problem believing the proof they see  
of God's existence?

---

## GOD IN THREE PERSONS: FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT

*Throughout the Old Testament, people were invited to worship the one true God, but what do we know about this amazing God of miracles and creative wonder? Christians believe God is actually three persons, a "Trinity." Though the word "Trinity" isn't found in the Bible, in the very beginning of God's story, the creation story, we see hints that God is plural. Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let **us** make mankind in **our** image, in **our** likeness.' " God is himself a mini-community.*

*The creation story tells us we were created in God's image. When he made the first human (Adam), God wanted him to experience the community and relationship that has eternally existed within the Trinity. That's why he made Eve. Notice that Adam and Eve were not two separate beings. Eve came out of Adam and they became two distinct persons who shared one being, like God. God is three distinct persons who share a single being.*

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

**The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."**

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. **Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.**

The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;

she shall be called ‘woman,’  
for she was taken out of man.”

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

GENESIS 2:15–24


*Recalling Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,’” God as a plural being is clearly evident from the very beginning of the Bible. But what are the identities of the individual persons of God, and how are they just one being? How do they interact? The opening words of John’s gospel make the answer more clear.*

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.


JOHN 1:1–5

*The “Word” here refers to Jesus because he is God’s way of communicating with us. John refers to him as “God,” as divine. John also says Jesus was there in the beginning. Jesus, the divine Word, partnered with God to create all that we see and all that we have yet to see.*

*So who are the other members of the Trinity? The second sentence of the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit was also present at creation: “The earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:2). Jesus and the Spirit were at the creation of the world, so these two persons are God. Is that it? Who else makes up the person of God? Fast-forward to the baptism of Jesus at the age of 30 to discover the answer. Look for the appearance of all three persons of the Trinity.*

 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not wor-

thy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them. LUKE 3:15–18

**When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”** LUKE 3:21–22 

*Three distinct persons are fully revealed in Scripture to make up the identity of the one true God: the Father, the Son Jesus and the Spirit. And all three were involved at the baptism of Jesus—the Father spoke, the Son was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended on the Son. Throughout the centuries, followers of Jesus have come to call the one true God the Trinity, three persons who share one being. As difficult as this concept is to fully understand, it is relevant to our lives.*

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In what ways have you experienced God as Father?  
As Jesus the Son? As the Holy Spirit?

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## THE TRINITY IN OUR LIVES

*In short, here’s how the triune God works: Because God the Father loves us so much, he sent God the Son to live and die for our sins. Now God the Holy Spirit lives in the hearts of all who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus. That’s good news!*

*There are many people in the Bible who devoted their lives to telling others about the good news of Jesus. The apostle Paul was one of those people. He traveled the ancient world telling all kinds of people about God. When he visited Greece, he noticed that the intellectual people who lived there created altars to many gods, including one dedicated “to an unknown God” in case they missed one and therefore offended him or her. Paul met with their council of elders, called the Areopa-*

*gus, and declares the identity of this God as the one who created everything in the beginning (see Genesis 1–2) and is now revealed in the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. His words to the people of Athens are applicable to all those who believe—God is everywhere and there is nothing in this world that his hand has not touched. The Trinity is woven into every aspect of our lives.*

While Paul was waiting for [Silas and Timothy] in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship — and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

**“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.** From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

**‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’** As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

**“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone — an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”**

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

ACTS 17:16–34

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What do you think is meant by the phrase Paul quoted:

“For in him we live and move and have our being”?

How should this dependency on God affect our daily lives?

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## WHAT WE BELIEVE

*The Bible never tries to prove the existence of God—his existence is simply an assumed fact. God has clearly revealed himself through creation, in events such as Jesus’ baptism and in our own consciences, leaving everyone without excuse in the end. The key question we asked at the beginning of this chapter comes down to the declaration of who the one true God is. The God who protected Israel and demonstrated power over false gods declares, “I AM!”*

*The journey of faith begins with our belief in God. Like the Israelites of the Old Testament and the early Christians of the New Testament, we too are called to make a personal declaration. Do we believe in the one true God? Do we accept the Bible as it reveals that God exists in three persons?*