

*JUNIOR CERTIFICATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICE*  
**SAMPLE LESSON PLAN RESOURCE MATERIALS FOR ELEMENTS OF SYLLABUS**

**SECTION D: THE QUESTION OF FAITH PART 2: THE BEGINNINGS OF FAITH**

<b>Syllabus Aim</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the beginning of faith in the asking of questions and the search for answers</li> <li>• To recognise expressions of human questioning in modern culture</li> </ul>
<b>Syllabus Objective</b>	<p>As a result of studying this section, the students should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be aware of the facility for questioning as an essential human characteristic</li> <li>• be able to name the common human questions of meaning and to articulate their own questions of meaning</li> </ul>
<b>Key Concepts</b>	Reflection, awe and wonder, question /questioner, search, meaning
<b>Description of Content</b>	Asking questions; looking at the questions human beings ask at different stages of their development and their expressions in culture, especially in youth culture. Finding answers; sources of meaning in human life (such as family, work, music, money, success, relationships, etc.)
<b>Methodology</b>	A variety of methodologies are used including pair/group work, self-assessment activities, presentation and interpretation of data, simulation games, and discussion. These methodologies are used so as to give students an opportunity to identify, explore and clarify the concepts and to structure and elaborate on their existing knowledge and understanding of the content.

**Procedure**

***Introduction Asking questions; Finding answers – Reflection***

Read the poem “Time to Stand and Stare” in Leisure” by H.W. Davies and discuss:

1. What do you think the poet is trying to say about life?
2. The poet uses a lot of images from nature. Why do you think this is so?
3. Do you agree with the poets words: “A poor life this if, full of care we have no time to stand and stare”? Why / why not?

or

*A Stillness Game*

Introduce this as a game, the aim of which is to sit still for a short time and to pay attention to what they see and hear. Instructions:

1. Find a spot on your own. (This can take place in class with students sitting separately or students could go to a large room / assembly area)
2. Remain in complete silence and stillness for 3-5 minutes, until summoned by your teacher.
3. During this time identify in your mind what you can see/hear inside and outside the room.

When the period of stillness is over, ask students to divide a page in their copies into two columns: “What I saw” and “What I heard”. Give students time to list what they observed under these headings.

Take feedback discussing the following questions:

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- What did you experience during the time of silence?
- Do you think that we need time out regularly or occasionally to be silent, to reflect? Why/Why not?

Conclude by emphasising the benefits of taking time for reflection in life.

***Asking questions; Finding answers – Awe and Wonder***

Sometimes people are able to look back and recognise that a certain experience filled them with awe and wonder and made them ask questions about the mystery of life. Read an account of such an experience in “The Golden String” by Bede Griffiths in Topic 3G Recognising Signs of God – New Zealand National Centre for Religious Studies. Discuss:

1. What did the author notice for the first time that evening?
2. What feelings came over him as he walked alone that evening?
3. Why do you think he experienced these feelings?

or

Read the extract “Learning to Sail” in *Student Work: AWE AND WONDER* and discuss:

1. What did the author notice for the first time as she sailed towards the quay?
2. How did the beauty of the evening affect her?
3. What questions did she reflect on?

Complete the Student Work Assignment: REFLECTIONS and take feedback from the students.

*Written Assignment:*

1. Describe a time when you were filled with awe and wonder about life.
2. What questions did this experience cause you to ask?

Or Interview someone you know well and ask them the following questions:

1. What kinds of experiences fill you with awe and wonder about life?
2. What kind of questions do these experiences cause you to ask?

***Looking at the questions human beings ask at different stages of their development***

Distribute *Student Work: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – BOARD GAME* to each pair/small group of students. Explain the rules and draw in snakes and ladders where fitting. Give students time to play the game i.e. Roll a dice and move the markers of the players around the squares. When the marker is placed at the end of a ladder the player moves up to the square at the top of the ladder. When the marker is placed in a square at the tongue of the snake the player moves down to the square at the tail of the snake. The first marker to reach Finish is the winner.

When the students have finished the game give them time to complete the following:

*Written Assignment:*

- 1) Write out all the questions asked in the QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS BOARD GAME
- 2) From your list, (a) identify one question, which a small child might ask.  
(b) identify one question which a teenager might ask  
(c) identify one question which an adult might ask.
- 3) One of the main differences between human beings and other creatures is that human beings ask questions. Do you agree or disagree with this statement. Give a reason for your answer.

Take feedback from the students on their written assignment and conclude that questioning is a human characteristic.

Distribute *Student Work: QUESTIONS I ASK* and give students time to complete the Research Assignment. When they have finished this task, get them to discuss and answer the following questions in pairs/small groups of 4 or 5:

1. Which questions do you ask very often?
2. Which questions do you rarely or never ask?
3. Choose two questions from the list that you think are very difficult to answer? Give a reason for your choice.
4. What do you think are the two most important questions to try and answer? Give a reason for your choice.

Take feedback from the class and conclude by noting that some of the questions which people view as difficult or important are questions about the meaning of life.

Or Present students with information on human questions of meaning (e.g Man’s Search for Meaning by V. E. Frankl. from Reason to Believe-The Believing and Living Series 1, p. 43) and discuss:

1. How are human beings different to other creatures?
2. Why do human beings ask questions?
3. Identify some questions of meaning that human beings ask.

4. Why do human beings ask questions about the meaning and purpose of life?

*Written Assignment:*

- Look at *Student Work: QUESTIONS I ASK* and write out the questions of meaning stated there.
- List the questions of meaning that you ask?

Take feedback from the students.

Read the “Poem From A Three Year Old” by B. Kennelly (in Show Us The Way, New Christian Way Series 2 Veritas, pp. 6-7) and discuss the following questions:

1. How many questions are asked by the three year old?
2. What are these questions about?
3. Which of these questions are about the meaning of life?
4. What questions of meaning do small children ask?
5. What questions of meaning do teenagers ask?
6. What questions of meaning do you ask?
7. What questions of meaning do adults ask?

Take feedback from the students and give them time to complete the following:

*Written Assignment*

Write your own poem containing the questions of meaning a fourteen-year-old old or an adult might ask.

Take feedback from the students highlighting any similarities or differences between the questions of meaning people ask.

### *Looking at the questions human beings ask..... and their expressions in culture, especially in youth culture*

*Group Work Research:* Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5. Assign each group one of the tasks from *Student Work: QUESTIONS OF MEANING IN YOUTH CULTURE – GROUP WORK*.

When the tasks are completed take feedback from each group, noting the questions of meaning on the chalkboard. Remind the students that these questions of meaning are expressed in teenage music, films, books/magazines and TV programmes.

As a follow up discuss these questions with the whole class:

- (a) Which of these questions are also questions of meaning for adults?
- (b) What other questions of meaning do adults ask?
- (c) What books/films/songs/TV programmes express these adult questions of meaning?
- (d) What answers do these books/films/songs/TV programmes give to these adult questions of meaning?

*Written Assignments:*

1. Write a paragraph on questions of meaning in teenage music, films, books/magazines and TV programmes.
2. Identify two questions of meaning asked by adults. In each case name some books/films/songs/TV programmes that express these.

### *Finding Answers: sources of meaning in human life*

*Sources of Meaning Game:* Divide the class into groups of four or five. Give to each group a pack of cards that have been cut out from *Student Work: SOURCES OF MEANING IN HUMAN LIFE*. Explain the rules of the game as follows:

1. Each player is to be dealt four cards from the pack. The rest of the pack is to remain face down.
2. The aim of the game is for each player to end up with four cards that represent the four most important sources of meaning in their lives i.e. the four most important things that make their lives meaningful.

3. When the game begins, each player draws a card from the pack. He/she may exchange it for one in their hand or put it at the bottom of the pack. If a player draws a blank card he/she may write any source of meaning on it. When a player is happy with his/her hand, he/she may stop playing. The game ends when each player has got the best possible hand.

When the game is over, invite the players to organise the sources of meaning in their hand in terms of priority (most important, second most important, etc). When they have done this, allow sufficient time for each player to present his/her sources of meaning to the group. Then, ask the players to discuss the following questions in their groups:

- § Were you surprised by the group's choice of sources of meaning? Explain.
- § Were the sources of meaning that each of you chose similar or different?
- § What were the most important sources of meaning in your group?

(adapted from the Values Game by G. Brennan, Logos [www.materdei.ie](http://www.materdei.ie))

Take feedback from each group. Conclude by noting the most important sources of meaning for the class.

Or Give students time to complete *Student Work: FINDING ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OF MEANING*.

Take feedback regarding the number of students who agreed or agreed totally with each statement. Note their responses on the chalkboard or overhead.

Discuss:

1. Are you surprised by the class' response to the list of possible answers to questions of meaning? Explain.
2. From these results, what are the most important sources of meaning for your class?
3. What are the least important sources of meaning for your class?

*Written Assignment* - Finish each of the following sentences:

Two important sources of meaning for me are ...

Two important sources of meaning for my class are ...

Or Present students with statistical data on contemporary sources of meaning from recent surveys (e.g. on the deepest long-term wishes of young educated Irish adults in "Young Educated Adults: A Survey", *Doctrine and Life*, January 2002, p. 51)

Written Assignments:

1. Are you surprised by the results of this survey? Explain.
2. Name the three things that give most meaning to life for the group surveyed.
3. If a survey was done of teenagers' deepest wishes, would the results be the same as here? Explain.
4. Name three things that give meaning to life for you.

Take feedback and conclude by highlighting some common sources of meaning.

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*Resources which teachers have suggested include:*

Community of Hope Veritas, pages 73-83.

Logos, [www.materdei.ie](http://www.materdei.ie)

*Man's Search for Meaning*. V. E. Frankl, New York: Washington Square Press, 1984.

*Reason to Believe*. The Believing and Living Series 1. Veritas Publications

Young Educated Adults: A Survey, *Doctrine and Life*, Vol 52, Jan. 2002.

Show Us The Way New Christian Way Series 2 Veritas, pages 6-7.

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### *Student Work: Wonder & Awe*

#### *Learning to Sail*

It had all been worth it. For four days I had struggled to get the hang of sailing. There had been days when I had spent more time in the water than on the boat and I had wondered if I would ever get to grips with this new sport. But, today it had all come together. Everything had fallen into place and I had been able to sail around the island without capsizing once. For the first time, as we sailed towards the quay I became aware of the beauty around me: of the evening sun bathing the mountains in a soft

light, of the seagulls bobbing up and down on the gentle waves, of the elegance of the sailing boats around me as we sailed for home. All that beauty filled me with awe and wonder. As I looked around I began to reflect: Who creates this beauty? Is it nature or is it God? As I sailed for home I began to question where the beauty in our world came from.

**Assignment: REFLECTIONS**

People sometimes say that personal experiences have made them wonder and reflect on the mystery of life. Mark X beside the experiences listed below that made you reflect on mystery in life.

<i>Life Experiences:</i>		<i>Life Experiences:</i>	
Beauty of nature		Sickness	
Reading a book		Holidays	
Listening to music		Learning a new hobby	
A Birth		Being involved in a car accident	
A Death		A friendship breaking up	
Other please state:		Other please state:	

Describe how two of these experiences made you reflect on life.

<i>Life Experiences:</i>	<i>Reflection on Experience:</i>

*Student Work: QUESTIONS I ASK*

**Research Assignment:**

Below are a list of questions that adolescents sometimes ask. Indicate how often you ask each question by circling the appropriate number opposite.

- 1 = I ask this question very often
- 2 = I ask this question often
- 3 = I sometimes ask this question
- 4 = I rarely ask this question
- 5 = I never ask this question

**Questions**

**How Often I Ask Each Question**

What time is it?	1	2	3	4	5
What film will we go to?	1	2	3	4	5
Who am I?	1	2	3	4	5
What is life about?	1	2	3	4	5
How much are the tickets for the concert?	1	2	3	4	5
Why do I have to go to school?	1	2	3	4	5
Why do people suffer?	1	2	3	4	5
What happens to people when they die?	1	2	3	4	5
What do I want to do with my life?	1	2	3	4	5
What will make me happy?	1	2	3	4	5
What homework do we have?	1	2	3	4	5
Should I leave school straight after Junior Cert?	1	2	3	4	5
Should I do Transition Year?	1	2	3	4	5
What time do I have to be home at?	1	2	3	4	5
Can I have some money?	1	2	3	4	5
Should I get a job straight after school?	1	2	3	4	5

Discuss and answer the following questions with your partner/group:

1. Which questions do you ask very often?
2. Which questions do you rarely or never ask?
3. Choose two questions from the list that you think are very difficult to answer?  
Give a reason for your choice.
4. What do you think are the two most important questions to try and answer?  
Give a reason for your choice.

*Student Work: QUESTIONS OF MEANING IN YOUTH CULTURE – GROUP WORK*

<p><b>Task 1</b> In your group, discuss and answer the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Name two recently released films that members of your group have seen.</li> <li>2. In each case, say briefly what the film is about.</li> <li>3. What questions of meaning are raised in each film?</li> <li>4. What answers does each film give to these questions of meaning?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Task 2</b> In your group, discuss and answer the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Name two songs from this week's Charts.</li> <li>2. In each case, say briefly what the song is about.</li> <li>3. What questions of meaning are raised in each song?</li> <li>4. What answers does each song give to these questions of meaning?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Task 3</b> In your group, discuss and answer the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Name two programmes that members of your group have watched recently on TV.</li> <li>2. In each case, say briefly what the programme was about.</li> <li>3. What questions of meaning are raised in each programme?</li> <li>4. What answers does each programme give to these questions of meaning?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Task 4</b> In your group, discuss and answer the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Name two magazines/books that members of your group have read recently.</li> <li>2. In each case, say briefly what the magazine/book was about.</li> <li>3. What questions of meaning are raised in each book/magazine?</li> <li>4. What answers does each book/magazine give to these questions of meaning?</li> </ol>

*Student Work: SOURCES OF MEANING IN HUMAN LIFE.*

My friends	Pleasure	My family
Success	Good results	Books
Good health	Fame	Laughter
Good looks	<i>Music</i>	Being cared for
Cool clothes	Sport	A good education
Religion	Popularity	Poetry
Respect for others	Money	Concern for others
Working for justice	Fame	My boyfriend/girlfriend
Being independent	God	Being free
Intelligence	<i>Making the world a better place</i>	Travel
Other Please state:	Other Please state:	Other Please state:

(adapted from the Values Game by G. Brennan, Logos [www.materdei.ie](http://www.materdei.ie))

*Student Work: FINDING ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OF MEANING*

Below are some possible answers to questions of meaning. Read each source of meaning and circle the number that best expresses your opinion of that source.

- 1 = I totally agree with this statement                      4 = I disagree with this statement  
 2 = I agree with this statement                                5 = I disagree totally with this statement  
 3 = I am undecided about this statement

The important thing is to be <i>popular</i> . If I can fit in I will be happy	1	2	3	4	5
The important thing is to <i>look out for myself</i> . I must take care of myself first and last	1	2	3	4	5
A <i>good education</i> is very important in life. I must work hard to get into college.	1	2	3	4	5
The important thing is to <i>have as much fun as possible</i> . The main thing in life is to always feel good.	1	2	3	4	5
The most important thing in my life is my <i>Relationship with family and friends</i> . Without them life would have no meaning.	1	2	3	4	5
My aim in life is to make as much <i>money</i> as possible. Wealth is the key to happiness.	1	2	3	4	5
Above all, I want to <i>be successful</i> in whatever I'm doing. Failure is to be avoided at all	1	2	3	4	5

costs.	
I live for my <i>work</i> . It gives meaning to my life.	1 2 3 4 5
<i>Music</i> is the most important thing in my life. Whenever life is getting me down I turn to music.	1 2 3 4 5
My religion is the most important thing in my life. Knowing God loves me gives me the confidence to face everything.	1 2 3 4 5
Life is about helping others especially the weak. It is important to work for justice.	1 2 3 4 5
Other (Please State)	1 2 3 4 5

*Written Assignment:* Finish each of the following sentences:

Two important sources of meaning for me are .....

Two important sources of meaning for my class are.....

### Student Work: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – BOARD GAME

*Instructions:* Draw in snakes and ladders where fitting. Roll a dice and move the markers of the players around the squares. When the marker is placed at the end of a ladder the player moves up to the square at the top of the ladder. When the marker is placed in a square at the tongue of the snake the player moves down to the square at the tail of the snake. The first marker to reach Finish is the winner.

37	38 You show no signs of curiosity when you hear that your best friend has won a fantastic prize.	9	40 There is an interesting programme on different lifestyles on TV but you flick on to another channel.	41	42 <b>FINISH</b>
36 You show no signs of curiosity when you hear that your Mom is expecting a baby.	35	34 It's time to decide what you want to do after school and you ask yourself: "What will make me happy? What do I really want to do with my life?"	33	32 A relative close to you dies and you wonder: What is life about?	31
25	26	27 You go along with your friend's plan to skip school, without wondering: "What should I do?"	28 You follow your friends into Transition Year and never think: "Do I really want to do this course?"	29	30
24	23 You're friends are planning a night out and you ask: "Where will we meet?"	22 You're tired and you grumble "Why do I have to go to school anyway?"	21	20	19 At the end of an interesting talk on alcohol abuse, you fail to ask any questions.
13 You're waiting on your Dad, and you ask: "What time did he say he would be home?"	14	15 You show no interest when the Career Guidance teacher talks to you about the subjects you might choose for Junior Certificate.	16 You're delighted to hear your favourite band is playing in Slane, and ask: "How much do the tickets cost?"	17	18
12	11 Your dog dies and you ask: "Do dogs go to heaven?"	10 You see a rainbow for the first time, but pay it no attention	9 You're preparing to play for your school team and you ask: "Mom, Where's my gear?"	8	7 You see a train for the first time, but are not the least bit curious
1 <b>START</b>	2 You see a small baby with its Mummy and ask "Mom, where did I come from?"	3	4	5 Your Uncle George dies and you ask: "Where do dead people go?"	6