

For

Eduqas

GCSE Religious Studies
Foundational and
Applied Catholic
Theology
(Route B Components
1 and 2)

Bible passages for 9-1
GCSE Religious studies

Sources of
Wisdom
for Catholic Christianity

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An overview of the Bible

What is the Bible, and what does it mean to Catholics?

The Bible is the Holy Book of Christianity. Christians believe that the Bible contains the record of God's **revelation** to humans – it reveals to them who God is. They also believe that it is the result of God's **inspiration** – that God motivated and guided the range of human writers who wrote the different parts of the Bible.

To do...

 In your own words, explain what is meant by **revelation** and **inspiration**.

Christians believe that God reveals himself in the Bible, and that the human authors of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit. However, they do not all interpret what the Bible says in the same ways. Many of the differences between different Christian denominations can be traced to different understandings of the Bible, but a central belief in the value and importance of the Bible is something which unites Christians.

Some Christians believe that it is important to read the Bible according to the plain meaning of the text, without speculating about the context in which it was written or the authors' intentions. This way of understanding the Bible is sometimes called 'literalist', because it takes the Bible as the literal word of God.

Christians who take a literalist approach to the Bible might believe the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible's human authors by directing them in exactly what words to write, and that no one should question anything that the Bible appears to teach because it comes from God. They are likely to read Bible stories as historical accounts of events which actually happened, and where there appear to be contradictions between different parts of the Bible they might think that this just shows that, as humans, people do not yet have enough understanding.

There are also a wide range of views held by Christians which fall in between these two ways of understanding the Bible.

Many Christians believe that the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the Bible's human authors gave them insights which they then recorded in a way which was suitable for their audience and the times they were living in. They will take this into account when reading the Bible, and might use what they know about the author's context to help them to understand the Bible's message.

Along with this, they might believe that some stories are metaphors used by the author to explain an idea or to symbolise the power of God. In their eyes, this approach doesn't devalue the importance or truth of the Bible, rather it helps the reader to understand the truth more clearly.

Catholics believe that:

- The Bible cannot be understood on its own. The Sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium (the teaching authority of the Church) are so connected that one of them cannot stand without the others.
- God is the principal author of Scripture. He made use of specific people who wrote in a human language and using their own imaginations and creativity as authors, at a particular time and place in history to produce the Bible.
- At times, Christians have to work carefully to determine when the sacred author is saying something is true, and when an author is writing metaphorically using an image to help bring out the truth more clearly. A Catholic will look to the authority of the Catholic Church to guide them in this.

Protestant Christians tend to emphasise the Bible as the main source of authority, though their church traditions also play a role. Some Protestants, especially evangelicals, see the Bible as the only source of authority for guidance on Christian faith and morals. This approach is sometimes known as sola scriptura ('by Scripture alone').

Reading the Bible is a central part of public and private worship for Catholics. The first part of the Mass is the Liturgy of the Word which contains readings from the Old and New Testaments. This is presented in the lectionary, and over a three-year cycle much of the Bible is read aloud. The Liturgy of the Eucharist originates from both the Old and New Testaments and contains many phrases and symbols from the Bible..

To do...



How do Christians sometimes understand what the Bible says in different ways?



What do all Christians agree on about the Bible?

This passage comes from a letter attributed to the early Christian leader Paul, written in about 63CE. Paul assures his readers that they can trust the Bible. Another way of translating 'All scripture is inspired by God' from its original Greek into English is 'All scripture is breathed out by God'.

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.


2 Timothy chapter 3 verses 16-17

To do...

 What does Paul say about **why** Christians should use the Bible?

 What do you think Paul would say about **how** Christians should use the Bible?

To do...

 For Christians, is the Bible like...?

A mirror

A gateway

A revolving door

A cloak

A guidebook

A bag of Lego



A packet of seeds

The internet

The Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. Catholic Bibles have 73 books. Protestant Bibles don't include the Deuterocanonical books, reducing the total number of books in them to 66.



The Old Testament	The first five books are the Law, also known as the Torah ('law' in Hebrew) or Pentateuch ('five scrolls' in Greek). They tell the story of creation and of how God made the Israelites his chosen people and gave them instructions about how to live as God's people.	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy
	The Old Testament Historical books continue the story of the Israelites, during which they were ruled by kings (including King David) and built the Temple in Jerusalem. They were conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians and sent into exile. After some time, they were allowed to return home and they rebuilt the Temple.	Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther
	The Wisdom literature asks the 'big questions' about God, humanity, suffering, what the world is like and why it is like it. Some of the wisdom books are written as poetry, and the Psalms are hymns.	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs
	The books of Prophecy tell the stories of the prophets, ordinary people who were chosen to be messengers of God. Their prophecies often warned the Israelites that there would be consequences for disobeying God. Many Christians believe that some of their prophecies foretold the life of Jesus.	Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi
	The Deuterocanonical books which are part of Catholic Bibles are not included in most Protestant Bibles. Therefore, they represent Catholic but not always Protestant teaching, reflecting the diversity in ways the Bible can be read by different denominations.	Tobit Judith Wisdom of Solomon Sirach Baruch 1 Maccabees 2 Maccabees Additions to Daniel and Esther

To do...

-  In the table above, highlight the different genres (types of writing) which can be found in the Old Testament.
-  Which two types of writing in the Old Testament are most different from each other?

The New Testament	The four Gospels tell the story of the life of Jesus. 'Gospel' means 'good news', referring to the 'good news' that Jesus' life is for Christians. The first three share much of the same content and are known as the synoptic Gospels. John tells the same story, but in a very different style.	Matthew Luke Mark John
	The Acts of the Apostles (often known as just 'Acts') is a book of history, which tells the story of the early Christians. It was written by the same author as Luke's Gospel.	Acts
	The epistles are letters which were written by a range of early Christian leaders to other Christians in the 1st century CE. They explain Christian beliefs and give instructions and guidance on how to live as a Christian.	Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon Hebrews James 1 Peter 2 Peter 1 John 2 John 3 John Jude
	The only apocalyptic book in the New Testament is Revelation. The word 'apocalypse' means a revelation or unveiling of future events.	Revelation

To do...


-  Highlight the types of writing which can be found in the New Testament.
-  What are the similarities and differences between the types of writing used in the Old and New Testaments?

Creation

Do all Christians believe the same things about the creation of the world?

The book of Genesis is the first book of the Bible. 'Genesis' means 'beginning'. The first chapter of Genesis tells the story of creation. It describes how, over the course of six days, God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. For Christians, this shows God's infinite creativity and power.

To do...

 At the end of each day, how does God feel about creation?

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

Genesis chapter 1 verses 1-19

In verses 1-19 of the creation story, God creates the world. In the second part of the story, God populates it with animals and people.

And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. *And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.* So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Genesis chapter 1 verse 20 – chapter 2 verse 4

Christians believe that humans are created in 'the image of God' ('Imago Dei').

God spends six days creating the world, and rests on the seventh day.

Both religions which have this passage as part of their sacred text have a Sabbath day of rest, on Saturday for Jews and on Sunday for Christians.

To do...



At each stage of the story, God makes creation happen by commanding it to happen. List all of God's commands in order:

1. **Let there be light**
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

To do...

'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness . . .'

Christians believe that God made humans in the image of God and to resemble him in having some of his characteristics, such as:

- being intelligent and able to think
- being able to use language to communicate
- having free will, and being able to make choices
- having a moral sense and knowing right from wrong
- being creative

Keep an eye out for these characteristics in the next two topics as well.



Why might each of these things be good for humans to have?



How are humans different to what Christians understand God to be like?

Genesis is an ancient book. Traditionally, Moses was thought to be its author. However, most Bible experts argue that Genesis was the work of a number of writers over a long period of time, and that it was passed on as an oral story for generations before it was written down.

There are some disagreements, including among Christians, about what type of writing Genesis chapter 1 is, which affects how it should be interpreted. Here are two different ways to understand Genesis 1, as well as some beliefs about God, humanity and creation that all Christians have in common:

Literal understanding

Some Christians believe that the creation story in Genesis is history, and so is literally true. Therefore, it can be understood as an historical account of how the world was created in six days of 24 hours.

Non-literal understanding

Some Christians do not believe that the creation story in Genesis is literally true. They might see it as a piece of poetry or a myth, a story which explains some important religious truths. It might matter less for them how the world was created than that it was created by God. They might accept scientific explanations of creation, and see them as being caused by God, seeing science and religion as being compatible with each other. They might understand a 'day' as representing a period of time rather than literally 24 hours.

Shared understanding

All Christians find truths about God, humanity and the world in Genesis, whether they understand it literally or non-literally.

 Which lines from Genesis chapter 1 describe these beliefs which all Christians hold in common?

- a) Creation was intentionally brought about by God
- b) God is supremely powerful
- c) God is transcendent (not part of the created universe)
- d) Humans are 'in the image of God'
- e) God's creation is good

Choose three adjectives to describe what Christians might learn from the creation story about the nature of God.

The Garden of Eden

What does the Bible say about how humans were created?





Most Bible scholars believe that Genesis chapter 2 was written by a different author than chapter 1. It seems to be an alternative account of the creation of humans, though it might be a re-telling of that part of chapter 1 in more depth. It tells of how God creates man and woman, and plants a garden for them to live in.

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

Genesis chapter 2 verses 4-9 and 15-17

To do...

-  How does God make the man?
-  What role does God give the man?
-  What does God forbid the man to do?
-  Do you think that the man will obey God, or disobey him?
Why?

Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner. So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

*'This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.'*

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Genesis chapter 2 verses 18-25

To do...



What does God say about why two humans are created?




How does God create the woman?

'And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.'

The man and woman's nakedness represents their innocence. At this point in the unfolding story, they were living in paradise, they would never die and they did not know how to do wrong.

To do...

 Compare Genesis chapter 1 with chapter 2.

What do the accounts say about God?

Genesis chapter 1

Genesis chapter 2

What do they say about humans?

Genesis chapter 1


Genesis chapter 2

What do they say about how humans should relate to the created world?

Genesis chapter 1

Genesis chapter 2

 What are the differences between the first and second accounts of creation?

 Overall, how similar do you think Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are? Colour this bar to show your answer and explain below.

**Completely
the same**

**Totally
different**

The Fall of Humankind

What went wrong?

At the end of Genesis chapter 2, the man and the woman were living in a close relationship with God. By the end of chapter 3, they have been banished from the Garden of Eden as the result of a very bad choice. The events in this chapter are often called the 'Fall of Humankind'.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

Genesis chapter 3 verses 1-6

To do...



What role does the snake play in Genesis chapter 3?



Highlight the ways in which the snake tempts Eve to eat the fruit.

To do...

Before they committed the first sin by eating the fruit, the man and the woman had a close relationship with God, who is described as walking in the garden and talking to them.



How does this next part of the story show that the relationship has been damaged?

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.'

Genesis chapter 3 verses 7-13

To do...

Christians believe that sin (by which they mean wrongdoing) has consequences.

 Highlight the ways in which Adam and Eve are punished for eating the fruit.

Even in his anger, God still makes clothes for Adam and Eve.

The LORD God said to the serpent,

*'Because you have done this,
cursed are you among all animals
and among all wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.*

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.'*

To the woman he said,

*'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.'*
And to the man he said,

*'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree
about which I commanded you,
"You shall not eat of it"*

*cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.*

*By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken; you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.'*

*The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all who live.
And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and
clothed them.*

*Then the LORD God said, 'See, the man has become like one of us, knowing
good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the
tree of life, and eat, and live for ever'— therefore the LORD God sent him forth
from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove
out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim,
and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Genesis chapter 3 verses 14-24

The story of the fall of humankind ends with Adam and Eve being banished from the Garden of Eden. As with chapters 1 and 2, some Christians believe that this story should be interpreted literally (i.e. there was a real Adam and Eve who ate the fruit from an actual tree), others believe it is a symbolic story to explain deep truths about God, the world and humanity.

For all Christians, Genesis chapter 3 helps them to understand an important question – if humans were created in the image of God, why are they imperfect? In particular, why do they do things which are wrong (which Christians call ‘sin’)?

To do...



What does this story say about human nature? Match up these heads and tails. Some tails match more than one head.

Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit

They could think through the bad consequences of their actions

They ate from the tree even though they knew they weren't supposed to

They tried to hide from God

They tried to place the blame for their actions elsewhere

They were sent out of the Garden of Eden

Life can be difficult for humans

Humans are rational

Childbirth will be painful, work will be a struggle

Humans have free will

Humans are 'fallen' – they act wrongly

Humans must take responsibility for their actions

Humans are different to animals

The relationship between humans and God has changed

To do...

Which of these would you say are evidence of human sin?

Inequality

War

Earthquakes

Disobedience

Bullying

Drought

Climate change

Racism

Why?

Christians see the rest of the Bible as being about God's attempts to bring humankind back into a close relationship with him, seeking to bring about atonement – to find a way for humans to make right for their wrongdoing, and get back into a right relationship with God.

God

What do Christians believe that God is like?


Christians believe in one God. This is called monotheism.

Christianity teaches that God is transcendent, which means that God is above and beyond anything in earth or space. This can make God difficult to describe and Christians accept that in many ways the nature and actions of God are a mystery to human beings. However, they do believe that God has the following characteristics or qualities:

God is eternal	He has no beginning or end.
God is omnibenevolent	He is all-loving and cares about human beings.
God is omnipotent	He has unlimited power.
God is omniscient	He knows all things – past, present and future.
God is omnipresent	He is always present and is everywhere at all times; he is not limited by a physical body.
God is creator	He created the world and everything in it. He cares about his creation and has a plan for it.
God is perfectly good	There is no sin or evil within him.
God is the ultimate judge	He will hold each individual to account for their thoughts, words and behaviour.

To do...

Read Psalm 139 verses 1-18 on the page opposite. This Psalm is a prayer of praise, marvelling at God. The writer is amazed by how wonderful God is.

-  How many of the characteristics and qualities which Catholics believe God has can you find reflected in this psalm? Highlight the sections.

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in *Sheol*, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night',
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them – they are more than the sand;
I come to the end – I am still with you.

Psalm 139 verses 1-18

Sheol was the Jewish name for the underworld. Christians usually understand this word to mean hell.

Keywords...

Nicene Creed

A creed is a statement of what Christians believe and teach. The Nicene Creed was adopted by the Church at Nicea in 325 CE.

Doctrine

A teaching held by the Catholic Church to help others know about God.

Christians believe in one single God, who made himself known to the world as three separate and inter-related 'persons':

- God the Father
- God the Son (Jesus)
- God the Holy Spirit.

These three 'persons' of God are known as the Holy Trinity.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a central belief for all Christians, but it is also something which is difficult to understand. Christians believe that human minds can never fully understand God, and the Trinity is considered to be true but also ultimately incomprehensible.

The doctrine of the Trinity is set out in the Nicene Creed. It provides a model of relationship between the three different persons. Christians believe that each person of the Trinity is associated with a special function:

- God the Father created heaven and earth
- God the Son, Jesus, is the saviour of the world
- God the Holy Spirit guides, helps and inspires human beings.

The Bible does not use the word 'trinity' to describe God. When the first Christians began to reflect on their experience of God, they began to see that they experienced the one God in three different ways, which they also saw in the Scriptures.

In the stories in Genesis of the creation and fall, the God is sometimes referred to in the plural.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.'

Then the LORD God said, 'See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil...'

Genesis chapter 1 verse 26 and chapter 3 verse 22

In the New Testament, Jesus refers to the three persons of God.

'All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.'

'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...'

Matthew chapter 11 verse 27 and chapter 28 verse 19

The account of Jesus' baptism in Matthew's Gospel says:

And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

Matthew chapter 3 verses 16–17

To do...



How does Matthew's account of the baptism of Jesus indicate that God the Father and the Holy Spirit were present?

To find out...



What words are said when a Christian is baptised? How does this reflect the doctrine of the Trinity?

Jesus, the Incarnate Son

What does the Bible teach about the nature of Jesus Christ?

The life of Jesus, his birth, teachings, death and resurrection, are at the heart of the Christian religion. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Early Christian thinkers, beginning with St. Paul, reflected on Jesus' significance and developed how Christians understand him.

God taking human form as Jesus Christ is known as the incarnation. Christians believe that...

Jesus is the Son of God and the second 'person' of the Trinity, and that he is both human and divine.

Jesus' birth was unique. They teach that the Virgin Mary became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit after accepting the invitation from God to be the mother of his Son. Catholics believe that Mary always remained a virgin.

The Son of God existed before he became incarnate in Jesus, and Jesus now exists eternally after his ascension to heaven. Jesus had to fully experience the human condition, from conception to death, for his life to have meaning for us.

God knows completely what it is like to be human, which means that God, as Jesus, can identify with human beings. Christians believe that the incarnation is a demonstration of God's immense love for human beings and the means of their salvation.

To find out...



Read the accounts of Jesus' birth in Luke chapter 2 verses 1–20 and the account of his last days in Luke chapters 23 and 24. Write down 5 things that these stories show Catholics about Jesus.

To do...



The belief that Jesus was both fully divine and fully human can be seen in the Bible. Look up the verses in the table on the page opposite. Which ones emphasise Jesus' divinity and which ones emphasise his humanity? Fill in the table with a short summary of each verse in the correct column.

When reading just a single Bible verse it can sometimes be helpful to read the verses above and below it as well, and to look at the title of the section which the verse is in, as ways of understanding the context and meaning of the verse.

	Jesus as divine	Jesus as human
Matthew chapter 28 verse 18		
Luke chapter 2 verse 7		
Matthew chapter 8 verse 27		
John chapter 11 verse 35		
Mark chapter 2 verses 5-7		
1 Peter chapter 2 verse 22		
Philippians chapter 2 verse 6		

Jesus, the Word of God

Christians believe that Jesus is 'the Word of God' – what does that mean?

In John's Gospel, the eternal Word of God becomes incarnate in the person of Jesus.

To do...



Draw lines to show where the following Christian beliefs about the Word of God can be found in John chapter 1.

The Word of God is eternal

The Word of God took part in creation.

The Word of God brings life.

The Word of God is the light.

The Word of God became Jesus (incarnation)

When 'John' is mentioned, it means John the Baptist. He was Jesus' cousin, who had announced to people that Jesus would be coming. He is a different John from the author of the Gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was **John**. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.*

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

John chapter 1 verses 1-18

This passage from Paul's letter to the Philippians is known as the kenosis hymn.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

*who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death –
even death on a cross.*

*Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

Philippians chapter 2 verses 5-11

To do...



Kenosis is a Greek word meaning 'emptying' or 'pouring out'. It means that Jesus gave up some of his divine attributes when he became human. Where can this be seen in the Kenosis hymn?

Keywords...

Gospel

From a Greek word meaning 'good news'. The first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which give accounts of Jesus' life and teachings

Incarnation

From a Latin word meaning 'being made flesh'. The belief that Jesus Christ is God 'incarnate', meaning that the Son of God became a human being.

Jesus and moral authority

What does the Bible teach about making moral decisions?


In Christianity, Jesus is seen as a model of how to live a good life, and also as the inspiration to lead one. Christians use the Bible as an authoritative source for moral teaching, especially the examples of Jesus' actions and teachings as found in the Gospels.

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are a set of laws which the Bible describes as having been given by God to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments are at the heart of Judaism and have also shaped Christian teaching and ethics. They are believed to express God's universal standard of right and wrong in any circumstance.

Do you think these are still relevant to Christians today? Work through the commandments and decide whether it is possible or desirable to live by each one.

To do...

 Match the following with the relevant commandments

Older people should be cared for.

Relationships should be honest.

Work should be balanced with rest.

God should be remembered.

Property should be looked after.

Life should be respected.

Only God must be worshipped.

Family should be nurtured.

The law should be respected.

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

Exodus chapter 20 verses 2–17

The Sermon on the Mount

The main teachings of Jesus on how to live the Christian life can be found in the Sermon on the Mount, which is in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew's Gospel was probably written for an audience with a Jewish background and it includes many references to the Old Testament.

Jesus teaches his followers about the Law of Moses and the commandments and how they should interpret them. Jesus states that he has not come to destroy the Old Testament law, but to complete it.

'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil.'

Matthew chapter 5 verse 17

'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.'

Matthew chapter 7 verse 12

The Golden Rule is what Christians today often call the teaching of Jesus found in Matthew chapter 7 verse 12. It is usually put into modern English as 'Treat others as you would like them to treat you.' It is a summary of all of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount which also sums up the teaching of the Old Testament (the law and the prophets). The Golden Rule is also a guideline which is widely used in other religions and among non-religious people.

Jesus goes on to take particular laws and develop each of them in a new way that goes beyond their original setting. He usually begins with the phrase 'You have heard it said ...' to refer to one of the laws, then goes on to say, 'but I say to you' before expanding on that law. In acting this way, Jesus implicitly claimed that he had the authority to do so, as God's special messenger.

To find out...



Use a Bible or New Testament to read Matthew chapter 5 verses 21–48. Complete the table on the next page with the teachings Jesus gives to his followers.

To do...



As well as Jesus' teachings, Christians also have his example to follow. Match up these heads and tails.

In the Gospels there are many stories in which Jesus cares for the sick. Jesus made the blind see, cured people of leprosy and gave the deaf hearing.

When Jesus was presented with a woman who was caught committing adultery, he did not condemn her even though she was guilty. He told the crowd, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.'

Jesus also showed forgiveness in the last moments of his life. While he was on the cross he says, 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.'

This means that Christians shouldn't be quick to pass judgement, but should be compassionate as we have all done wrong.

Jesus' example shows Christians that they should treat others with compassion, love, mercy and forgiveness.

This shows that Christians must treat the vulnerable with compassion and care.

Murder and anger

'You have heard it said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"'

If you are even angry with or insult your brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement.

Be reconciled to them before making an offering to God.

Adultery and lust

'You have heard it said, "You shall not commit adultery"'

Divorce

'It was also said, "Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce"'

Taking oaths

'Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord"'

Revenge

'You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"'

Love of neighbour

'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy"'

To do...



How similar you think the teachings of Jesus are to Ten Commandments?
Colour this bar and explain your reasons in the space below it.

**Totally
different**

**Completely
the same**



'In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus often took rules which were about behaviour and expanded on them to include what happens in peoples' hearts.' How far do you agree?



Would what Jesus taught on the Sermon on the Mount be easier to follow or harder than:

The Ten Commandments?

The rules at your school?

Why?

Suffering


What does the suffering of Jesus mean for Catholics?

Jesus spoke about undergoing physical suffering for the sake of others. This would have recalled a prophecy (in which God revealed his future plans) made by the prophet Isaiah in the eight century BCE. Although it is written in the past tense, Isaiah is actually describing future events in which a person will come and suffer in behalf of others.

To do...

The character in this passage is often known as the 'suffering servant'.

It doesn't give his name or say who he was, but it does give some information about what he was like.

 Use three different colours to highlight where the passage shows that the suffering servant:

was blameless

suffered

was killed

Christians often identify the suffering servant with Jesus, because they believe that he was blameless and without sin, and that he suffered and died. They might refer to this passage as being a prophecy which foretells or predicts what Jesus would be like and what he would do.

*He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.*

*Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
By a perversion of justice he was taken away.
Who could have imagined his future?
For he was cut off from the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people.
They made his grave with the wicked
and his tomb with the rich,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

Isaiah chapter 53 verses 3-9

Acquainted – knowing

Despised – being hated

Transgression – something wrong, a sin

Infirmity – physical weakness

Afflicted – suffering

Iniquities – wickedness

Jesus' death, atonement and salvation

All Christians believe that Jesus is the saviour of the world, and that his death on the cross atoned for human sinfulness. Atonement is the idea that because people's sins have put them far from God, they need a way to put things right again. You can remember this in the form of the word - 'at-one-ment', making things at one again.

Christians believe that Jesus' atonement for their sins means that they are now saved from sin and are able to enter God's kingdom when they die.

Some see salvation as God's free gift to people who are Christians. Others believe that behaving well and living as they believe God wants them to is essential for their salvation. Catholics believe that living as God intended is only possible through the free gift of salvation that Jesus achieved by his life, death and resurrection.

Some, especially Catholics, believe that being baptised and taking part in the sacraments are also essential in achieving salvation.

To do...


 What do Catholics mean by 'suffering'?

The belief that Jesus suffered and died for humanity is central to the Catholic faith. The suffering of Jesus is known as 'the Passion'.

The crucifix is a reminder of this. Crucifixes can be found in all Catholic churches. Individual Catholics might also wear one.

Christians believe that the crucifixion shows that God is not a distant observer of human suffering, but that he understands what it means to suffer, because Jesus suffered on the cross.

To do...

 How might a belief that God, in the person of Jesus, understands what it is like to suffer change how a Catholic feels about suffering?

To do...



What do these Bible verses tell us about Jesus' teaching about suffering?

'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.'

John chapter 15 verse 13

*'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and **take up their cross** and follow me.'*

Mark chapter 8 verse 34

*'Whoever does not **carry the cross** and follow me cannot be my disciple.'*

Luke chapter 14 verse 27

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.'

Matthew chapter 5 verses 10–12

As they went to their place of execution, people who were going to be crucified were usually made to carry on their shoulders the cross-bar to which their hands would be nailed. Jesus used the image of carrying a cross to indicate that those who follow him might experience suffering as a result.

1 Corinthians Chapter 15

Why is the resurrection so important to Christians?

Many of the letters in the New Testament were written by Paul, an early Christian missionary and preacher. He had been travelling around the Mediterranean world teaching about Jesus and establishing churches for around ten years when he wrote his first letter to a group of Christians in Corinth, in Greece. It was probably written in 53 or 54 CE, about twenty-five years after the crucifixion of Jesus.

In these passages Paul explains what Jesus' death and resurrection means for Christians.

*For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that **Christ** died for our sins in accordance with the **scriptures**, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the **scriptures**, and that he appeared to **Cephas**, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.*



**1 Corinthians chapter 15
verses 3-7**

Paul gives Jesus the title 'Christ', which is the Greek word for the Messiah.



When Paul refers to the scriptures, he means the Old Testament. His letters were written before any of the gospels. Here he is referring to his belief that Jesus death and resurrection had been foretold in Old Testament prophecies (see p.28)

'Cephas' is the Greek word for 'rock'. It was a name which Jesus used for the disciple Peter, and it is Peter who Paul means here.

To do...

-  Highlight the reason Paul gives for why Christ died.
-  Highlight the people who Paul says have seen Jesus after the resurrection.

To do...

-  What can you say about Paul's view of the significance of Jesus if he calls him 'Christ'?
-  Do these events explain why Paul gives Jesus the title of 'Christ'?

1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 12-14

essential	optional
fundamental	vital
crucial	basic
necessary	possible
extra	simple

Thus it is written, 'The first man, *Adam*, became a living being'; the *last Adam* became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne *the image of the man of dust*, we will also bear *the image of the man of heaven*.

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trumpet*. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

*'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'
'Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?'*

**1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 45-49
and 51-55**

'Adam' and 'the first man' refer to Adam from Genesis. 'The last Adam' and 'the second man' are usually understood to mean Jesus.



To do...

-  Highlight what Paul says about the last Adam/second man.

Bearing 'the image of the man of dust' refers to our current life on earth and to our being like Adam, mortal and imperfect.

Wearing 'the image of the man of heaven' refers to the Christian belief in a future existence in heaven.

To do...

-  Paul expects a big change to take place 'at the last trumpet'. What will change?
-  Highlight the line in this passage which offers Christians the most hope of a future existence in heaven.

To think about...

-  This is a complicated passage which can be interpreted in different ways.

After studying it for yourself, choose two things that you would like to know to help you to understand it better.

Eschatology is the study of what happens at the 'end times' or the 'end of the world'. This includes death, judgement, the destination of the soul and what will happen to humankind at the end of time.

That 'the Son of Man' (i.e. Jesus) comes in his glory' is a reference to the Christian belief that one day, Jesus will return and everyone who has lived will have the quality and goodness of their life judged by him.

Jesus often referred to himself as 'the Son of Man'. In this passage, 'king' is also used as a metaphor for Jesus.


Eschatology

The sheep and the goats

In this passage from Matthew's Gospel, Jesus uses imagery which would have been familiar to people in Israel at the time when he lived, of a shepherd dividing his animals into different types. This passage is about what Christians call 'eschatology', beliefs about the last days of the world. ('Eschaton' means about the last things in ancient Greek.)

In this passage, it is Jesus who is speaking.


To do...

 As you read, highlight the things done, or not done, by people who are 'the sheep' (on the right) and by 'the goats' (on the left), using a different colour for each.

*'When the **Son of Man comes in his glory**, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then **the king** will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'*

Matthew chapter 25 verses 31-46

To do...

 How do people need to help others in order to be called 'righteous'?

The story of the sheep and the goats is a parable told by Jesus. Jesus wasn't describing an actual event – this is a story with symbolic meaning. There are different ways to interpret this story, but Christians often understand it as meaning that at the end of the world, Jesus will return and everyone who has lived will be judged by him. People who have lived a righteous life (the 'sheep') will go to heaven and the others, who have been unrighteous (the 'goats'), will go to hell.

Keywords...


Judgement. The belief that each individual will be held to account by God for the things they do, or don't do, while they are alive.


Heaven. Those who have accepted God's love and grace will enjoy eternal existence in God's presence. This experience of God is what Catholics call 'heaven'.


Hell. Those who reject God, his forgiveness and love will live outside God's love for eternity. This lack of God is called 'hell'.


Many Christians believe that once judgement happens, people will either be in heaven or hell for all eternity.

To do...

 List three actions which were done by 'the sheep'.

 List three actions which were done (or ought to have been done, but weren't) by 'the goats'.

 What will happen to the righteous people?

 What will happen to the unrighteous people?

 What does this passage tell Christians today about how to treat others?

 How might they put this into practice in their everyday lives?

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Jesus seems to use being carried away by the angels as a metaphor for going to heaven. Abraham is an Old Testament character, the forefather of the Jewish people.

Hades is the underworld, often understood to mean Hell.


When Abraham says "They have Moses and the prophets", he is referring to the Old Testament. Moses is traditionally thought to have been one of the authors of the Old Testament, and the prophetic books can also be found there.


*'There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was **carried away by the angels to be with Abraham**.*

*The rich man also died and was buried. In **Hades**, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames." But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us." He said, "Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment." Abraham replied, "**They have Moses and the prophets**; they should listen to them." He said, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."*


Luke chapter 16 verses 19-31

To do...

 What was Lazarus' earthly life like?

 What was his afterlife like?

To do...

 What was the rich man's earthly life like?

 What was his afterlife like?

The unmerciful servant

Another parable of judgement is the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, which is in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus told this parable in response to a question from the disciple Peter about how many times we have to forgive (see p.42)

*'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his **slaves**. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his Lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the Lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred **denarii**; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their Lord all that had taken place. Then his Lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his Lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'*

Matthew chapter 18 verses 23–35

In the time when Jesus lived, slavery was commonplace. Being sold into slavery was one of the usual punishments for leaving debts unpaid.

A denarius (denarii is plural) was a silver coin.

To do...

Under each character's name below, write how much they owed and draw an arrow to show which character they owed it to.

Next to their names, write what happened to each of them in the story.

In a different colour, write an adjective to describe how each character behaves.

The king


The first slave

The second slave

To do...

-  How was the first slave 'unmerciful'? How would he have behaved differently if he had been merciful?


-  'The key quote from this parable is "Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?"' Do you agree?

-  Explain what Christians might learn from this parable about ...
Judgement

What it means to be 'merciful'

All of these parables have the same theme: Jesus taught that each individual will be held to account by God for the things they do, or fail to do, during their lives.

To think about...

-  What should motivate Christians to be righteous and to do good deeds, love of God or fear of judgement?

Purgatory



Catholics believe that when people die, they either go to heaven or hell. They also believe that for most people who are destined for heaven, they cannot enter it immediately because they are not yet perfect and heaven is a place of perfection. So purgatory is a process of cleansing and perfecting for those who have already been saved. When a person dies, prayers are said for their soul so that their time in purgatory will be shortened before being received into heaven. Protestant Christians do not accept the idea of purgatory.

St. Paul used the image of fire in his first letter to the Corinthians. Fire is an image that is often connected with purgatory.



For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

1 Corinthians chapter 3 verses 11–15

To do...

-  Highlight wherever Paul uses the word 'fire' in this passage.
-  What does he say that the fire will do?

To do...

-  Explain Catholic beliefs about purgatory in 25 words or fewer.
-  How might a belief in purgatory affect a Catholic's daily life? Try to refer to one of the sacraments in your answer.

Catholics believe that, as with heaven and hell, when they speak about purgatory they are trying to explain something that is beyond human understanding. They believe that the emphasis is on God's mercy and love, and that even though humans are unworthy God wants us to be with him.

Prayer

Why is prayer significant for Catholics?

In the gospel accounts of his life, Jesus prays often. He taught his disciples to pray using the Lord's Prayer. Catholics see this prayer as a model that includes Adoration, Thanksgiving, Confession and Supplication (**ACTS**).

- **Adoration** - Catholics are encouraged to begin their prayer by adoring and praising God for who he is and for all that he has done. Catholics believe that God delights in praise.
- **Confession** - Catholics acknowledge to God that they have done things that were wrong. It's a time for them to express sorrow about what they have said, thought, or done that was not pleasing to God. They ask God to forgive them and they believe that he does so freely.
- **Thanksgiving** - being thankful to God for his love, protection and forgiveness.
- **Supplication and intercession** - praying for their needs and for the needs of others, such as friends, family, the sick, priests, missionaries, government leaders and persecuted Christians around the world. They may also pray for such things as God's guidance, wisdom, and opportunities to serve.

One place in the Bible where Jesus' teaching on prayer can be found is the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.


The Pharisees were a religious group that emphasised obedience to God's laws.

Tax collectors, on the other hand, were widely hated and thought to be corrupt.

*He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. The **Pharisee**, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this **tax-collector**. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income." But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.'*

Luke chapter 18 verses 9–14

To do...

 What does this parable teach Christians about how they should approach prayer?

Christians believe that God hears prayers, but that doesn't mean that he will always give people what they want. Many Christians believe God will answer prayer in his own way and that he will do what is best in the long term, which might not be to grant everything someone asks for, responding to what he knows we need and not to what we think we need. Catholics believe that God's wisdom is greater than ours in what is best for us.

Our Father, in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors; and do not bring us to the time of trial, but deliver us from the evil one.

The 'Our Father' prayer, Matthew chapter 6 verses 9–13


But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.


Matthew chapter 6 verse 6

"Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew chapter 7 verses 7–8

To do...

 Use 'A', 'C', 'T' and 'S' to label the different parts of the 'Our Father' prayer. What does Matthew chapter 6 verse 6 teach about private prayer?

 Using a Bible, look up times when Jesus went to pray in John chapter 11 verse 41, Mark chapter 14 verse 36 and Luke chapter 23 verse 46. Why do you think Jesus went to pray?

The Hail Mary and the Rosary

The Hail Mary is an important prayer for Catholics in which they ask Mary, Jesus' mother, to intercede for them. The main part of the prayer is taken from Luke's Gospel where the angel Gabriel tells Mary she is going to give birth to God's Son. The Hail Mary is the main prayer of the rosary, a series of beads divided into (usually) five sets of ten beads each known as a 'decade'. As they progress through the decades, Catholics meditate on the important events in the lives of Jesus and Mary as a form of prayer.

Forgiveness

What did Jesus teach about forgiveness?

Forgiveness is at the heart of the gospel message. Jesus' example and teaching shows Christians that they should treat others with compassion, love, mercy and forgiveness.

Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'

Matthew chapter 18 verses 21–22


Peter was one of Jesus' disciples. In saying that he would forgive people seven times he might have thought he was being exceptionally forgiving. Christians think Jesus reply means that they should forgive as many times as it takes.


The importance of forgiveness is emphasised in the Lord's Prayer. Christians ask God to forgive their sins, as they forgive those who have sinned against them. This means Christians can only expect to receive forgiveness from God if they are forgiving towards others.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew chapter 6 verses 14–15

To do...

-  Write a summary of Jesus' teaching about forgiveness from these two short passages, using at least 15 words but not more than 30.

-  How do you think that Peter felt when told by Jesus that he had to keep forgiving people indefinitely?

There are many other examples from Jesus' life for Christians to follow.

- He forgave the woman caught in adultery (John chapter 8 verses 1–11) telling her to 'go and sin no more'.
- He showed forgiveness in the last moments of his life as he was being put to death (Luke chapter 23 verse 34). While he was on the cross he said, 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.'

To do...

 What do Catholics mean by the term 'forgiveness'?

Christians believe that God's forgiveness is


- available to anyone
- total (any and all wrongdoings can be forgiven)
- an act of grace (things God does for people even though they do not deserve them)

All Christians believe that forgiveness requires them to repent, which is to be sorry for their sins and live differently in future.

Protestant churches usually place most emphasis on each individual Christian's personal repentance to God. For example, in Anglican church services, there is usually a time when the worshippers pray silently for forgiveness, after which the vicar declares that their sins are forgiven (which is known as 'absolution').

In the Catholic Church, personal repentance is also important, but in addition there is the Sacrament of Reconciliation (which is often known simply as 'confession'). In this an individual confesses his or her sins to a priest. They then receive from the priest absolution and a penance (which is something which they should do in order to reinforce the change in the way they live).

To do...

 Create a mind map to summarise Christian beliefs about forgiveness, including beliefs from different denominations.

Christians don't believe that being forgiven by God means that things which they have done wrong will have no consequences. Christianity also emphasises the importance of reconciliation, which is the healing and rebuilding of relationships which have been damaged.

To find out...

 Find out about a Catholic organisation which works towards reconciliation.

To think about...

 Which of these statements best reflects Catholic beliefs about forgiveness?

'Forgiveness goes two ways. We cannot expect God to be merciful to us if we don't show mercy to everyone we meet.'

'It is important to go on forgiving forever. Nothing is unforgiveable.'

'The most difficult thing about Christian teaching on forgiveness is that it means there isn't punishment for wrongdoing.'

Capital punishment

What do Christians believe about the death penalty?

Capital punishment (the death penalty) has not been legal in the United Kingdom since 1965, but it is still allowed in around 58 countries around the world.

Many Christians will want to base their views about serious issues such as capital punishment on what they read in the Bible. However, within the Bible, Christians can find different teachings which appear to say very different things about capital punishment. In some ways, this isn't surprising – the Bible was written by different authors and in different situations and reflects the times it was written in (look back to what p.1–2 says about how Catholics interpret the Bible). However, it does mean that Christians don't always reach the same conclusions about big issues such as this.

As well as the Bible, Christian responses to issues such as capital punishment might be influenced by other factors, including their own conscience and the teachings of their church, which for Catholics will include the teachings of the Pope and the magisterium. The Catholic Catechism maintains that capital punishment is inadmissible.

We are going to use three verses from different parts of the Bible to investigate this issue.




*Whoever sheds the blood of a human,
by a human shall that person's blood
be shed;
for in his own image
God made humankind.*

Genesis chapter 9 verse 6

This verse is part of a passage with promises God made to Noah after the great flood. This promise made between God and humanity, in which God blesses humanity but requires them to follow some of his rules, is known as a covenant.

By 'sheds human blood', it means 'to kill someone'.

To do...


-  What is the reason given for why those who kill someone else must themselves be killed?
-  Can you remember where else in the Bible it refers to humankind being 'in the image of God'?
-  Why might a Christian feel that he or she ought to follow this rule?

eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot

Exodus chapter 21 verse 24

This verse comes from the part of the Bible in which God gives to Moses laws for the people of Israel to follow. The rule from which this verse comes is actually about how to punish someone who seriously injures a woman who is pregnant, but it is also used as a general principle for punishments – whatever injury someone inflicts, they must suffer themselves. At the time they were given this rule, the people of Israel were living in the desert after having escaped from slavery in Egypt. There were no courts, police or prisons where wrongdoers could be locked up.

To do...

 How far do you agree with the following statements?

This law is harsh and cruel.


This law is harsh, but it was necessary to have firm laws.

This law is fair, because it means that the punishment fits the crime.

This law is fair, because it is consistent.

This law treats the rich and the poor alike.

This law prevents violence from escalating.


 How might this verse be seen by a Christian as supporting the use of the death penalty for murder?

'You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other also.'


Matthew chapter 5 verses 38–39

Jesus' commandments in the Sermon on the Mount are often taken to be the key tenets of Christian life. These verses are from a part of the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus takes teachings from the Old Testament and adds to them (see p.24–27).

To do...

 One argument that can be made for capital punishment is that society should be able to take revenge on a wrongdoer. Does what Jesus says in this verse support or contradict this argument? Explain how.

To do...

 How might the verses used in this topic influence how a Christian thinks about capital punishment?

Colour code these different views about capital punishment, to show which support it and which oppose it. Match them up to the Bible verses opposite.

The Old Testament teaches that the death penalty should be used for some crimes.

The overall message of Christianity is love and forgiveness so capital punishment goes against this.

There is a progression in what the Bible says about capital punishment – the Old Testament is harsh but fair, the New Testament emphasises forgiveness. We no longer live in time when harshness was necessary, so we shouldn't need the death penalty.

Jesus said that revenge is wrong. Jesus taught us not to seek revenge, but to turn the other cheek.

The death penalty upholds the commandment 'You shall not murder' (Exodus 20:13) by showing the seriousness of murder as a crime.

Christianity teaches that all life is sacred. If murder is wrong, so is capital punishment. Only God has the right to give and take away life.

*Whoever sheds the blood of a human,
by a human shall that person's blood
be shed;
for in his own image
God made humankind.*

Genesis chapter 9 verse 6

*eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for
hand, foot for foot*

Exodus chapter 21 verse 24

*You have heard that it was said, "Eye
for eye, and tooth for tooth." But I tell
you, do not resist an evil person. If
anyone slaps you on the right cheek,
turn to them the other cheek also.*

Matthew chapter 5 verses 38–39

*Another part of the Bible (say which
part you use)*

To do...



'Christians shouldn't support capital punishment.'

Plan an answer for this question which includes both sides of the argument.

Can you give two or more arguments in favour and against and reach a judgement?

Can you include at least one Bible quote to back up a point of view?

To do...



In this topic, we have only used single verses from the Bible instead of whole passages. What are the advantages and disadvantages of basing an argument on:

a single Bible verse

a Bible passage

either the Old Testament or the New Testament

the entire Bible