

BELIEVE

CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

Early Elementary Leader's Guide
(Grades 1–3)

ZONDERVAN

Believe Children's Curriculum
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Introduction to *Believe Children's Curriculum*

Prepare to take a wonderful journey of faith that will help your students *believe* and apply God's truths in new and life-changing ways! The *Believe* children's books and curricula are based on the book *Believe* by Randy Frazee, which is an in-depth walk through Scripture organized around 30 major beliefs of the Christian life. *Believe* and its accompanying curricula are written for use among all age groups, allowing children, youth, and adults to work through similar materials together as a family at home and at church.

This curriculum includes 30 lessons based on 30 core beliefs outlined in the *Believe* book. The 30 lessons are divided into three sections of ten lessons each. The first section, **Think**, encourages children to learn to think like Jesus. The second section, **Act**, teaches children how to fulfill the mission to love God and to love their neighbor better. The last section, **Be**, will help to instill in children the ten key virtues God desires to see developed in their lives.

Each lesson includes a Key Verse, Key Question, Key Idea, instructions for sharing the content, options for engaging the material through fun and exciting activities as well as follow-up ideas for families. Stories from the Old Testament, New Testament, and the life of Jesus support each Key Idea.

Use this leader's guide to familiarize yourself with the curriculum and to begin thinking through the best implementation for your particular group. This curriculum was developed to allow for maximum adaptability within any learning environment. Leaders can use it for midweek or Sunday morning programming. Parents can use it in homes in one-on-one or small-group settings. Teaching time frames and formats can be stretched or condensed depending on the attention span of your students.

This curriculum is an engaging and practical tool to walk students through 30 core beliefs found in the Christian faith. They will hopefully understand not only how to communicate these beliefs but also how to put them into action. May the students under your leadership be richly blessed by this experience!

Curriculum Components

Early elementary-age children (grades 1–3) will likely come to you with a vast range of academic ability and Bible knowledge. Students starting grade 1 may have very little ability to read or write independently, while those completing grade 3 will likely be reading chapter books and writing essays. The commonality within this range is the need to have a concrete basis for abstract ideas

and the need to engage actively with learning. The *Believe* Early Elementary curriculum was written with these growing learners in mind. The curriculum approaches important spiritual topics in a concrete way, while incorporating the fun of music, art, and games that cater to the wide range of needs presented by these students. Below are the three main curriculum components.

1 | Come Together

Each lesson begins with gathering the students for “Come Together.” This group learning activity is designed to connect the day’s story to the students’ lives and to draw out any prior knowledge that might help them better understand the story.

2 | Hear the Story

The second curriculum component, “Hear the Story,” includes presenting the Bible stories interactively. The Early Elementary curriculum incorporates poster illustrations or PowerPoint slides. Look for suggestions for student participation throughout the story to get the students more involved. This section closes with review questions and prayer.

3 | Explore More

After the Bible story is shared, the students are invited to “Explore More” about the lesson through art, music, games, coloring, or other activities. Choose from among the many suggested activities to suit your available time, space, and resources; consider how to best engage the unique interests and talents of your students. Be prepared to gather supplies in advance. Below are two of the key “Explore More” activities.

Worship

“Worship” is one of the “Explore More” activities included in every lesson. These age-appropriate songs support the Key Idea of the lesson while providing students with the opportunity to worship using instruments, body motions, reading through lyrics, or simply singing aloud together. Some of the suggested songs are repeated throughout the curriculum where appropriate, but feel free to pull out “old favorites” as they come to mind. Title, artist, and CCLI # are included for ease of use in finding and acquiring any songs you choose to include in your teaching time.

Skits

Each lesson also includes a “Skit” option in the “Explore More” section. These skits emphasize the Key Ideas and often involve students as actors or audience participants. The skits normally require few, if any, simple props, but feel free

to incorporate any objects, furniture, or costumes you like. The skits provide an opportunity for you to address the varying reading abilities of the students. If your group is made up of mainly nonreaders, you can read the skit to them. Oftentimes, there are simple questions for the audience to answer or lines for them to repeat. If you have some strong readers, you may choose to assign them some of the reading parts in the skit.

Setting Up the Optimal Learning Environment

One-Room Schoolhouse (all ages + grades together)

Unless you have a very small group of early elementary-age students, avoid using this format for students in grades 1–3. They are at an age of increasing independence and academic ability and may resent being put in a class with preschoolers. Also, their lack of maturity and abstract thinking will make it a challenge for them to adapt to later elementary tasks. The key to capturing their interest is to engage them at an appropriate level for their ability.

If your situation makes it necessary to combine all elementary ages at once, you will need to use resources and helpers wisely to address the varying needs of your students. Older elementary-age students are usually capable and eager helpers to younger classmates, and early elementary-age students, in turn, will enjoy helping preschoolers. Keep in mind, however, the individual needs of this age group so that they can engage in some activities catered to them.

One way to adapt for different age groups is to introduce the lesson with a common “Come Together” activity and then split into age-based activities. Older students can watch the story on DVD while you help younger students with a craft activity, for example. Then, you can meet with the older students for discussion and “Explore More” while a helper reads the Bible story to the younger students. Another option is to share the Bible story as a whole group by watching the DVD, and then have the older students run a center (based on the “Explore More” activities) for the younger students. As a reminder, the DVD story is appropriate for all ages and is based on the same lesson as the chapter, but the Early Elementary curriculum is aligned to the chapter, not the DVD.

Classrooms Divided by Age + Grade

This format most closely mimics a traditional school setup. There is a group of students, all similar in age/grade, in a room with one teacher (and possibly helpers). All the activities are done with the whole group at the same time. Begin with the “Come Together” activity; then move on to “Hear the Story,” involving the students in the discussion that goes with it. Then move to the

“Explore More” activities, choosing one or more options that best fit the time and resources available.

Large and Small Groups

With smaller groups, it is possible to combine a range of ages into one large group for the “Come Together” and “Hear the Story” parts of the lesson. Then, teachers can divide the students into smaller groups based on age or grade (with one teacher per group) to do one or more of the “Explore More” options best suited for that age group. At the end of the lesson, the groups can come back together again in a large group in order to show a craft, sing a song, perform a skit, or review the lesson.

Learning Center

The learning center model requires some detailed logistics and planning, as not all activities require the same amount of time and space. For example, some of the activities require a lot of space or may be disruptive to other groups, so you’ll need to think through where the “loud” and “spacious” centers can be held. Also, for centers that require less time, provide pictures to color (or similar fillers) for students who are finished with a center but are not yet able to move on to the next activity.

The learning centers are suggested as follows: (1) “Come Together,” (2) “Hear the Story,” and (3) “Explore More.” The “Explore More” learning center can have more than one leader and location based on how many activities you choose to do. The learning center model can be organized in two different formats:

Rotating Students

In this format, several people are required to lead learning centers. Each learning center leader stays at his or her center, repeating the activity for each group of students that rotates through the center. For example, if you have three groups of students, the “Come Together” learning center leader will do the same “Come Together” activity three different times for each group of students.

Rotating Leaders + Students

In this format, an adult leader stays with one group of students and rotates with them through each of the learning centers. This option requires that each leader prepares for and understands all the activities at each learning center.

Getting Families Involved

Family Page

The *Believe Children's Curriculum* includes a Family Page for each lesson, which offers families ideas for interacting with their early elementary-age children around the week's lesson. Leaders can distribute the Family Page at the end of each lesson for the students to take home.

Each Family Page starts with a recap of the week's Bible Basis, Key Verse, Key Question, Key Idea, and book chapter, as well as an Overview section that helps parents use the suggested activities. These activities include the following:

- Table Talk: a set of life application questions based on the week's learning
- Living Faith: fun options for bringing the lesson to life through drama and play
- Extra Mile: additional ideas for families to reinforce and apply the Key Idea

Family Letter

On the next page is a Family Letter that leaders can use to familiarize families with the *Believe* curriculum. Leaders can also mention the fact that *Believe* Early Elementary curriculum uses the book *Believe* by Randy Frazee as an additional resource that families may want to have at home. Feel free to customize this letter as necessary in order to encourage parental involvement in the children's program and follow-through at home.

Dear Parents:

Welcome to the *Believe* experience! We are so excited that your child is participating in the *Believe Children's Curriculum*.

As you may know, this program includes 30 lessons, each one centered on an important belief of the Christian faith. Each lesson is designed to illustrate how this belief is shown in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the life of Jesus.

While we explore God's Word as a class, we encourage you to extend that exploration to your home. There are many ways you can support the development of your child's faith during this campaign:

- Share your learning. Although the *Believe* curriculum is divided into age groups, the Key Ideas are the same throughout, allowing the entire family to discuss the weekly lessons.
- Read the weekly Family Page and implement the ideas. Save these pages in a folder so that if you only have time for a few activities one week, you can look back and try the rest at a later time.
- Schedule family time with God outside of church. Life can get pretty hectic, especially in families with young children. That's all the more reason to prioritize and schedule family activities that are not likely to happen by accident. This can be a fun time of worship, singing, prayer, Bible reading, and reflecting on the week's lesson.

Believe is a family experience. The faith you demonstrate and nurture in your children now will grow with them into adulthood. As we explore the foundations of our faith here at _____, share the experience with your children. We have been blessed with a God we can believe in! Let's help pass on this solid foundation of faith to our children.

God's blessings,

Lesson Planning Tips + Tricks

Preparing in advance for your class will help you to be more comfortable with the material, which will allow students to get the most from the lesson. Advance preparation also helps with behavior management; if students don't have to wait while you gather supplies or think through your next step, they're less likely to get antsy. Of course, there are always unexpected elements we can't plan for, but being familiar with the lesson content and prepared for activities will help you coast over any bumps in the road more smoothly.

While the *Believe Children's Curriculum* is meant to be user-friendly and ready to implement as-is, you may want to consider including some of the following elements as you plan your lessons:

1. Personalization — Think about how the lesson and its Key Idea relate to personal experiences in your class, church, or community. Share anecdotes or current events that help illustrate the lesson for your students. Did you just come across a similar topic in a book you're reading? Is there a recent or upcoming event that gives your students an opportunity to put their faith into action? Maybe you can send this week's craft project to a children's hospital because it inspires hope, or record your class reciting their memory verse to email to a church-supported missionary. The more ties you create between students' lives and the weekly lessons, the more strongly the biblical truths will take root.
2. Individualization — Each student is different and will present different learning and behavioral needs. As you get to know the students in your class, plan ahead how you might challenge those who are more capable and support those who need behavioral or learning adaptations.

In general, gifted learners yearn for increased independence, open-ended tasks, and opportunities to show higher-order thinking. Instead of having these students fill in blanks on a worksheet, for example, you might ask them a general question and have them read through a section of their Bible to formulate a response. Rather than asking them to recall or identify facts, events, and people, ask them to compare/contrast, evaluate, or explain why/how. These students might also enjoy taking on a larger role in a skit, looking up additional Scripture verses, or leading part of the lesson.

Students with behavioral or academic concerns will have needs of their own that you can prepare for. Use short, clear directives, explaining one step at a time for complex activities, such as crafts. Have

materials prepared in advance so that students are not left waiting as you scramble. Keep close tabs on the climate of the class—if you sense students becoming antsy or bored, take a break to do something more interactive and physical, such as a game, a song with motions, or a sign language Bible verse.

3. If you don't write it down, it (likely) won't happen! Make notes throughout your lesson plan of how you might incorporate an anecdote or adapt an activity for certain students. If you have helpers or volunteers available, make note of the tasks you'd like them to take on. Will they lead a small group in playing a game? Or cut out materials to prepare for a craft? Jot down names of possible student leaders for an activity. Who might be good at demonstrating the game? Who could handle a large role in the skit? Write down any "backup" plans in case technology does not work or a student needs to work separately from the group (either for an extra challenge or to combat overstimulation). Maybe you'll have a list of Scripture verses for them to look up and record or have them create a poster to advertise your class skit.
4. Review, review, review. Go over the Key Idea and Key Verse many times. Bring back an idea, verse, or song from a previous lesson when applicable. Don't stick to just the activity options that are provided, but be creative in using novel approaches to make the lesson "stick."

Believe Believes in You

Don't worry about not doing everything perfectly. Remember, have fun! Remember, God is in control! *Believe* will be a success as you faithfully implement it week after week. Let God guide you into believing more deeply in his unending love and patience as you lead the students to a deeper belief in the One who made them and calls them his own.

BELIEVE CURRICULUM | Early Elementary Scope and Sequence

Lesson	Title	Key Verse	Key Idea	Explore More*
1	God	2 Cor. 13:14	I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.	-Three-In-One Flip Book (<i>activity</i>) -Days of Creation (<i>game</i>) -Who Said It? (<i>worksheet</i>)
2	Personal God	Ps. 121:2	I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.	-The Sheepfold (<i>craft</i>) -Shepherd’s Rod and Staff Relay (<i>game</i>) -Mary Had a Little Lamb Retold (<i>discussion</i>)
3	Salvation	Eph. 2:8	I believe a person can have a relationship with God by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ.	-Salvation Necklace (<i>craft</i>) -Ephesians 2:8 (<i>activity</i>) -Hidden Message (<i>worksheet</i>)
4	The Bible	2 Tim. 3:16	I believe the Bible is God’s Word, and it guides my beliefs and actions.	-My Commandments (<i>writing</i>) -Double Dare (<i>game</i>) -Ten Commandments (<i>song</i>)
5	Identity in Christ	John 1:12	I believe I am significant because I am a child of God.	-God the Creator (<i>craft</i>) -Remember Me (<i>game</i>) -Spread the Special (<i>writing</i>)
6	Church	Eph. 4:15	I believe God uses the church to bring about his plan.	-Tongues of Fire (<i>craft</i>) -Warmer/Colder (<i>game</i>) -One Apiece, No Repeats (<i>activity</i>)
7	Humanity	John 3:16	I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.	-Woolly Sheep (<i>craft</i>) -Gathering in the Sheep (<i>game</i>) -Bible Memory Rap (<i>activity</i>)
8	Compassion	Ps. 82:3–4	I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to people in need.	-Can of Compassion (<i>craft</i>) -Charades (<i>game</i>) -How Can I Help? (<i>worksheet</i>)
9	Stewardship	Ps. 24:1–2	I believe everything I am and everything I own belongs to God.	-Cheerful Giving Cans (<i>craft</i>) -Bible Memory Hopscotch (<i>activity</i>) -The Whole Earth Is God’s (<i>activity</i>)
10	Eternity	John 14:1–2	I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus will return to establish his eternal kingdom.	-Elijah Taken to Heaven (<i>craft</i>) -God’s Glory (<i>activity</i>) -Dreams and Visions (<i>worksheet</i>)

*Each lesson also includes Explore More options for Praise and Worship (*music*) and Act It Out (*drama*).

11	Worship	Ps. 95:1	I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me.	-Memory Verse Chain (<i>craft</i>) -Daniel, Law, Lions (<i>game</i>) -Worship Poem (<i>writing</i>)
12	Prayer	Ps. 66:19–20	I pray to God to know him and find direction in my life.	-Gideon’s Trumpet (<i>craft</i>) -Memory Pop-Up (<i>game</i>) -Prayer Path (<i>activity</i>)
13	Bible Study	Heb. 4:12	I study the Bible to know God and his truth and to find direction for my daily life.	-Sunny the Sunflower (<i>craft</i>) -Dirt Game (<i>game</i>) -Disappearing Memory Verse (<i>game</i>)
14	Single-Mindedness	Matt. 6:33	I focus on God and his priorities for my life.	-What’s on Your Mind? (<i>worksheet</i>) -What’s Missing? (<i>activity</i>) -Single-Mindedness Memory Game (<i>game</i>)
15	Total Surrender	Rom. 12:1	I dedicate my life to God’s plan.	-Forgiveness Rock Garden (<i>craft</i>) -Fiery Furnace Memory Game (<i>game</i>) -Two-Act Play (<i>role-play</i>)
16	Biblical Community	Acts 2:44	I spend time with other Christians to accomplish God’s plan in my life, in the lives of others, and in the world.	-The Wall of Jerusalem (<i>craft</i>) -Working Together (<i>game</i>) -Community Relationships (<i>activity</i>)
17	Spiritual Gifts	Rom. 12:6	I know my spiritual gifts and use them to bring about God’s plan.	-The Bouncing Man (<i>craft</i>) -Silver or Gold I Have None (<i>song</i>) -Spiritual Gifts Posters (<i>activity</i>)
18	Offering My Time	Col. 3:17	I offer my time to help God’s plan.	-Jesus Has Time for Me Hourglass (<i>craft</i>) -Where Is Jesus? (<i>game</i>) -Bible Memory Pass Along (<i>activity</i>)
19	Giving My Resources	2 Cor. 8:7	I give my resources to help God’s plan.	-The Treasured Star (<i>craft</i>) -Giving a Gift (<i>game</i>) -Combined Resources (<i>writing</i>)
20	Sharing My Faith	Eph. 6:20	I share my faith with others to help God’s plan.	-Seeing Jesus in Me (<i>craft</i>) -“What Am I?” (<i>game</i>) -Going on a Picnic (<i>activity</i>)

*Each lesson also includes Explore More options for Praise and Worship (*music*) and Act It Out (*drama*).

21	Love	1 John 4:11	I will try hard to love God and love others.	-His Banner Over Me Is Love (<i>craft</i>) -“His Banner Over Me Is Love” (<i>song</i>) -Pin the Love on the Heart (<i>game</i>)
22	Joy	John 15:11	No matter what happens, I feel happy inside and understand God’s plan for my life.	-Picturing JOY (<i>craft</i>) -Spread the Joy (<i>game</i>) -Joy/Happiness Sort (<i>activity</i>)
23	Peace	Phil. 4:6–7	I am not worried because I have found peace with God, peace with others, and peace with myself.	-Peace Dove (<i>craft</i>) -If You’re Peaceful and You Know It (<i>song</i>) -Sometimes I Get Worried (<i>game</i>)
24	Self-Control	Titus 2:12	I have the power through Jesus to control myself.	-Samson’s Hair (<i>craft</i>) -Prodigal Son (<i>game</i>) -Bible Scramble (<i>activity</i>)
25	Hope	Heb. 6:19	I can deal with the hardships of life because of the hope I have in Jesus.	-Our Hope Is in Jesus (<i>craft</i>) -Keeping Promises Poster (<i>activity</i>) -Hope Beanbag Toss (<i>activity</i>)
26	Patience	Prov. 14:29	I do not get angry quickly, and I am patient, even when things go wrong.	-Take Up Your Mat (<i>craft</i>) -Saul’s Robe (<i>game</i>) -Patience (<i>writing</i>)
27	Kindness/ Goodness	1 Thess. 5:15	I choose to be kind and good in my relationships with others.	-Friendship Bracelet (<i>craft</i>) -Fruit of the Spirit (<i>activity</i>) -Kindness Matters (<i>activity</i>)
28	Faithfulness	Ps. 36:5	I can be trusted because I keep my promises to God and others.	-Faithfulness Pattern (<i>craft</i>) -Do You Trust Me? (<i>game</i>) -Pass the Verse (<i>activity</i>)
29	Gentleness	Phil. 4:5	I am thoughtful, considerate, and calm with others.	-Gentleness Balloon (<i>craft</i>) -Gentle Balloon Toss (<i>game</i>) -Balloon Bible Memory (<i>game</i>)
30	Humility	Phil. 2:3	I choose to value others more than myself.	-Jesus Washes His Disciples’ Feet (<i>craft</i>) -Humble Puzzles (<i>activity</i>) -Pride and Humility (<i>worksheet</i>)

*Each lesson also includes Explore More options for Praise and Worship (*music*) and Act It Out (*drama*).