

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

SECTION D: THE QUESTION OF FAITH PART 3: THE GROWTH OF FAITH

Syllabus Aim	To identify the characteristics of religious faith
Syllabus Objective	As a result of studying this section, the students should: 1. have an awareness of the variety of images of God and their sources 2. be able to articulate their own images of God and to identify their sources 3. differentiate between the faith of the child and that of the adult and have a sense of the development from one to the other.
Key Concepts	Trust; faith; childhood faith; personal faith; mature faith; stages of faith.
Description of Content	Imaging God: images of God from a wide variety of sources, including the student's own experience. The search for God from childhood to adulthood: from simple human trust to religious commitment – stages of faith
Methodology	A variety of methodologies are used including presentation and interpretation of data, group work, self-assessment activities and teacher-directed visualisation. 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.

Introduction

Allow students time to study pictures of different images of God or the picture and accompanying dialogue in *Teach Me Your Ways*, The Light of the World Series 3, Gill & Macmillan and discuss:

1. Do you think that the mother is correct when she says that no one knows what God looks like? Why/Why not?
2. In your opinion, from where might the daughter get her image of God?

Conclude by noting that many people have an image or mental picture of God. Their image of God has been shaped by a variety of sources e.g. parents, teachers, and communities of faith, literature, music, art, film.

Imaging God: images of God from a wide variety of sources

Using Student Work: IMAGES OF GOD explain that these are different ideas about what God is like. Allow the students, individually or in pairs, time to look at the pictures and read the texts. Discuss:

1. What image of God has each of these people?
2. In each case, say from where they might have got that image of God.
3. Draw or write about your own image of God
4. From where do you think you got this image of God?

When the students have completed the questions, take feedback and probe their answers so that they may identify as many sources as possible. Alternatively using *Student Work: AN IMAGE OF GOD* have students identify from those listed, the sources which could have influenced each of these images of God.

OR *Group Work Activity (Materials required: Poster Paper, Markers, List of week's Top 40 charts, Collection of pictures of God)* Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 and give to each group a large sheet of poster paper and marker. Ask each group to select a recorder and presenter. Assign each group one of the following tasks:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1 Film | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name one film in which you find an image of God. • Describe the image of God and identify what has shaped this image of God. |
| 2 Music | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the week's Chart Hits and name those songs in which you find an image of God. • In each case, describe the image of God and identify what has shaped this image of God. |
| 3 TV | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name one TV programme that you watch and in which you find an image of God. • Describe the image of God and identify what has shaped this image of God. |
| 4 Literature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name one magazine/book that members of your group have read and in which you find an image of God. • Describe the image of God and identify what has shaped this image of God. |

5 Art

- Describe what you see in the painting e.g. Rembrandt – The Return of the Prodigal Son?
- What image of God comes across to the viewer from the painting?
- Can you think of any images or stories that might have influenced the painting?

When the tasks are completed have each group place their sheet of poster paper on the wall. Take feedback from each presenter. Conclude by highlighting the variety of images of God in society and their sources.

Or *Scripture Assignments* – Divide the students into pairs or small groups. Give each a copy of one of the following Old Testament/Hebrew Scripture references:

Psalm 7: 8	Deuteronomy 32:11	Isaiah 66:12-13	Psalm 23:1-2	Psalm 18:2
Exodus 15:1	Psalm 47:5-8	Malachi 2:10	Hosea 14:5	Exodus 13:21-22

Assignment:

1. Read the scripture reference and match it with one of the following images: a rock, an eagle, the dew, a fire, a mother, a father, a judge, a king, a shepherd, a saviour.
2. Explain what using the image described in the scripture reference says about God.

Take feedback from the students and correct their answers with reference to the following Answer Sheet:

Reference:	Image	Explanation:
Psalm 18:2	A rock	God is like a place of refuge - a place where the person is safe.
Deuteronomy 32:11	An eagle	God prevents any harm coming to Israel in the same way as an eagle prevents its young from falling.
Hosea 14:5	The dew	Like the dew that causes the lily to blossom, God renews Israel
Exodus 13:21-22	A fire	God cares for and guides the people of Israel
Isaiah 66:12-13	A mother	Like a mother, God comforts the people of Israel.
Malachi 2:10	A father	God is like a father in that he created each one of us.
Psalm 7:8	A judge	God judges the individual person
Psalm 47:5-8	A king	God rules over all the nations and over the entire earth
Psalm 23:1-2	A shepherd	God provides for the person in the same way as a shepherd for his flock
Exodus 15:1	A saviour	God helps the people of Israel escape from the Egyptians

(adapted from *Religion for Living 3*)

As a follow up give students *one or more* of the following assignments:

1. Which of the images of God in the Old Testament/ Hebrew Scriptures do you like the best? Why?
2. Write down your favourite scripture passage from the ones you've read. What does this passage say to you about God?
3. Where did the people of the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures get their images of God?
4. Write a paragraph on Images of God in the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures or complete *Student Word: Word Search*. Correct answers to the Word Search using the following Answer Sheet:

Z	X	C	V	B	N	K	M	A	S
J	F	H	G	F	J	L	D	S	H
S	A	V	I	O	U	R	Y	T	E
K	T	L	Q	W	D	E	W	R	P
P	H	K	I	N	G	O	I	U	H
M	E	M	U	Y	E	A	G	L	E
N	R	O	C	K	V	C	X	Z	R
Q	W	T	E	I	T	Y	U	I	D
A	S	H	D	N	G	H	J	K	L
Z	X	E	C	G	B	N	M	Q	W
F	I	R	E	U	I	O	P	A	S

OR Explain that in the Gospel of John, Jesus said, “Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father” (14:9). Christians believe that Jesus shows people most clearly what God is like. To Christians, Jesus actions and parables give a special insight into the nature of God. Divide students into pairs/small groups. Give each a

copy of one of the following New Testament references or book of Bible Stories: Matthew 20:1-16; Luke 15:11-32; Luke 15:8-10; Luke 15:4-7; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 14:15-24

Assignment: Read the scripture reference and match it with one of the following: A shepherd searching for a lost sheep; A woman searching for a lost coin; A generous landowner; A man who divides his property among his servants; A forgiving father; A man who gave a great banquet.

- Discuss:
1. What description of God is given in the reference you looked up?
 2. Explain in what way God is like the person described.
 3. Choose one of these images and draw a picture of it. Explain what it says about God

Take feedback from the students and correct their answers with reference to the following Answer Sheet:

<i>Reference:</i>	<i>Image</i>	<i>Explanation:</i>
Luke 15:4-7	A shepherd searching for a lost sheep	God's love for people is so great that God will look for those who stray and rejoice when they are found.
Luke 15:8-10	A woman searching for a lost coin	God will do almost anything to find people who are lost and will rejoice when they are found.
Matthew 20:1-16	A generous landowner	God is extremely generous – those who join his Kingdom at the last moment are given as big a welcome as those who are first at the door.
Matthew 25:14-30	A man who divides his property among his servants	God wants us to make full use of the talents and gifts we have been given.
Luke 15:11-32	A forgiving father	God is extremely forgiving and will not be content until people have returned to him.
Luke 14:15-24	A man who gave a great banquet	God invites the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame into his Kingdom.

Images of God from the student's own experience

Meditation

This exercise could be used to help the students get in touch with their own image of God. When the students are in a comfortable position and have relaxed their bodies and minds, read the following very slowly (pause at the ... to give students an opportunity to reflect): I want you to imagine yourself in a place with God. ... Where are you? ... Look around you and notice your surroundings. ... Where is God in this place? ... What is happening between yourself and God? ... What are you doing? ... What is God doing? ... What are you saying? ... What is God saying? ... What is happening between yourself and God? ...

How do you feel in this meeting? ... How does God feel about you? ... Respond to God in the way you feel is best....

(Adapted from *Partners in Faith: A Programme of Adult Faith Development*)

After the meditation, allow a few minutes of quietness. Then invite the students to take leave of the place where they have talked with God and to become aware of their present surroundings. The meditation can be followed by one of the assignments outlined below to help students express their present image of God.

OR

Picture Assignment

Draw a picture or symbol that describes your present image of God. Take feedback from students giving each time to present and describe their picture or symbol to the whole class. When all students have made their presentations and displayed their drawing discuss: What are our images of God?

Using the chalkboard present students with the following list of people or things that can shape a person's understanding of God. Brainstorm students to identify those factors, which they believe have influenced their idea of God:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sacred Texts	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pictures /Art
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music	<input type="checkbox"/>	Events in life
<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Films	<input type="checkbox"/>	Literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please state)

Take feedback from students and conclude by highlighting the variety of images and the factors that have influenced them.

Brainstorm students for answers to the questions: What does it mean to trust somebody? Think of someone you trust a great deal. How do you show that trust?

Or conduct a simulation game or role-play on trust with the students (such as one of Richard Reichert's "Self-awareness through group awareness"). When the simulation game is complete conclude by explaining that when we trust somebody we believe in him or her and know that we can depend on them.

Trust is an important element of faith. When we say that we have faith in another person, we usually mean that we trust them. Similarly, when someone says that they have faith in God, what they mean is that they trust God. In religious faith, a person puts their trust in God. A person with religious faith says "yes" to a friendship with God. DISCUSS:

What is faith?

What is religious faith?

How do people with religious faith show their trust in God?

The search for God from childhood to adulthood: from simple human trust to religious commitment - stages of faith

Read *Student Work*: JOHN'S STORY OF GROWING IN FAITH and discuss the following questions:

1. As a 7 year old how does John think of God?
2. At six, from where does John get his beliefs about God?
3. At fifteen, how has John's image of God changed?
4. What question does he not have an answer to?
5. At 25, from where does John get his beliefs about God?
6. As John grew older how did his faith in God change?

Take feedback. Conclude that as John grew older, his faith changed from being one that depended on the faith of the community to one that John chose after he had examined and made choices about his faith.

Read articles on Stages of Faith from *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* by James W. Fowler, *Logos* and *The Christian Way Book Three Teacher's Book*.

Discuss: In what ways do John's statements aged 6, 15 and 25 years reflect different stages in the development of his faith.

Resources which teachers have suggested include:

A Time to Live New Christian Way Series 3 Veritas, pages 25-34, and 36-41.

All About Faith 2 Gill and Macmillan Series, pages 44-45, 55-57, 59, 66-70, and 177-179.

Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith by James W. Fowler. San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1984.

Community of Hope Veritas, pages 84-93.

Cyberclass year one Scholastech, pages 56-57.

Logos.

Love One Another New Christian Way Series 1, Veritas, pages 11, and 13-20.

Partners in Faith: A Programme of Adult Faith Development – Columba Press, Session 3

Teach Me Your Ways, The Light of the World Series 1 – Gill and Macmillan, Chapter 176

The Christian Way Book Three Teacher's Book and Resource Material

Understanding Catholic Christianity– St. Mary's Press, Chapter 2

Student Work: IMAGES OF GOD

Below are different peoples ideas about what God is like. Study the pictures and read the texts before you answer the questions.



I think God looks like a normal human except he would probably have a beard and a moustache and dark brown hair and holy medal. He would have a long cloak black on the inside and red on the outside. He would be about five foot six inches and he would be smiling. He makes good thinks. But sometimes when he is angry he punishes people for doing bad. I think he wears brown sandals. - Derek 9 Years

God is a spirit. God is not a She or a he. God is a it. God made the world in seven days. The world is really wonderful. - Paul 6 years

The image I have of God is of a guide, because I know that he'll be there whenever I need him. Sometimes when I pray I'm kind of frightened because I can't see him and I feel silly talking to someone In mid air - Jacqueline 16 years

Student Work: WORD SEARCH - IMAGES OF GOD IN OLD TESTAMENT/HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Find the following words in the word search:

*rock
eagle*

*dew
judge*

*fire
king*

*mother
shepherd*

*father
Saviour*

Z	X	C	V	B	N	K	M	A	S
J	F	H	G	F	J	L	D	S	H
S	A	V	I	O	U	R	Y	T	E
K	T	L	Q	W	D	E	W	R	P
P	H	K	I	N	G	O	I	U	H
M	E	M	U	Y	E	A	G	L	E
N	R	O	C	K	V	C	X	Z	R
Q	W	T	E	I	T	Y	U	I	D
A	S	H	D	N	G	H	J	K	L
Z	X	E	C	G	B	N	M	Q	W
F	I	R	E	U	I	O	P	A	S

Student Work: JOHN'S STORY OF GROWING IN FAITH

John – 7 yr Child

John –15 yr Adolescent

John – 25 yrs Adult

<i>I guess God is like Jesus, sort ofWe believe that God is, like, in three parts, Father, Son, and um ..., Spirit – Holy Spirit. But I picture God mostly as Jesus. But sometimes I sort of think of God as an old man, and sort of like a judge or ruler</i>	<i>I don't think of God anymore as an old man, or even a person, anymore. Instead, I have this deep feeling that God is a kind of friend, a presence that loves me, cares for me, and really knows me. Yet, I still don't understand how this loving God allows people to suffer.</i>	<i>It is important to me to be able to know and state my beliefs and values. It's not enough to go along with what my parents and religion have taught me. So I have thought about my religious beliefs and worked out what I believe about God. Now I am working to put my beliefs into action.</i>
--	---	--