

LESSON 29: Personal Checkup



REFERENCE

Page 131 – 133[AN INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) Sample circle

AIM

- To help learners evaluate how they spend their time, and to consider a lifestyle committed to truth and goodness

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners evaluate their lifestyle in the light of their religious convictions.
- DAP Learners set goals to improve the balance in their lives, and to improve their spiritual awareness and practice.

TEACHER'S NOTE

This lesson aims to help learners to evaluate how they use their time. One question for learners to consider is whether they do set aside time to be with God and to reflect on their relationship with God. However, once the exercise has been done, it might be worth asking the learners to consider how they try to be mindful of God's presence in all of their life.

Invite learners from other religious backgrounds to do this activity with reference to their own faith.

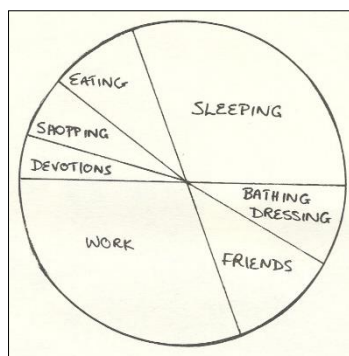
LESSON OUTLINE

I Introduction

Ask learners to draw two large circles to represent their:

- average school day
- average weekend day

Ask them to divide the days into their different activities. Show them an example on the board or newsprint such as the one below.



(Di Scott. 1978. *Youth Ministry in a Time of Crisis*. Newlands: Di Scott, p 85)

2 Class Activity

- i Ask learners to answer the following questions
 - If you could spend your time differently, but realistically (e.g. you still need to come to school), what would you like to change?
 - In what areas of your circles would you like to spend more or less time?
- ii Ask learners to draw two more circles below their first two. They show their changes in the new circles.

3 Small Group Sharing

- i Ask learners to share their circles with a partner or in threes.
- ii Then, ask the whole class to brainstorm with you what they think a circle depicting a good Christian life would look like. (You could also include examples from other religions represented in the class.)

4 Personal Reflection

Ask learners to answer the following questions in writing:

- What do I need to do to live a more Christian (or faith-focused) lifestyle?
- What stops me?
- What am I going to do about it?

Each person reflects in silence and writes notes on their reflections. They draw new circles to represent their new Christian (or faith-focused) lifestyles.

5 Conclusion

This exercise helps us to realise that one area of our lives we usually need to work on is our time with God. Indicate that in the following few lessons they will be exploring some ways in which they can find more time to be with God and to become more spiritually aware.

OTHER IDEAS

6 Questionnaire

Choose any other self-reflection exercise that helps the learners to evaluate their spirituality. They could, for example, test themselves against the Corporal (Bodily) and Spiritual Works of Mercy listed below.

THE SEVEN CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

1. to feed the hungry
2. to give drink to the thirsty
3. to clothe the naked
4. to take in the homeless
5. to visit the sick
6. to visit those in prison
7. to bury the dead

THE SEVEN SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

1. to convert the sinner
2. to instruct the ignorant
3. to advise the doubtful
4. to comfort the sorrowful]
5. to bear wrongs with patience
6. to forgive injuries
7. to pray for the living and the dead

MATERIALS

- There are no further materials provided for this lesson.



LESSON 30: The Importance of Meditation



REFERENCE

Page 131 – 133 [AN INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) TSM: 'Meditation'
- (1) Bible

AIM

- To enrich the spiritual experiences of learners, and to encourage them to broaden their range of spiritual practices.

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners understand what is meant by meditation.
- EXP Learners experience one form of meditation.
- DAP Learners incorporate the practice of meditation into their lives.

TEACHER'S NOTE

The Lesson Materials page 'Meditation' provides a process you can follow with your class. However, be mindful that the author writes from an American perspective (the references to East and West, the practice of meditation by some sports teams, and even with regard to the research that supports this practice), and that you might need to substitute more local examples regarding the practice of meditation. In South Africa, Sagewood School in Midrand, Gauteng, is an example of a school that has incorporated the practice of the form of meditation that you will be introducing to learners in this lesson into its school day.

In the lesson, when you get to the actual practice of meditation, remember to allow enough time for the learners to settle into the exercise. Sometimes it takes a while for the noise, (embarrassed) laughter, and restlessness to quieten down.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Process

- Tell the learners that in today's lesson they will 'unpack' the idea of meditation.
- Use the Lesson Materials page 'Meditation', and follow the suggested process, substituting contemporary South African and international figures..

2 Feedback

- Once the class has done the short meditation exercise, take some feedback from the learners of their experience with this activity. Some points you may wish to highlight :
 - Meditation means deliberately concentrating in order to see things as they really are, and to see the real connections between things.
 - When we meditate, what we are trying to do is to contemplate (look) with our hearts, instead of with our eyes or our heads.

- The silence that we need for reflection is not meant to be a vacuum, but to make space for something.

OTHER IDEAS

3 The Benefits of Meditation

Invite learners to commit themselves to a regular practice of meditation – even for 5 minutes two to three times a week for a period of two to three weeks. They keep a journal of their experience, and to consider whether it has had some effect on their lives. Stress that any effects are not likely to be dramatic.

MATERIALS

TEACHER

- Betsy Caprio. 1973. 'Meditation', from *Experiments in Growth*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, p 98-101



Lesson Materials



Meditation

“What do you know about meditation? Let's pool our information. . . .

(Students may know that Joe Namath and Willie Stargell and Ted Simmons and Mark Spitz meditate, or that many of the Philadelphia Phillies practice T. M. – transcendental meditation, which is one form of meditation.)

“There are many styles of meditating, but basically they can all be collected into two categories. One style is meditating or thinking about some particular idea. Can you give us an example of this type of meditating? . . .

(Thinking about your life or a scene from the life of Jesus or about the power of the Creator on a starry night, etc.)

“This is 'thinking' meditation – thinking, often in steps, about some topic or picture or story until you become very familiar with it. Have you ever done this? . . .

(Probably, especially those who have said the rosary with thought.)

“It's a good thing to do. Your thinking topic can be almost anything that you want to think about, but it's often a religious topic – and, in fact, is a way of praying or leading into prayer among the religions of the West. What are those? . . .



(Judaism and Christianity as we know them, and – more West than East – Islam.)

“The Psalms tell us about meditating in this way, and St. Paul gave his followers instructions to meditate upon the things he had taught them. You might want to set aside a little time every day or every week to meditate like this.

(See Psalm 63) (1 Timothy 5:15)

“Usually, today, when we see books on 'Meditation' or hear about famous sports stars meditating, another or second style of meditation is being referred to. This kind of meditation is hinted at here and there in religious and other books of the West, but it's more often associated with the religions or ways of growth of the East. What are those? . . .



(Religions: Hinduism and its offshoot, Buddhism; way of growth: yoga.)

“The purpose of this second sort/...

Lesson Materials

MEDITATION (cont)

"The purpose of this second sort of meditation is not to think or pray, but to give both the mind and the body a little rest and inner peace that will lead to even better thinking, praying, action and everything else *after* the meditation. It's a preparation for daily living, a way of renewing yourself.

"As you probably know, lots of people in our own country have learned this second, more physical sort of meditation, and practice it every day. Do you think it's OK to use a technique which may be associated with another religion? . . . Or should we shy away from such things because they didn't originate with our own faith? . . .

(Students as well as teachers may get hung up on this point. We can adopt methodology from another faith without adopting its theology. How "Catholic" are we?)

"Well, very briefly, the main difference between the typically Western or thinking style of meditation and the typically Eastern style is that, in the latter, the mind is *emptied* of thoughts rather than being filled with them. In other words, we have one word, 'meditation,' being used to cover two opposite practices. Confusing? . . .

(Yes.)

"Now, what we're going to try today, if you like, is the second style of meditation in a very, very simple form. Teachers here and there across the country are beginning to ask their students to meditate in this way once or twice a day, and the reports are coming in that school becomes more pleasant as a result, and marks go up, and people seem much happier. So, it's worth a try, don't you think? . . .

(But anyone who doesn't like can just observe.)

(Watch education journals for more on these exciting first steps by creative teachers.)

"Just follow the directions. First, sit rather straight – but comfortably – in your seats. . . .

"Now, close your eyes and tune in to your breathing . . .

"See if you can slow down the rate of your breathing a little . . . and now, just follow the breath as it comes in and goes out, nice and easy

"Don't think about anything else/...

Lesson Materials

MEDITATION (cont)

“Don't think about anything else. Just keep following your breath for a minute or two Try to sense where it is going

(If students seem to be going along well, let them have two minutes or even more.)

“Now, when you feel ready to, open your eyes and come back to the classroom

(Wait for stragglers.)

You've just been meditating. That's probably the easiest way there is to do the emptying-the-mind meditating. How did it go? . . . Were you able to keep with the breathing, or did other thoughts creep in? . . .

“What's the point of tuning in to the breathing? What does that do? . . .

(Keeps the mind from being pulled all different ways by its thoughts.)

“Did anyone notice any other feelings or sensations? . . .

(There may have been some “spacey” feelings – an altered state of consciousness, as described in Chapter One.)

“There are several other ways people meditate in the non-thinking way. Some are ‘sitting’ or ‘passive’ meditations, like what we just did, and some are ‘moving’ or ‘active’ meditations, to be done while working or walking or something else. How could ‘following the breath’ be done as an active meditation? . . . Maybe someone would like to do some research on the subject for extra credit – and you might check out the research showing the physical effects of meditation, which have been measured by doctors and scientists.

(Just be aware of the passage of the breath while you do something else; why not stand everyone up to move around and try it – eyes open?)

(Such as change in metabolic rate, change in skin resistance which indicates decrease in stress, increased perceptual ability, faster reaction time, reduction in drug use.)

“Two last thoughts, now that we're back in our heads: First, do you think meditation could be of any use to you? . . .

(Possibilities include increased calm and centeredness, better coping during times of stress, renewal of energy, etc.)

“Second, since this is a religion class/...

Lesson Materials

MEDITATION (cont)

“Second, since this is a religion class, let me ask you what value you think meditation might have in terms of practising one’s faith. . . .

(It can help one open up to the Spirit, to be more receptive, to have more energy to do the good works of religion, etc.)

“I’m not planning to ask you to meditate here regularly, but if you could work a few minutes of this into each day you might be very surprised and pleased with the results. Very experienced meditators aim for 15 minutes or more once or even twice a day, because the good effects pile up.

(Or – maybe you are! Why not?)

(Perhaps prefaced by “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord” from Psalm 18.)

“If you do try this on your own, be patient with yourself. Remember that ‘you can’t push the river – it flows by itself.’”

(The Christopher Newsletter recommends meditation as we’ve experimented with it.)

© Betsy Caprio. 1973. ‘Meditation’ from *Experiments in Growth*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, p 98-101

LESSON 31: Imaginative Prayer



REFERENCE

Page 131 – 133 [AN INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) TSM: 'The Bubble'
- (2) Logbook or Journal (optional)

AIM

- To enrich the spiritual experiences of learners, and to encourage them to broaden their range of spiritual practices.

OUTCOMES

- EXP Learners experience imaginative prayer.
- DAP Learners use this experience to enhance their own prayer lives.

TEACHER'S NOTE

The exercise in this lesson uses a centering approach. Being centred usually has the connotation of being 'together' or integrated, in balance, or having one's body and spirit in equilibrium. Monks of the Orthodox churches talk about finding the "place of the heart," and John of the Cross wrote about his soul's "deepest centre".

When working with imaginative exercises such as this, build in the option of allowing learners to sit out. As with the previous lesson's meditation exercise, expect a little 'silliness' at first. Sometimes just standing next to learners who are giggling, centers them more quickly. But most learners will settle into the activity if they are given a little time to do so.

As before, you will need to rehearse the exercise, and remember to move through it at a suitable pace – one that allows learners the space to settle into and participate meditatively in the activity. Again, you may prefer to make the language a little more South African in style.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Imaginative Prayer

- Introduce the idea of imaginative prayer – another form of prayer learners could use to enhance their spiritual practice. Indicate that while the activity will begin in a similar way to the meditation they experienced in the previous lesson, they will be invited to become aware of God's presence at the center of their lives.
- Use the Lesson Materials page 'The Bubble' to conduct the imaginative prayer.

2 Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by thanking the learners for their participation.

If you have chosen to promote the idea of keeping a log then ask them to record this prayer experience, calling it Centering Prayer.

OTHER IDEAS

3 The Vacation

Lead the learners through this meditation, or give it to them in print to try out for themselves.

*I imagine I retire to a lonely place
to give myself the gift of solitude,
for solitude is a time when I see things as they are.*

*What are the little things in life
that lack of solitude has magnified unduly?*

*What are the really big things
that I find too little time for?*

*Solitude is the time to make decisions.
What decisions do I need to make or reconsider
at this juncture of my life?*

*I now make a decision
about the kind of day today shall be.*

*Will it be a day of doing?
I list the things I really want to do today.*

*Will it also be a day of being
-no effort to achieve,
to get things done,
to gather or possess,
but just to be?
My life will not bear fruit
unless I learn the art of lying fallow,
the art of "wasting" time creatively.*

*So I decide what time to give to play,
to purposeless and unproductive interests,
to silence, intimacy, rest.
And I ask myself what I shall taste today,
and touch
and smell
and listen to
and see.*

(Anthony de Mello. 1984. 'The Vacation' in *Wellsprings*. Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash)

MATERIALS

TEACHER

- Betsy Caprio. 1973. 'The Bubble' from *Experiments in Growth*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, p 85 – 89



Lesson Materials



The Bubble

"I'd like to start this experiment by asking if one of you can tell the rest of us about a time in your life when you've had the physical feeling of coming unglued, or of falling apart at the seams, or just going to pieces. Does anyone have such an experience that he or she would be willing to share with us? ... What we'd like to know, briefly, is what the circumstances were and, more important, how it felt...

("Torn-to-pieces-hood," said William James)

(If no one responds, be ready with some example from your life, with emphasis on how it felt.)

"Thanks. Well, lots of us have had that feeling. A famous poem describes it with the words "Things fall apart: the centre cannot hold

(Yeats' The Second Coming)

"OK. Now, today, we're going to try an experiment that may help us get a little more 'together' and a little less unglued. If you'd rather watch quietly than experiment, that's Ok – but why not try?

"First of all, sit as straight as you can in your seat; really get squared off with your feet flat on the floor and your back and shoulders up tall. Be comfortable though, not stiff.

(Or, if you are doing things on the floor these days, sitting cross-legged will also work.)

"Now, close your eyes and see if you can follow the directions I'll give you. Try to imagine the following spots:

- one just above your head...
- one just under your feet...
- one on each side of your elbows...
- one just in front of your waist...
- one just behind the middle of your back...

(Pause a few seconds after each.)

(Go slowly.)

"Now, connect these imaginary dots with imaginary arches...

"You have the framework here/...

Lesson Materials

THE BUBBLE (cont)

"You have the framework here for a make-believe bubble. Can you also imagine some sort of covering on the frame, so that you are inside the sphere? ... It can be a transparent covering of soap-bubble-like material, or it can be solid, such as dress fabric or even metal...

"Now, here you are all collected inside your bubble. Can you find one more spot, this one inside yourself? See if you can find your center ... This will be a spot of spiritual quiet ... a place where it's silent and calm and where you seem to come together ... a 'still point'...

(T.S.Eliot's good phrase, and if you're looking for quotes, Browning wrote, "There is an inmost center in us all, where truth abides in fullness.")

"You may want to stop with this step, or if you've found what seems to be your center, you may want to add another step. The calmness and unity we feel in our centers can be thought of as God's presence. The Kingdom of God really is within us.

"Without creating anything that isn't there, see if you can imagine that God is at this place in yourself...

"And, if that idea appeals to you, see if you can let this peace that comes from Him spread throughout all of you from the center spot, like ink spreading through a blotter ... Try to picture it spreading to your legs ... your arms ... your brain ... and all through you, into every cell, just like blood goes to all parts of the body ...

(Go slowly.)

(A good pause, which you can time by doing this exercise yourself - slowly.)

"Can you remember any time in the past when you have felt especially together and centred? ... when the 'centre becomes clear?..."

(Times often mentioned are when doing art or craft projects, making music or – for students who have studied the oriental martial arts, like karate – while engaged in combat or self-defense, playing sports. Cf. Experiment No. 6, "Natural Highs." What's the connection?)

"Think for a minute about babies and very small children. Their whole beings body, emotions, thoughts are very unified, aren't they? . . . Whatever they do, they do with their whole selves. They are very centered. As we get older, we lose that quality and begin to get tugged in different directions. Who's ever noticed that quality in the very young? . . . Can you remember being that way? . . .

"Well, this is a difficult experiment/...

Lesson Materials

THE BUBBLE (cont)

"Well, this is a difficult experiment to do at first try. If you have trouble with it, or feel like you're not very centered, you might want to try it again on your own until you get the feeling that all the parts of you – physical and spiritual – are working in harmony.

(Elton John's "... never, never leaving harmony.")

"There's another way you can keep practising centering too. Let's just do it together now, and then maybe you'll decide to use this idea on your own. Instead of imagining that you're in a bubble, just try to find your center where you're sitting right now...

"Now, stand up and get yourself lined up inside ... and see if you still have that center ... Try to get a sense of yourself as a whole person, a person put together...

(the kinesthetic sense)

"And now, walk anywhere around the classroom doing anything you like and see if you can keep that experience of being centered...

(Let this last as long as you choose.)

"OK, let's sit down again...

"How'd you do? ...

"When you're ready, let your bubble dissolve into the air, or let the pieces fall away like an eggshell does when the chicken hatches, and come back to the classroom...

(Note: There's a thin line between suggesting possible experiences, as we've done here, and pouring kids into molds. You would not want your language to get any more suggestive than what's above.)

"When we all get back, let's compare notes on bubbles and on centers. Does anyone have anything to report? ...

(If no response, perhaps you can ask how many were able to construct a bubble. And of what sort of material? And how many were more or less able to find their center? Where? Different people have different spots.)

"Some call this centering/...

Lesson Materials

THE BUBBLE (cont)

"Some call this centering 'coming home and quietly resting.' Some compare the center spot in themselves to the eye of a tornado – especially if they live very hectic lives.

"This is something you can do any time and place, isn't it? ... I think you'll find that taking a second to stop and get centered helps everything in life flow more happily and smoothly, including things like praying...

"The Quakers talk about 'peace at the center' and 'centering down.' That's what we're after – it's like coming home."

(How would you feel about asking students to get centered every so often? Before each class? Before a quiz?)

© Betsy Caprio. 1973. 'The Bubble' from *Experiments in Growth*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, p 85-89

LESSON 32: Special Places



REFERENCE

Page 132 – 133 [CATHOLIC SPIRITUAL TRADITION]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) Bible
- (3) Poster materials
- (3) Information on a range of special places

AIM

- To broaden the learners' knowledge of spiritual practices through a discussion of pilgrimage

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners understand the meaning of pilgrimage.
- DAP Learners approach their own lives as a pilgrimage or journey.

TEACHER'S NOTE

Allow for learners' creativity and interest to direct them in this lesson. You could give them background before the lesson and ask them to research their place of pilgrimage and have a report back in this lesson. Alternatively, you could allow them the lesson to research and do a project for their class or school that can be displayed later or told to peers in story, newspaper, mime, acting, or poster format. This could also be used as a theme at assembly if appropriate.

If learners do not have easy access to research facilities, collect as much information as you can and share it with them in a creative way. This can include books, articles, website addresses, like www.marypages.com, the Southern Cross newspaper, etc. Bring this with you to the lesson to share with the learners.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Paradox

Pose the following questions:

- Where is God? God is everywhere.
- So, have you met God? Why not?

(At this stage, leave the questions hanging. Pilgrimage can be seen as a journey to a meeting with God. It is true that God is everywhere, but we are usually not able to dispose ourselves to meeting him. However, certain places associated with special religious experiences have a power to attract the pilgrim and to help him or her to be open to a meeting.)

2 Scripture Reflection

- i Begin by reading, or having read, Psalm 84. This is a pilgrimage song sung by Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem.
- ii Help the learners unpack the idea of pilgrimage through reflection on this psalm:
 - What is a pilgrimage?
 - Why do people go on pilgrimage?
 - What is the significance, in this case, of going to Jerusalem?

3 Poster

In this activity, the learners will make a poster that focuses on a special place of Christian or Catholic pilgrimage. Share some information on special places with them using the resources suggested in the Teacher's Note above and tell them to choose one of the places of pilgrimage listed below that they would like to research. They may also choose a place not listed, but it would be best to check it out if you are not familiar with it, before giving them the go-ahead. They may do this exercise in small groups of 2 to 3, or alone if they prefer. They will need to complete this work outside of class time.

- Fatima, Portugal
- Guadalupe, Mexico
- Israel
- Lourdes, France
- Medjugorje, Yugoslavia
- Ngome, KwaZulu-Natal
- Rome, Italy
- Santiago de Compostela, Spain
- Taize, Lyons, France

4 Presentation

Arrange an opportunity for the posters to be displayed in the school, or perhaps a sample of the best to be presented at a school assembly.

OTHER IDEAS

5 Journeys in Scripture

Invite learners to look up the following references in Scripture. Each one tells of a journey. Help the learners to recognise that, in each case, the destination was a place of meeting with God.

- Exodus 19:1-8
- 1 Kings 19:1-8
- Luke 9: 51-62

6 Pilgrimage in World Religions

Learners could research the pilgrimages undertaken by adherents of other religions. They would discover the significance of Mecca for the Muslim, or Varanasi for the Hindu, for instance.

7 Audiovisual

Source some audio or audiovisual material with information about a particular place of pilgrimage and play or show this to the learners.

8 Invite a Speaker

Invite a speaker to come to your school and speak to the learners about places of pilgrimage and the importance of taking part in a pilgrimage.

MATERIALS

- There are no further materials provided for this lesson.

