

*JUNIOR CERTIFICATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICE
SAMPLE LESSON PLAN RESOURCE MATERIALS FOR ELEMENTS OF SYLLABUS
SECTION B: FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION – CHRISTIANITY
PART 5: FAITH IN CHRIST*

Syllabus Aim	To examine the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus for his followers then and now. (Syllabus p14)
Syllabus Objectives	As a result of studying this section the students should § have an awareness of the emerging identity and development of the first Christian communities; § to be able to compare and contrast those early faith communities with modern faith communities; <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Higher Level Only</u></p> • have an understanding of the meanings attached to the new titles for Jesus. (Syllabus p19)
Key Concepts	Pentecost, missionary, People of God. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Higher Level Only</u></p> Son of Man, Son of God, New Creation, Christ/Messiah.
Description of Content	The work of the disciples after the death of Jesus and the formation of the first Christian communities. The characteristics of those first communities: faith, worship, and way of life. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Higher Level Only</u></p> An examination of some of the new titles for Jesus and new understandings of Jesus and his life.
Methodology	These Lesson Plan Resource Materials are designed using a variety of methods including interpretation of data, discussion and role-play.

Procedure

Introduction

The Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost are separate but closely related experiences. Understanding each is necessary for understanding the formation of the first Christian communities. Each of the following statements below refers to one of these three experiences. Read John 20:14-18; Acts 2:2-4; Acts 1:3-10. Identify each as "R" Resurrection, "A" Ascension or "P" Pentecost.

Take feedback from the students explaining how the Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost are separate but closely related experiences. Understanding each is necessary for understanding the formation of the first Christian communities. The Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:3) tell us that the Ascension took place on the 40th day after Jesus' death. However the Jewish festival of Pentecost, celebrating of the giving of the Law to Moses, would have taken place 50 days after the Passover. As they believe that it was fifty days after leaving Egypt – after the Passover – that Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

So between the Ascension and Pentecost Jesus' disciples would have had to spend days without a concrete plan of action, waiting, wondering what to do next.

Brainstorm: When have you found it difficult to wait?

What would you have felt if you were one of the disciples in this situation?

What would you do in this situation?

The work of the disciples after the death of Jesus and the formation of the first Christian communities

Read Matthew 28:16-20. Give students time to identify the correct answer to the following questions on the events after the death of Jesus.

- This meeting with Jesus took place - Before the crucifixion/ When Jesus was choosing his apostles/ After the resurrection

- During this meeting Jesus asked the disciples to - Keep quiet about the Good News / Go and tell everyone about the Good News and make them disciples too / Tell some people but not all, about the Good News
- Jesus told the disciples that - They were on their own / He would be with them helping them all of the time / He would soon forget about them

Read Acts 1:8. Discuss: What did Jesus promise to send the disciples?
How would this affect them?
What does the word witness mean?

Brainstorm with students their experience of being involved in setting up a group or club by asking the questions: Have any of you ever been involved in setting up a club or a group?

Discuss:

1. What is the group/club?
2. Who was involved in setting it up?
3. Why was it set up?
4. Why did other people get interested in the group?
5. What keeps you loyal to the group/club?

Read Acts of the Apostles 2:40-47 and discuss:

1. How did the first Christian community begin?
2. Why did it come together?
3. Who was involved in setting it up?
4. Why did others become interested in the community?
5. Why would people in the first Christian Communities have stayed loyal, even when they were being persecuted?

Read the account of the Ascension in Acts 1:3 –10 and Pentecost in Acts 2:2-3 or listen to the stories on audiotapes using The Jesus Programme - Bible news.

Written Assignment: Jerusalem TV is preparing *Primetime* reports on rumours about the Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost. As a reporter you have to:

- 1 Give a brief introduction about the death and reported resurrection of Jesus
- 2 Interview one of the apostles about the rumours of Jesus' ascension *or* their Pentecost experience.

Sample questions:

- What is your name?
- How did you know Jesus of Nazareth?
- What effect did his death have on you?
- What did you hear, see, feel on this occasion? (on the 40th day after his death *or* the Jewish harvest festival of Pentecost (Greek for 50th day after Passover)
- Who else witnessed this event?
- What meaning does this event have for you?
- What effect has it had on you and the others who witnessed it?

- 3 Try to draw some conclusions for your viewers based on the evidence and comments you have received.

Take feedback on the student assignment and role-play some of the interviews.

Discuss: What instructions did Jesus give his followers before his Ascension?
What effect did the Pentecost experience have on the apostles?

Inspired by the gifts of the Holy Spirit the apostles lead by Peter went out into the streets of Jerusalem and began preaching the good news about Jesus of Nazareth.

Read Acts 2: 41-47 and give students time to complete the following assignments:

1. Circle in the list below the words which describe the work or activities that were characteristic of the first Christian communities as outlined in the above account from Acts.

PRAYING TOGETHER	MEETING IN THE TEMPLE	WATCHING TV	GAMBLING	HAVING MEALS TOGETHER
LEARNING FROM THE APOSTLES	SHARING PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS	BAPTISED	MEETING AT THE MARKET	PERFORMING MIRACLES

2. Write a paragraph using these words to describe a day in the life of a member of the first Christian community.

or

Find stories from other parts of the Acts of the Apostles which are examples of three of the characteristics of the first Christian communities listed above.

E.g. Acts 3:1-10 = Peter and John performing a miracle

The Characteristics of those first communities: faith, worship and way of life.

Read Acts 4: 32-35 and discuss:

- What does this tell us about the faith of this Christian community?
- What does it tell us about their way of life?
- In what ways did they show a missionary responsibility, to share with others the Good News about Jesus?

or

Give students time to look up some references from Acts of the Apostles and write in one sentence what each reference says about the characteristics of the first Christian communities.

Take feedback from students as to what the Acts of the Apostles tells us about the Faith, Worship, Way of Life of the first Christian communities

Categorise the references under the headings Faith, Worship and Way of Life and discuss what the references tell us about the missionary work of the disciples?

or

Read *LETTER TO MARTHA* from “A Time to live, New Christian Way Series 3 pages 53 & 54 and discuss the following questions:

1. Why was Daniel interested in Jesus of Nazareth in the beginning?
2. What kind of things had got Jesus into trouble?
3. How did Daniel feel about Jesus being crucified? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Who was Peter and what did he do?
5. List 5 things that the followers of Jesus did that impressed people.

Assignment:

Using the information that you have found in the Acts of the Apostles write a reply to Daniel.

The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem became troubled by the activities of the first Christian communities. For example a young disciple named Stephen was charged with blasphemy, put on trial before the Sanhedrin and stoned to death by an angry mob.

Invite students to take different parts in reading *Student Work: STEPHEN STORY* (Acts 6:8-7:60)

Discuss: What kind of man was Stephen?

Of what two things was Stephen accused?

How did Stephen answer these accusations?

At what point do you think the Jewish authorities began to disagree?

Could Stephen have avoided the stoning? How? Why didn't he?

After this the Christian community in Jerusalem suffered persecution and the disciples began to preach the good news about Jesus of Nazareth in other parts of the Roman Empire and to baptise people who were non-Jews (Gentiles). This emphasised that all who believe in God and Jesus as the Son of God, are united in faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. People in the first Christian communities saw themselves as the People of God who gathered around Jesus to hear his words and be touched by his presence. All members of the community shared a sense of God being present in their lives, calling

them, loving them and binding them together. By the end of the first century AD Christian communities had spread from Palestine into Asia Minor, North Africa, Greece and Italy.

Assignment: Read the story of Saul's conversion and missionary work in: the Acts of the Apostles 7:57-60; 8- 9; 18; 22; 26. or Community of Faith (Veritas) Chapter 7

- Discuss the following questions:
- What religion was Saul?
 - How did Saul feel about Stephen being stoned to death?
 - How did Saul look upon the first Christian community?
 - Describe the events that brought about the conversion of Saul?
 - What missionary work did he do?

OR

Read *Student Work: THE CONVERSION OF SAUL* (Acts of the Apostles 9:1-20, 26, 28.) in the following different voices: A narrator; Saul; The Lord; Ananias. Discuss:

1. What did Saul do before he met the Lord?
2. Why did Jesus Speak to Saul?
3. What happened as a result?
4. What did Saul do when his strength came back?
5. What words would you use to describe his faith in the end?
6. Where did he worship?
7. When he joined the apostles in Jerusalem what way would you describe his way of life?
8. St Paul became a great missionary for Christ. Pick out two sentences from above that show his missionary zeal.

OR

Read an account of the persecution and spread of the first Christian community in:

- All About Faith 1 (Gill and Macmillan) Chapter 34
- A Time to Live (Veritas) Lesson Seven
- Teach Me Your Ways (Gill and Macmillan) Unit VI

Discuss the following questions:

- Did the characteristics of the first Christians remain evident in the life of the communities as Christianity spread?

Compare and contrast early faith communities with modern faith communities

Read the accounts of A Christian Community, First Century A.D Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35 and the Corrymeela Community page 102 "A New Commandment" Kirwan and Garland, Gill and Macmillan and give students time to complete the Assignment:

1. In the corresponding box list all the things which the people in each extract did because they were part of a Christian community:

First Century Christians	The Corrymeela Community

2. What are the similarities between these three Christian communities?
3. What are the differences?
4. How are the characteristics of the early Christian communities evident in these examples of Christian communities?

Research Assignment: Choose any Christian community and through some research fill in the answers to the following questions:

- Name of Christian Community:
- List three things that this Christian Community believes about Jesus.
- How do these compare with the faith / beliefs of the early Christians?
- List three worship practices of the Christian Community.
- How do these compare with the worship practices of the early Christians?
- List three things about the way of life of the Christian Community.
- How do these compare with the way of life of the early Christians?

- List three ways the Christian Community is involved in spreading the Good News / missionary activity.
- How does this missionary activity compare with that of the early Christians?

An examination of some of the new titles for Jesus and new understandings of Jesus and his life.

As an introduction to this part, to help students come to an understanding of the significance of a name or a title, one of the following options could be used:

Option 1: Address the students in the class by their wrong names or their sister's/brother's name. Continue this for a while until some reactions are generated. Discuss:

1. What is wrong with calling you the wrong name?
2. Why did you not like it/why did you feel so strongly about it?
3. What is the significance of a name?
4. Why do parents put so much thought into a name for a baby?

Option 2: Brainstorm with students the significance of their names using the following questions

1. Why were you called the name you have?
2. Do you like it? Why/why not?
3. If you were able to name yourself, what name would you choose for yourself? Why?
4. What is the significance of a name?

This could be followed up with an assignment where the students must look up a 'Baby name book' and find out the meaning of their name.

Option 3: Divide students into groups. Distribute a 'Baby name book' to each group. Ask the group to look up the name of each of the people in their group in the name book. Discuss:

1. What did you learn about your names from doing this activity?
2. Why do parents put so much thought into a name for a baby?
3. What is the significance of a name?

Option 4: Research the meaning of the following Jewish names. Joseph, Mary, Michael, David, James, Sarah, John. ("Jesus and You" by J. Finley and M. Pennock)

Written Assignment: Test your knowledge of the following Jewish names by drawing arrows to match each of the following names with its meaning:

<u>Names:</u>	<u>Meaning:</u>
Joseph	Beloved
Mary	Yahweh is gracious
Michael	Princess
David	He who is like God
James	Let God add
Sarah	Derived from an Egyptian word for "beloved"
John	He will trip by the heel

Take feedback from students and correct their responses using the answer sheet.

From the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, people were asking 'who is this?' (Mark 1:27) Jesus seems to have been reluctant at first to encourage speculation about his identity (Mark 3:12). But Jesus could not stop people from wondering about him. Eventually he asked his disciples 'Who do you say I am?'

In the different parts of the New Testament various titles are given to Jesus to express his identity. Some of these Jesus referred to himself and others are titles, which his followers gave to him. In the first Christian communities the treasury of titles that had been built up were used to show the meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection and to present this in a way that was appealing to particular groups.

Research information on the following titles for Jesus- Son of Man, Son of God, New Creation, Christ/Messiah. (e.g. "Keeping Hope Alive" by D.A. Lane and "Topic 7G Jesus The Christ" – New Zealand National Centre for Religious Studies)

Discuss the following questions:

- Which of these titles did Jesus use to describe himself?
- Which of these titles did the first Christians use to describe Jesus?
- What does the title say the first Christians believed about Jesus?
- Which of the titles do you find most appealing? Why?

Student Assignment:

Design an advertising Poster / Flyer using one of these titles which would provoke interest in Jesus for people today.

Resources which teachers have suggested include:

A New Commandment, The Light of the World Series 1 – Gill and Macmillan Chapter 30

A Time to Live New Christian Way Series 3 Veritas, pages 45, 47, 53, 66-70 and 144-145.

According to your word, Brid Greville, Chapter 4

Acts: Church on the Move Leader's Guide by C. Nystrom

All About Faith 1 Gill and Macmillan Series, pages 136-139 and 145-147.

All About Faith 2 Gill and Macmillan Series, pages 175, and 194-196.

Believe the Good News, The Light of the World Series 2 – Gill and Macmillan Chapter 25

Community of Faith Veritas, pages 47-50, and 52-55.

Community of Hope Veritas, pages 7-12.

Cyberclass junior certificate year one, Scholastech pages 46-52.

Jesus and You -J. Finley & M. Pennock

Jesus of History Christ of Faith, Thomas Zanzig

Jesus The Christ - New Zealand National Centre for Religious Studies

Keeping Hope Alive - D.A. Lane

Logos.

Love One Another New Christian Way Series 1, Veritas, pages 154-158, 162-164, and 176.

Read the New Testament, Etienne Charpentier. SCM Press

Show Us The Way New Christian Way Series 2 Veritas, pages 130-138, 195,197-198 and 201-202.

Teach Me Your Ways, The Light of the World Series 3 – Gill and Macmillan Chapter 31 & 32

Student Work : STEPHEN STORY (adapted from Acts6:8-7:60)

Reader 1: Stephen, a man richly blessed by God and full of power, performed great miracles and wonders among the people. But he was opposed by some men who were members of the synagogue. They and other Jews started arguing with Stephen. But the Spirit gave Stephen such wisdom that when he spoke, they could not refute him. So they bribed some men to say,

Reader 2: "We heard him speaking against Moses and against God!"

Reader 1: In this way they stirred up the people, the elders, and the teachers of the Law: They seized Stephen and took him before the Council. Then they brought in some men to tell lies about him.

Reader 3: "This man, is always talking against our sacred Temple and the Law of Moses. We heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will tear down the Temple and change all the customs which have come down to us from Moses!"

Reader 1: All those sitting in the Council fixed their eyes on Stephen and saw that his face looked like the face of an angel. The High Priest asked Stephen,

Reader 4: "Is this true?"

Reader 1: Stephen answered,

Reader 5: Brothers and fathers, listen to me. Before our ancestor Abraham had gone to live in Haran, the God of glory appeared to him in Mesopotamia and said to him, 'Leave your family and country and go to the land that I will show you. God made him move to this land where you now live. God did not then give Abraham any part of it, but God promised to give it to him, and that it would belong to him and to his descendants. Then God gave Abraham the ceremony of

circumcision as a sign of the covenant. So Abraham circumcised Isaac a week after he was born; Isaac circumcised his son Jacob, and Jacob circumcised his twelve sons, the famous ancestors of our race. Jacob's sons became jealous of their brother Joseph and sold him to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him and brought him safely through all his troubles and the king made Joseph governor over the country and the royal household.

Then there was a famine all over Egypt and Canaan, which caused much suffering. Our ancestors could not find any food, and when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent his sons, our ancestors, on their first visit there. On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and the king of Egypt came to know about Joseph's family. So Joseph sent a message to his father Jacob, telling him to come to Egypt. A king who did not know about Joseph began to rule in Egypt. He tricked our ancestors and was cruel to them, forcing them to put their babies out of their homes, so that they would die. It was at this time that Moses was born. The king's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. When Moses saw one of the Israelites being ill-treated by an Egyptian, he went to his help and took revenge on the Egyptian by killing him. The next day he saw two Israelites fighting, and he tried to make peace between them. 'Listen, men,' he said, 'you are fellow- Israelites; why are you fighting like this? But the one who was ill-treating the other pushed Moses aside. 'Who made you ruler and judge over us?' he asked. 'Do you want to kill me, just as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?'

When Moses heard this, he fled from Egypt and went to live in the land of Midian. After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. He heard the Lord's voice: I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Take your sandals off, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have seen the cruel suffering of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groans, and I have come down to set them free. Come now I will send you to Egypt.

Moses is the one who was rejected by the people of Israel. 'Who made you ruler and judge over us?' they asked. He is the one whom God sent to rule the people and set them free. He led the people out of Egypt, performing miracles and wonders in Egypt and at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert. Moses is the one who said to the people of Israel: 'God will send you a prophet, just as he sent me, and he will be one of your own people.' He is the one who was with the people of Israel assembled in the desert; he was there with our ancestors and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and he received God's living messages to pass on to us. But our ancestors refused to obey him; they pushed him aside and wished that they could go back to Egypt.

Our ancestors had the Tent of God's presence with them in the desert. But it was Solomon who built him a house. But the Most High God does not live in houses built by men as the prophet says, 'Heaven is my throne, says the Lord, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house would you build for me? Where is the place for me to live in? So did not I myself make all these things?' "How stubborn you are!" How heathen your hearts, how deaf you are to God's message! You are just like your ancestors: you too have always resisted the Holy Spirit! Was there any prophet that your ancestors did not persecute? They killed God's messengers, who long ago announced the coming of his righteous Servant. And now you have betrayed and murdered him. You are the ones who received God's law, that was handed down by angels yet you have not obeyed it I "

Reader 1: As the members of the Council listened to Stephen, they became furious and ground their teeth at him in anger. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw God's glory and Jesus standing at the right hand side of God.

Reader 5: Look! I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right-hand side of God!

Reader 1: With a loud cry the members of the Council covered their ears with their hands. Then they all rushed at him at once, threw him out of the city, and stoned him. They kept on stoning Stephen as he called out to the Lord,

Reader 5: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! Lord! Do not remember this sin against them!

Reader 1: He said this and died.

Student Work: THE CONVERSION OF SAUL (Acts of the Apostles 9:1-20, 26, 28.)

Narrator: In the mean time Saul kept up his violent threats of murder against the followers of the Lord. He went to the High Priest and asked for letters of introduction to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he should find there any followers of the Way of the Lord, he would be able to arrest them, both men and women, and bring them back to Jerusalem.

As Saul was coming near the city of Damascus, suddenly a light from the sky flashed round him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him,

The Lord: Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?

Saul: Who are you?

The Lord: I am Jesus, whom you persecute. But get up and go into the city, where you will be told what you must do.

Narrator: The men who were travelling with Saul had stopped, not saying a word; they heard the voice but could not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground and opened his eyes, but could not see a thing. So they took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. For three days he was not able to see, and during that time he did not eat or drink anything.

There was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. He had a vision in which the lord said to him,

The Lord: Ananias!

Ananias: Here I am Lord.

The Lord: Get ready and go to Straight Street, and at the house of Judas ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying and in his vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him so that he might see again.

Ananias: Lord many people have told me about this man and about all the terrible things he has done to your people in Jerusalem. And he has come to Damascus with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who worship you.

The Lord: Go because I have chosen him to serve me, to make my name known to Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel. And I myself will show him all that he must suffer for my sake.

Narrator: So Ananias went to the house where Saul was, and placed his hands on him.

Ananias: Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me – Jesus himself, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here. He sent me so that you might see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Narrator: At once something like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he was able to see again. He stood up and was baptized; and after he had eaten, his strength came back.

Saul stayed for a few days with the believers in Damascus. He went straight to the synagogues and began to preach that Jesus was the Son of God.

Saul went to Jerusalem and joined the disciples. He stayed with them and went all over Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.