

*SAMPLE LESSON PLAN RESOURCE MATERIALS  
FOR ELEMENTS OF SYLLABUS*

**SECTION B: FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION - CHRISTIANITY PART 2: EVIDENCE ABOUT JESUS**

<b>Syllabus Aim</b>	To identify the Gospels as the main source of knowledge about Jesus. (Syllabus page 14)
<b>Syllabus Objectives</b>	As a result of studying this section the students should <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to name some of the sources of information about Jesus of Nazareth</li> <li>• differentiate between documents of faith and documents of history</li> <li>• be able to trace the development of the Gospels from oral tradition to written word (Syllabus page 16)</li> </ul>
<b>Key Concepts</b>	evidence - from oral tradition, from written tradition; gospel; evangelist; synoptic.
<b>Description of Content</b>	An overview of the historical sources for evidence of the life of Jesus. The Gospels as documents of faith rather than history. The Gospels as good news—from oral tradition to the written word. The evangelists as people of faith; how the Gospels came to be written. Different perspectives in the Gospels –some examples from the writings of the evangelists.
<b>Methodology</b>	These Lesson Plan Resource Materials are designed using a variety of methods. These include role-play, discussion, self-assessment and interpretation of data which are used to help students identify the Gospels as the main source of knowledge about Jesus by giving them an opportunity to explore and clarify the concepts and to elaborate on their existing knowledge and understanding of the content.

## Procedure

### Introduction

Introduce this part by using a *game of Chinese Whispers*. Organise the class into a circle. Say something in a low voice to the nearest student, which can be passed around the circle by students whispering it to the person on their left. There are two ground rules when passing on the sentence. It must be whispered. And the person hearing the sentence cannot ask any questions, nor ask for it to be repeated. When the sentence reaches the last person compare what they say with the initial sentence.

Discuss:

1. What was the sentence the first person passed on?
2. How did the final version compare with the initial sentence?
3. What happened to the sentence on the way around the circle?
4. What could be done to make sure the sentence was passed on with no variation?

Or A *Role Play* situation (a minor car accident). Six students are asked to role play the participants:

- 1 Driver of red car
- 2 Driver of blue car
- 3 Passenger in red car
- 4 Woman pedestrian on footpath
- 5 Garda who arrived on the scene after the accident.
- 6 Reporter who interviews the Garda and writes a report for their editor. (The reporter does not hear the account of the other four people involved.)

Participants 1-4 are given the following *Description of the Situation*:

*There has been a minor car accident. A blue car and a red car have collided at a crossroads. The blue car failed to give way but the red car was travelling too fast. Both cars have been slightly damaged but no one was injured.*

- *Role Play*: Each participant is called on in turn to tell his or her story to the class.

• *De-briefing and Class Discussion:*

What similarities are there in each story?

What are the differences?

Which account is true?

Discuss the questions to explore the reasons behind the writing down of an accurate account of an incident.

***The Gospels as good news - from oral tradition to the written word***

The disciples of Jesus were busy going around preaching and teaching about Jesus because they wanted the people who came after them to know about Jesus. Many years after Jesus' death, people decided that the best way to ensure that Jesus' story would always be known was for themselves or close followers of Jesus to write it down.

Brainstorm: Have you ever read a biography or autobiography? Whose?

Take feedback from students noting their examples on the chalkboard.

Discuss the following questions noting feedback on the chalkboard as below. In taking feedback you may refer to the answers given in *Jesus and You - J.Finley & M.Pennock page 22*.

What is a biography?

What is an autobiography?

Who could write a biography?

Who could write an autobiography?

When could a biography be written?

When could an autobiography be written?

Why do people write biographies?

Why do people write autobiographies?

Who is the intended audience for a biography?

Who is the intended audience for an autobiography?

Chalkboard:

	AUTHORSHIP	PURPOSE OF WRITING	DATE OF COMPOSITION	INTENDED AUDIENCE
BIOGRAPHY				
AUTOBIOGRAPHY				

We could summarise all of this by saying that there are three stages involved in the writing of a biography or autobiography:

- The events that the person is involved in, take place
- These events etc. are reflected upon or researched
- The actual writing of the words and putting together of the story

The Gospels tell the story of the life death and resurrection of Jesus. They are quite like a biography that you would read about any famous / important person, except they are not as interested in giving historical facts about Jesus, as they are in giving an account of the meaning of his life, death and resurrection.

Discuss the following questions noting feedback on the chalkboard as below. In taking feedback you may refer to the answers given in *Jesus and You - J.Finley & M.Pennock page 22*.

Who wrote the Gospels?

When were the Gospels written?

Why were the Gospels written?

Who are the intended audience for the Gospels?

Chalkboard:

	AUTHORSHIP	PURPOSE OF WRITING	DATE OF COMPOSITION	INTENDED AUDIENCE
GOSPELS				

As with the writing of a biography there were a number of stages in the development of the Gospels. Scripture scholars generally recognise that the Gospels were developed in three distinct stages. They are the result of a somewhat gradual process of formation and composition.

Present students with information on the three stages in the development of the Gospels from *Jesus and You* J.Finley & M.Pennock pages 23-26 or from other resources listed at the end of this lesson plan.

The three stages can be visualised with reference to the following *Overhead / Chart*:

Stage 1: <i>The historical Jesus</i>	Stage 2: <i>Oral preaching of the early Church</i>	Stage 3: <i>The writing of the Gospels</i>			
The words and deeds of Jesus	<p>The preaching and teaching of the apostles recalling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sayings of Jesus</li> <li>• Parables</li> <li>• Miracle accounts</li> <li>• Short creeds</li> <li>• Hymns</li> <li>• Prayers</li> </ul> <p><i>As time went by various statements, memorable speeches, vivid images.... were written down.</i></p>	<p>The Evangelists Matthew Mark, Luke and John</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selected</li> <li>• edited</li> <li>• assembled</li> </ul> <p>material to meet the needs of their communities.</p>			
..... 30 AD		Mark 67-70*	Matthew 80-90*	Luke 80*	John 90 -100*

(\*The New Jerome Biblical Commentary - authors' articles)

*Written Assignment:*

1. How long is it after the death and resurrection of Jesus until the first Gospel was written?
2. Over what time period were the Gospels written?
3. Which of the following stages came first, second and third in the writing of the Gospels?

Stage: __	Mark writes his gospel in approximately 65-66AD. Matthew and Luke write theirs between approximately 80-90AD. John is the last gospel to be written between approximately 90-100Ad.
Stage: __	Jesus carried out his preaching and teaching.
Stage: __	The apostles (early church) spend their time learning more about Jesus by sharing their stories with each other. They go around preaching and teaching about Jesus.

Take feedback from students and correct their assignment on the stages in the development of the Gospels.

### *The Gospels as documents of faith rather than history*

Ask the students to imagine that they have been asked to write a book about a famous footballer called Joe Bloggs. Discuss: Where could they get information about him? Take feedback from the students and note their responses on the chalkboard.

§ Noting that one source of information is a Birth Certificate ask the question: What kind of information does a Birth Certificate contain?

§ Noting that a Diary is another possible source of information ask the question: What kind of information could a diary provide?

Read the Birth Certificate and Ann Bloggs' Diary on the *Student Work: DOCUMENTS* and discuss:

1. What do we know about Joe Bloggs from his birth certificate?
2. What do we know about Joe Bloggs from his mother's diary?
3. Why does little Joe "mean the world" to John and Ann Bloggs?
4. Which document gives the most facts about Joe Bloggs: the birth certificate or the diary entry? Explain.
5. Which document tells us most about what Joe Bloggs means to his parents? Explain.

Present students with information on the Gospels as documents of faith from *Jesus of History, Christ of Faith*, pp. 24-25 or from other resources listed at the end of this lesson plan.

Discuss:

1. The Gospels do not give us a history of Jesus' life. What kinds of facts about Jesus are missing from the Gospels.
2. Identify one difference between the Gospels and a biography or history book about a famous person.
3. Why did the evangelists (gospel writers) write the Gospels?
4. Why do the Gospels focus mainly on Jesus' miracles, teachings, death and resurrection?
5. Why are the Gospels called "documents of faith"?

As a follow up draw the following chart on the chalkboard:

Document of History	Document of Faith
Provides information about the past	Written to explain the meaning and importance of an event or life.

Recall Joe Blogg's Birth Certificate and Ann Blogg's diary.

Discuss:

1. Is Joe Blogg's Birth Certificate a document of faith or a document of history? Explain.
2. Does the entry in Ann Blogg's diary about the birth of little Joe resemble more a document of faith or a document of history? Explain.

### ***The Evangelists as people of faith; how the Gospels came to be written***

Explain that the people who wrote or oversaw the writing of the gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. *Using Student Work: TEST YOURSELF GOSPEL QUIZ* test students' knowledge of the Gospels and correct their Answers

1. The Gospel of Matthew is the longest in the New Testament.	True √	False
2. Mark's Gospel gives a lot of inside information' about Peter.	√	
3. Luke's gospel is called 'the gospel of the great pardons' because of his emphasis on Jesus' attitude towards sinners.	√	
4. The gospel of John ends with the words 'and I will be with you always, to the end of time'?		√
5. The word gospel means "Good News".	√	
6. The Gospel of Luke is the shortest in the New Testament.		√
7. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were all apostles.		√
8. Mark it is believed was the first of the Gospels to be written.	√	
9. Matthew's Gospel was written for a Jewish Christian audience.	√	
10. Luke was know as the beloved physician.	√	
11. Luke's Gospel was written for a Gentile Christian audience.	√	
12. John's Gospel was written at the end of first century.	√	
13. The Gospel of Luke begins with the words 'Dear Theophilus'.	√	

Discuss the following questions noting feedback on the chalkboard as below. In taking feedback you may refer to the answers given in *Jesus and You - J.Finley & M.Pennock page 26.*

Who was Matthew / Mark/ Luke /John?

When did they write their Gospel?

Who are the intended audience for their Gospel?

Why were their Gospel written?

Chalkboard:

	EVANGELIST	DATE OF COMPOSITION	INTENDED AUDIENCE	MAJOR POINTS OF EMPHASIS
Matthew:				
Mark:				
Luke:				
John:				

The word evangelist comes from the Greek word *evangeloin*, which means ‘the proclamation or announcement of the good news’.

Discuss: What good news were the evangelists proclaiming or announcing?

**An overview of the historical sources for evidence of the life of Jesus**

While the New Testament is the primary source of information about Jesus there are also historical texts which refer to the existence of Jesus.

Present students with information on the historical sources for evidence of the life of Jesus from *Topic 7G Jesus The Christ – New Zealand National Centre for Religious Studies* or from the resources listed at the end of this lesson plan.

*Written Assignments:*

- Are you surprised about anything in the non-biblical evidence of the existence of Jesus?
- Does the fact that evidence exists outside the New Testament deepen your knowledge of Jesus as a historical person?

Take feedback from the students.

**Different perspectives in the Gospels - some examples from the writings of the evangelists**

Present the students with two different accounts of the same event (e.g. Different newspaper accounts of a game, film etc.) Using two different voices read the two different accounts and discuss:

How are the two accounts similar?

How are the accounts different?

Take feedback from the students and note their responses on the chalkboard.

Discuss: Why are there differences between the two accounts? Which of the accounts are true?

*or*

Ask the students to recall an event at which they were all present. Choose one of these and do the following exercise with the students.

*Student Assignment - Written/Oral:*

1. What were the main happenings at the event?
2. What other details do you remember about the event?
3. What were your impressions of the event?

Take feedback from the students and note their answers on the chalkboard as follows:

Basic Story	Other Details	Impressions

Discuss: Why did some students notice different details from others?  
Does the fact that every student failed to notice the details listed in the column “Other Details” mean that these events are untrue?

What does this exercise teach us about the manner in which people observe events?

Compare the way the Gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke told the miracle story of Jesus calming the storm. Using three different voices read the gospel accounts of “Jesus Calms a Storm” in Matthew 8:18-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25 using the NRSV, Jerusalem or Good News Bible.

Discuss: How are the accounts of “Jesus Calms a Storm” similar?

How are the accounts different?

*Student Assignment:*

Each student silently rereads the accounts underlining words that are in common with one colour and words that are particular to a gospel with a different colour.

Take feedback from the student assignment on the chalkboard as outlined below: “Jesus Calms a Storm”

Matthew 8:18-27	Mark 4:35-41	Luke 8:22-25

Note the points that are in common with one colour and those that are particular to a gospel with a different colour.

Discuss: At what points in the story does one gospel have more or less to say about the miracle than another?  
 What points in the story do they all have in common?  
 Why are there differences in the versions of this story?  
 Which of the Gospel accounts appears to have most points in common with the others?

In taking feedback on these questions refer students to the ways in which the gospel writers were

- Ø writing at different times,
- Ø for different people
- Ø presenting a particular view of Jesus
- Ø Matthew, Mark and Luke are called synoptic (seen together) because they share many similarities. If you line up Mark - Matthew - Luke in parallel columns, you would note that there are many similarities, indeed that they can be "read together" (syn-together; optic-look at). Hence, the term "synoptic Gospels."

*Student Assignment:* Fill in the following words correctly in the paragraph below:

Matthew	seen together	different	Jesus Calms a Storm	synoptic
Gospels	Mark	similar	Luke	different

The Gospels, which share many similarities, are called \_\_\_\_\_. This word means \_\_\_\_\_. These are the Gospels of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. These \_\_\_\_\_ were written at \_\_\_\_\_ times for \_\_\_\_\_ people but in for example the story of \_\_\_\_\_ they have many \_\_\_\_\_ points.

*or*

Write a paragraph explaining in your own words why certain Gospels are called synoptic and give an example of a story from the Gospels to illustrate your answer.

*Resources that teachers have suggested include:*

- A Time to Live - New Christian Way Series 3 Veritas, page 96.
- According to your word, Brid Greville, Chapter 5
- All About Faith 1 - Gill and Macmillan Series, pages 8-13 and 16-21.
- Believe the Good News, Kirwan & Garland, Chapter 23
- Community of Faith - Veritas, pages 33-38 and 41-46.
- Cyberclass Manual Disk 1 Section B Part 2 & Junior Certificate Text Year One, Scholastech pages 46-52.
- Jesus and You: Discovering the Real Christ, J. Finley & M. Pennock
- Jesus of History Christ of Faith, Thomas Zanzig, Chapter 1 & 2
- Jesus of Nazareth, Brennan, Lane, et al, Chapter 1 & 2
- Love One Another - New Christian Way Series 1, Veritas, pages 22, and 34-40.
- Show Us The Way - New Christian Way Series 2 Veritas, pages 140-142 and 148-149.

*Student Work: DOCUMENTS*

<b>BIRTH CERTIFICATE</b>				
<i>Date and Place of Birth</i>	<b>Name</b>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Name and Dwelling Place of Father</i>	<i>Name and Maiden Surname of Mother</i>
1988 June, Sixth, The Coombe, Dublin	Joseph Francis	Male	John Bloggs, 22 Sweeney Parade, Dublin 3.	Ann Bloggs Formerly Smith
<i>Rank or Profession of Father</i>	<i>Name and Residence of Informant</i>	<i>When Registered</i>	<i>Signature of Registrar</i>	
Carpenter	Sr. Angela The Coombe	July Twelfth 1988	J. J. Ryan	

## ANN BLOGG'S DIARY

Entry for Tuesday 6th June 1988

At 12.30 p.m. today John and I had a beautiful baby boy. He has bright blue eyes and a big mop of black hair, just like John. I wanted to call him after his father but John would not hear of it. He says that one John in the family is enough, so we have decided to call him Joe. We had a lot of visitors this evening. My parents came and teased John that he would get very little sleep once the baby and I came home. He laughed – after ten years of waiting for a baby John is not bothered by the thought of a few sleepless nights. Little Joe means the world to us. We look forward to taking him home and doing all the things that parents do – giving him his bottle, teaching him to walk, even taking him to football matches! Having Joe has made our family complete.

*Discuss:*

1. What do we know about Joe Bloggs from his birth certificate?
2. What do we know about Joe Bloggs from his mother's diary?
3. Why does little Joe mean the world to John and Ann Bloggs?
4. In your opinion which document gives the most facts about Joe Bloggs: the birth certificate or the diary entry? Explain.
5. In your opinion which document tells us most about what Joe Bloggs means to his parents? Explain.

### *Student Work: TEST YOURSELF GOSPEL QUIZ*

Test your overall knowledge of the Gospels. Place a ✓ to indicate the correct answer

	True	False
1. The Gospel of Matthew is the longest in the New Testament.		
2. Mark's gospel gives a lot of inside information' about Peter.		
3. Luke's gospel is called the gospel of the great pardons' because of his emphasis on Jesus' attitude towards sinners.		
4. The gospel of John ends with the words 'and I will be with you always, to the end of time'?		
5. The word gospel means "Good News".		
6. The Gospel of Luke is the shortest in the New Testament.		
7. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were all apostles.		
8. Mark was the first of the Gospels to be written.		
9. Matthew's Gospel was written for a Jewish Christian audience.		
10. Luke was know as the beloved physician.		
11. Luke's Gospel was written for a Gentile Christian audience.		
12. John's Gospel was written at the end of first century.		
13. The gospel of Luke begins with the words 'Dear Theophilus'.		