

LESSON 30: The Search for Truth

AIM

To help the learners understand that the one Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth is at work in all religions as they search for truth (2.5.3, 2.5.4, 2.5.5)



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bibles (2)
- * Copies of the worksheet (4)(5) ⇨
- * Words of an “I Believe” song (9)

OUTCOME

Learners consider religions as ways of searching for Truth.

TEACHER BACKGROUND

We tend by nature towards the truth. We are obliged to honour and bear witness to it: “It is in accordance with our dignity that all of us, because we are persons... are both impelled by our nature and bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. We are also bound to adhere to the truth once we come to know it and direct our whole lives in accordance with the demands of truth. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 2467)

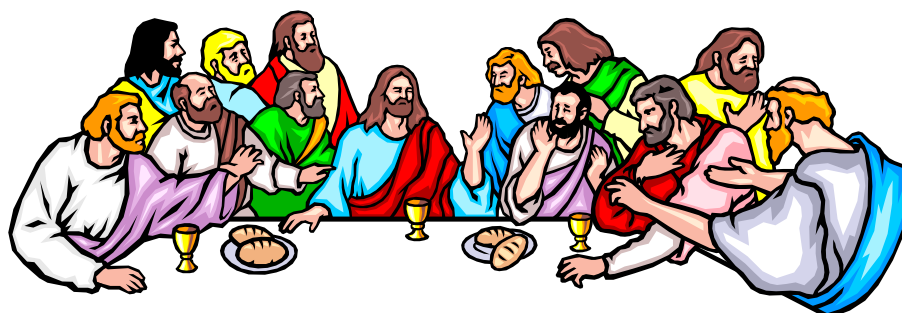
LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 Discuss the idea and experience of **searching** with the learners. What feelings go with it? What difficulties arise? What helps one in a search?
- 2 **Scripture** acknowledge that we are searching for truth and gives us the assurance that God helps us in our search. Read and discuss the following passages: [Matthew 7:7] [John 14:15-17, 26], [John 8:32]
- 3 **Beliefs** are like signposts which guide our search. They point us in the direction we think truth is to be found. Ask the learners to write a few sentences, each beginning, “I believe...” Give them time to share some of their writing.
- 4 The Christian Church, on its journey, has put together its guide to truth that we call the **Apostles’ Creed**. This formula is said every Sunday in the Catholic Church. It reflects what the apostles taught from the beginning, and it has twelve sections or articles in their memory. Invite the class to recite the creed together slowly and reflectively. ⇨
- 5 In order to come to **the truth ourselves**, we need to make sense of the creed in our own lives and situations. So we think about its statements, in order to say them in our own words. On the worksheet are a number of “I believe” statements from Christians around the world. ⇨ Invite the learners to read them. How do they compare with the statements they made in ACTIVITY 3?
- 6 Take **an article** of the Apostles’ Creed, such as “I believe in God the Father, creator of heaven and earth” or “I believe in the Holy Spirit”. Help the learners to see that each of the articles are short summaries of belief. Books can be and have been written about each one of them to draw out their meaning. Make a mind map of a chosen article to illustrate this, drawing ideas from the learners and adding some yourself.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 7 All religions search for truth and arrive at statements of belief that help their members in their search. The Buddha taught the **Four Noble Truths** as follows:
- **FIRST** *Dukkha* happens everywhere all the time. Everything in the world is *dukkha*, because nothing is perfect.
 - **SECOND** *Dukkha* is caused by greed and selfishness. This selfishness is the cause of suffering in the world.
 - **THIRD** Greed and selfishness can be stopped.
 - **FOURTH** The way to stop selfishness is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path which shows people how they should live.
- (*Dukkha* means ‘things being imperfect’.)
- 8 Ask the learners to research the **Noble Eightfold Path** of Buddhism.
- 9 Take any **“I Believe” song** and study its words, comparing it with the Apostles’ Creed.
- 10 **New Year** is important and symbolic for various religions and cultures. Learners do a project on different calendars and their New Year celebrations. Research Chinese New Year, Hindu, Muslim and Jewish traditions around a New Year.
- 11 **Walking tour:** As we know, the world is a global village and people of many different cultures and religions live side by side. If you walk through any city in South Africa you will find places of worship of all kinds. Help the learners to identify different Christian churches, Muslim mosques, Hindu temples, Jewish synagogues, and any other places that are used for religious purposes. Some traditional religions or African Independent Christian churches do not worship God in a building but in a tent or outside in a field or by a river.

I Believe



THE APOSTLES' CREED

WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE

- I I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
- II I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
- III He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
- IV He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
- V He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.
- VI He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
- VII He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
- VIII I believe in the Holy Spirit,
- IX the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints,
- X the forgiveness of sins,
- XI the resurrection of the body,
- XII and the life everlasting.

I believe in God, father and mother, bearer of forgiveness and tenderness, strength and hope, for all the world's poor. (Peru)

We believe in God the Son who became a man, died, rose in triumph, to reconcile all the world to God, to break down every separating barrier of race, culture or class, and to unite all people into one body. (South Africa)

I believe in one world, full of riches meant for everyone to enjoy. I believe in one race, the family of mankind (India)

We believe that we have been called to help in healing the many wounds of society and in reconciling us to each other and to God. (Northern Ireland)

We do not believe in the way things are at present, because the Kingdom of God is a new heaven and a new earth (Brazil)

I believe that behind the mist the sun waits... I believe in reason, and not in the force of arms; I believe that peace will be sown throughout the earth. (Chile)

I believe that life is great! I believe that young people will win through and form a new and better humanity. (Peru)

LESSON 31: Ecumenism

AIM

To become familiar with other local faith communities, and to understand the importance of Christian ecumenism and interreligious dialogue (14.1.7, 14.1.8)



OUTCOME

Learners are familiar with faith communities in their locality.

Learners appreciate and respect people from faith communities other than their own.




WHAT YOU NEED

- * Copies of the worksheet  (1) ⇨
- * Backup material (3)(5) ⇨
- * Background material (4) ⇨
- *  *We Are One in the Spirit* (8)

TEACHER'S NOTE

Be conscious of the life experience of the learners. It is very common for children to have parents belonging to different churches and many in the class will not be Catholic, some possibly not Christian. Ecumenism is not so much about appreciating the differences between us, as about bringing all together into one fold under one shepherd. This happens on a theological level but we can work at it on a practical every day level too. If time permits therefore do ACTIVITY 1 with the learners in order to let them reflect on their own experience. If this is not possible go to ACTIVITY 2. See *A Multi-faith and multi-denominational focus* in the Grade 7, Part I Teacher Handbook (p 14) for further reference to the Church's teaching on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 Invite the learners to read and discuss **Journal Entries** on the worksheet.  ⇨ They share their thoughts in small groups. Emphasize that this is a personal reflection not a debate about different beliefs and practices.
- 2 **Why do people belong** to a Church, religion or faith community? Is it just to feel good, or a habit? For each of us there are things in life that are really sacred, special, meaningful, important, mysterious, "don't touch" things, things worth living and dying for. Encourage the learners to think of some. Religion is to do with what is most sacred in our lives, what makes our lives worthwhile, where we experience a sense of wonder and awe, where we acknowledge and experience God. For many of us that is in an organized community like a Church. Faith is something personal, what we believe and religion is a way of expressing that faith, a public and communal expression.
- 3 **What is a Christian?** Ask the learners individually to write a response to this question. Then give them time to share. A useful checklist of common Christian beliefs and practices is given after the lesson in the **MATERIALS** below. ⇨
- 4 **How do Christians come to be divided?**

Give whatever background you think necessary to this question.

The first followers were Jews and they kept Jewish laws and customs, it was only from about 60 AD that they began to call themselves Christians. The New Testament tells how Jesus came to complete the Old Law not to do away with it. Jesus' followers believed he

was the Son of God and worshipped him and this offended the Jews who then persecuted the Christians. Christianity spread through the Jewish and then the Roman world. Poor people especially found a message of hope in Christianity. They learned more about God, the Trinity, and belief in Jesus to earn salvation. Christianity flourished and became the official religion of the Holy Roman Empire. Within the Christian community there were power struggles almost from the beginning. St Paul already had to write to the Corinthians about unity and division. At various times these power struggles caused serious divisions. For some abuse of power led to disillusionment. For others self-interest caused splits in the Church. Different trends also developed on their own. Christians fought together against Muslims during the Crusades, but after that time division amongst Christians became serious. The Reformation was an attempt to do away with some of the excesses and bad practices that had crept into the Church. Martin Luther led a break-away group in Germany. In England Henry VIII also broke away and made himself the head of the local Church. These Protestant groups split further, gradually forming different sects with their own different emphases.

5 What do Christians have in common and what are some of the main differences?

All Christians believe in Jesus Christ, “follower of Christ” is after all what the name Christian means. All Christians use the Bible. Baptism is a common practice amongst all Christian but most Christian churches do not share the Catholic belief that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist, or recognise seven sacraments. Other differences are that Protestant clergy are not expected to remain unmarried as Catholic priests and religious are. Catholics have more definite or stricter teaching on questions such as divorce and remarriage, birth control and abortion than other Churches generally do.

Catholics have always had a strong devotion to Mary which most other churches have dropped. Other specific Catholic beliefs and practices can be found in the **MATERIALS** below. ⇒

6 What is unity? Is unity achieved by all becoming clones or carbon copies of one another? Many schools and clubs have the word UNITY in their motto. Research the mottos of some schools or clubs. Discuss in small groups whether true unity is really possible? What are some of the barriers to unity?

7 The Ecumenical Movement: The word ‘ecumenical’ means ‘universal’ or ‘worldwide’. Jesus’ prayer at the Last Supper was, “Father I pray that they may be one. May they be one in me as I am in you” [John 17:11]. Since the middle of the 20th century the main Protestant and Catholic churches, recognising that the division in his Body, the Church, is against Jesus’ will, have moved towards greater unity.

8 Hymn *We are One in the Spirit.*

Discuss the words of this hymn in the small groups. Conclude by making recommendations, “The real way to Christian unity is ...”, and by singing the song.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 9 **Interview ministers** of local churches and ask them about their basic beliefs and practices.
- 10 Do a **research project** in groups on different local churches and their beliefs and practices.
- 11 Let the learners **discuss the impact** of the divided Christian Church in their own lives at home and at school.
- 12 Learners research how **Protestantism** originated.

TO REMEMBER

The word 'ecumenical' means universal. The ecumenical movement seeks ways of bringing about worldwide unity among Christian Churches.

MATERIALS

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

A Christian is a person who

- follows Christ
- believes in the Good News of Jesus
- believes in God
- believes in the Blessed Trinity
- believes that Jesus Christ is God
- believes that Jesus died for human beings
- believes that Jesus rose from the dead
- believes that Jesus now lives among us
- accepts Jesus as a personal friend and saviour
- prays to the Father as Jesus taught
- keeps the ten commandments and Jesus' commandment of love
- tries to live according to the teachings of Jesus

to love God above all

to love others as themselves

to forgive their enemies

to care for the poor and lowly

to treat all people as brothers and sisters

(Adapted from Kieran Sawyer. 1978. *Developing Faith*. Ave Maria Press)

MATERIALS

WHAT IS A CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN?

A Catholic Christian is one who, besides the things listed above

- accepts the Pope as Christ's representative on earth
- celebrates the Eucharist every Sunday with other Catholics
- believes that Jesus is present in the Eucharist
- receives holy Communion during Easter time
- confesses at least once a year
- believes that the best way to live the Christian life is within the Catholic Church

(Adapted from Kieran Sawyer. 1978. *Developing Faith*. Ave Maria Press)

Journal Entries

Read and discuss, share your thoughts in small groups.

Faith, Hope and Charity were three friends, sometimes known at school as "the unholy triplets," not so much because they were irreligious but because they were such a lively group, and often up to mischief. Faith was a Methodist and lived with her mother and two sisters in Coronationville, the big coloured township outside Johannesburg. Hope was a Catholic, a white girl living with her parents in the suburbs of Johannesburg and Charity was a Zionist from Soweto where she stayed with her grandmother. During the mid-year winter holidays the three friends joined a bigger group to spend a weekend away on a Faith Adventure Camp. This is what they wrote in their journals:

Faith: I had a wonderful time at the camp, the food was nice and we had lots of fun playing games, even a scavenger hunt. But what I really liked the most was the quiet time we had with our Bibles every evening before bed-time. Once I went outside, even though it was freezing, and counted the stars and when Hope and Charity came out too, we just sat quietly together. It was as if we were just talking with Jesus. Then after a while we got talking about God and Jesus and religion and we didn't even end up

Hope: Wow, I was really quite scared to be going away on this camp but it worked out OK. Usually I get bored at Mass and other services but Father made it all seem so interesting I didn't even mind going. I also enjoyed the videos and the discussions but the evening outside looking up at the stars with Faith and Charity was the most special. We had never talked about religion much before and that night I really got to understand them better.

Charity: My real name is Lerato, and that means "Love." I know my gran loves me but I wonder sometimes about my mom. Why did she just leave me? My friends love me too, and that night on the camp when we stood outside and looked at the stars twinkling it seemed as if God was winking at us. We just laughed when Hope talked about that. I think that was the closest we have ever felt. That and when at the prayer service we three led the singing.



SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Sometimes we don't talk to others, even our friends, about God, because we're too shy and because we don't want to get into arguments just because we're different.

But when the mood is right and we do share what is important to us we feel a great sense of closeness.

Have you ever had that experience, or an experience like the three friends? Do you wish sometimes that there weren't all these different churches, after all don't we all believe in the same God? Share your thoughts with others in your group.

LESSON 32: Interreligious Dialogue

AIM

To help learners understand the idea of inter-religious dialogue and the urgent need for it in the world (12.4.10, 12.5.12)

OUTCOME

Learners appreciate the role of interreligious dialogue as a means of addressing conflict.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Rough and polished stones (1)
- * Story (2) ⇔
- * World map, newspaper and magazine articles (4)
- * Bibles (5)

TEACHER'S NOTE

The topic of this lesson is interreligious dialogue but in the context of structural morality. The story provided considers religious tolerance and intolerance and the effects it can have on the personal lives of the learners. The situation could also be Muslim-Christian, Muslim-Jewish, anti-Jewish Zionism, the Irish Protestant-Catholic situation, or differences between main-line and fundamentalist Christian churches, or Christian and traditional churches. See general notes on the multifaith question in Part I of the Teacher Handbook for this grade.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **Dialogue:** Ask the learners to think of the round smooth stones in a river bed. How did they get that way? Over time, the effect of the moving water and the rubbing of the stones against one another, is one of polishing. If you have some semi-precious stones, display them. Similarly, they are polished in a tumbler where the same action takes place as in a river bed, but speeded up, of course. This is a good image of dialogue. The stones interact with one other. This interaction helps both in the dialogue to discover their true, inner selves!

- 2 Read or tell the following **short story**.

Rosalie, instead of enjoying the Christmas season to the full always felt kind of bothered. As a little child she had believed in Santa Claus who had come regularly to bring gifts to the family. Now, getting older she sensed the uneasiness, the false sense of jollity when Dad made jokes about the real meaning of Christmas. As a Jew married to a Christian, he was the cause of other moments like this in the family. Religion was obviously a sore point at home and as a family they seldom talked about it. Rosalie's father would sometimes comment that in proper Jewish families they would have a Sabbath meal on a Friday evening where mother would preside and they would all gather as a family to pray and share a meal with all the "right rituals". Then Mom would reply, "But we should all know that Jesus has come and all that Old Law stuff is finished with." And she'd drag the children to Church on Sunday while dad slept in.

Sometimes Rosalie felt really angry, like being a religious football. Sometimes too she could sense that her parents felt lonely, living their separate lives. She even once overheard her mom in tears saying, "I should have thought twice before I married you!" But then something strange happened. After her parents went away for a weekend together, leaving the children behind, they both came back kind of changed. They seemed closer now, as if their differences didn't seem to matter so much anymore. They gathered the children

around the table one Friday night and told them, "We've learned that we should have a commitment to each other and you, our family, first of all. God doesn't want the fact that we belong to different religions to divide and break up our family. God wants to live in our home and wants us to build a relationship with him in spite of our differences. So from now on you're going to be lucky. We're going to celebrate two lots of festivals. Just think, we'll have two New Years, the Christian and the Jewish one." Little David's eyes grew big and he piped up, "Mom, Dad, does that mean we get two Christmases too?" They all laughed and Dad hugged him close, "You wish!"

Invite learners to comment on the story or to share similar situations in their own experience.

- 3 **Tolerance and Intolerance:** Discuss the question of differences and intolerance. Explain the following terms:
- PREJUDICE is a negative attitude towards other who are different and results from a lack of acceptance.
 - DISCRIMINATION is behaviour based on prejudice, in other words, treating different people in different ways because of their religion, race, gang, gender, music preferences, sporting ability, and so on.

Invite learners to talk about instances of prejudice and discrimination that they have experienced.

- 4 **World Conflicts:** You could either make this an activity of a historical nature, or one of current affairs. To give the learners an overview of conflicts in the world that have or have had a religious component. If they choose the first option (HISTORICAL) ask them to research libraries and the internet. If they choose the second (CURRENT) they could comb printed and online newspapers for a few weeks for articles that report on such conflicts. Examples might be:

HISTORICAL

- the Medieval Crusades (1100-1300)
- the European Wars of Religion (1541-1648)
- the division of India and Pakistan (1947)

CURRENT

- the Taliban in Afghanistan
- Christian-Muslim conflict in the Sudan
- Catholic-Protestant conflict in Northern Ireland
- Hindu fundamentalists in India

The learners try to identify the causes and the consequences of the intolerance and conflict in question with yours or other adult guidance.

- 5 End with a brief **time of reflection** on Jesus' Prayer for Unity [John 17:20-23].

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 **Debate:** Do we have to respect other's opinions even if we are convinced they are wrong? Why? Why not? The debate could be organised as a fishbowl discussion. Two chairs are placed in the centre of the room. Two learners volunteer to occupy the chairs to begin the discussion. They are in the fishbowl, and no one else may enter the debate until one of the learners vacates his or her chair, and another takes that place. Encourage the learners not to occupy a chair for too long. You may have to help the discussion along at times when the two chairs become silent.