
Lesson Plans for World Religions

Correlated with Curriculum Guidelines for Adolescent Catechesis and Confirmation, Diocese of Buffalo, 2004.

Lesson Plan #1: *Judaism – People of the Covenant* (World Religions pp.49-52)

SUPPLIES: Ten Commandments on cards (see activity below)
Blackboard and chalk/newsprint
Printouts of the Thirteen Articles for small groups

TIPS FOR FACILITATING DISCUSSION

Let them answer the questions – waiting for answers is important

Reflective listening – repeat back what they say so that everyone hears it

As discussion goes on invite responses from the introverts (more quiet students)

*Please note that the possible discussion responses in italics are only suggestions. Feel free to come up with other discussion questions. The young people’s responses may take the discussion in a different direction than given in the lesson plan. If that direction corresponds to the theme facilitate it through that.

ACTIVITY: Tell the young people that for this activity they need to stand if the stated criteria applies to them.

15 min.

Stand if

You ever made a pinky promise with someone

You took an oath for a club you belong to

As a Boy Scout or Girl Scout you made a promise (You could ask those who stand to recite the Scout promise if they want to)

You have made and kept a promise

DISCUSSION: What is so important about a promise?

It is your word. It is a commitment.

Our topic for this session is Judaism. Promises are central to this religion.

COVENANT PEOPLE: God’s desire for an ongoing relationship with His people is a central point in Judaism. The result of God’s desire was the covenants that He made with them. Ask the young people to define what a covenant is

10 min.

Covenant = the binding agreement between God and His people.

The first covenant was between God and Abraham.

There was a covenant between God and Noah – the rainbow is a sign of it.

The Ten Commandments were placed in the Ark of the Covenant.

It is important to understand covenant because in Christianity Jesus is the fulfillment of the covenant. Covenants were sealed with sacrifices. Abraham and his descendants would sacrifice animals as a sign of the covenant. Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice for Christians.

PEOPLE OF THE LAW

ACTIVITY: Ask for 10 volunteers. Give each volunteer a piece of paper with one of the Commandments on it. Tell them to hold their Commandment in front of them and stand in a line that puts the Commandments in correct order.

15 min.

The Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
4. Honor your father and mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

A PERSECUTED PEOPLE:

Destruction of the temple (many times)

Western Wall –the platform of the former Temple that was destroyed by Romans in 70C.E.

Holocaust

Family ritual – they have many beautiful family prayer services as part of their tradition

10 min.

MAIMONIDES (pronounced my-mon-a-dees): He is recognized as the greatest Jewish philosopher. He avidly studied the Torah. He developed the Thirteen Articles of Judaism to explain their essential beliefs. Divide the class into three groups. Give each group a section of this poetic form of the Thirteen Articles. Their task is to read it and compare it to our understanding of God. They also need to relate it to the Jewish people – why would these beliefs about God be so important to them. They will describe it to the rest of the class.

15 min.

Thirteen Articles of Jewish Faith:

We praise the living God,
For ever praise His name,
Who was and is and is to be
For e'er the same;
The One eternal God
Before our world appears,
And there can be no end of time
Beyond His years.

Without a form is He,
Nor can we comprehend
The measure of His love for us—
Without an end.
For He is Lord of all,
Creation speaks His praise.
The human race and all that grows
His will obeys.

He knows our every thought,
Our birth and death ordains;
He understands our fervent dreams,
Our hopes and our pains.
Eternal life has He
Implanted in our soul.
We dedicate our life to Him—
His way, our goal!

A Member of the Division of Catholic Education

CLOSURE: Get 3/5 responses to the following depending on time:
I now know . . .

5 min.

I still wonder about . . .

I understand . . .

CLOSE WITH A PRAYER

Compiled and written by Denise Heineman York, Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministry
Phone (716) 847-8789
Email: dyork@buffalodiocese.org

Lesson Plan #2: CHRISTIANITY (World Religions pp.52 – 56)

- a. To present a brief overview of the history of Christianity as a worldwide religion.

The history of Christianity details a movement from a small Jewish sect begun in Palestine to the world's largest religion today. Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire and later the Byzantine Empire. Though Christianity eventually established strong ties between Church and state, internally Christianity was constantly fighting to maintain its unity. Doctrinal differences, cultural differences, and church corruption all contributed to these ongoing divisions. (Using material like Channing Co. 'History of the Roman Catholic Church' give a brief history emphasizing the 2 schisms, the Renaissance, the Reformation.)

- b. Since the history of Christianity begins with Jesus of Nazareth, here we present the life of Jesus, focusing on His public ministry, His death and Resurrection.

Activity: 1. Ask students "What are the many names or titles Christians gave to Jesus over the centuries?" List all the names the students come up with on the board. Call on volunteers to share what each name says about the kind of person Jesus is.

2. Show some segments from Zefereilli's *Jesus of Nazareth*. After the viewing ask the students what they found attractive about Jesus and His message and what they found disturbing.

3. Show the video *Secret Ambition* by Michael W. Smith from Two by Four. Scripture References included .

- c. To present some major doctrines believed by all Christians.

1. Have the students read the Apostles Creed and then compare it to the Nicene Creed. As is evident, both of these creeds have similar outlines. They both begin with God the Father, followed by Jesus and concluded with the Holy Spirit and other beliefs. The Nicene Creed is more complete in its articulation of Jesus. They present the basics of Christianity. (The teacher could divide up one of the creeds on different sheets of newsprint and have class put the pieces together correctly as they talk about each section.)

2. Divide the class into four groups. Have each group do some research on one of these Christian themes: Trinity, Sin, Salvation, Scripture.

Trinity: Like Jews, Christians believe in one and only one God. God is the creator of all things, both visible and invisible. In addition, Christians believe God is all-knowing, all-loving, and all-powerful. God is present everywhere and is unchanging. God desires only the best for all creation. However, Christians hold that there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in one God. This doctrine of the Holy Trinity is central to Christian faith

Sin: An understanding of sin helps us understand why Christians need Jesus. Sin is an offense against God. For Christians, Adam and Eve were the first sinners. God commanded them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but Adam and Eve disobeyed. Thus, the first sin of humankind was the sin of disobedience.

Christians believe the sin of Adam and Eve “closed the gates of Heaven” and this sin – known as original sin – became a part of the human condition. Original sin is washed away in Christian baptism though the propensity of humans to commit actual sins remains.

Salvation: God chose to redeem humankind through Jesus. Though people sin, they can be reconciled to God. There is nothing more pleasing to God than one who turns away from wrongdoing and returns to God. There is no sin that God cannot forgive. Christians believe that those who truly follow Jesus and his way of living are saved. When they die, they will be fully united with Jesus in heaven.

Scriptures: The word scripture means “writings”. The holy writings used by Christians are collectively called the Bible. The Bible is a book of books. The Christian Bible includes the Hebrew Scriptures used by Jews known as the Old Testament. The New Testament includes the gospels which are the stories of the life of Jesus, as well as epistles or letters of the early Christian communities. Christians use the Bible in both public and private settings. The Bible offers instruction on Christian living. Besides the Ten Commandments found in the Old Testament, Christians follow the Great Commandment of the New Testament: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”(Mt.22:38-39)

- d. To talk about the importance of the Church building as a **sacred place**. Mention the exterior architecture of a church building as well as its interior with an altar, a tabernacle, a lectern, a cross, statues. Plan a class visit to a few Christian churches or allow volunteers from the class tell about their church.
- e. To mention **sacred times** to the class. For all Christians, **Sunday** is a holy day. We associate Sunday with the resurrection of Jesus so each Sunday becomes a “little Easter”. All Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter. Many Christians expand their celebration to the Christmas cycle and the Easter cycle. The Christmas cycle includes Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany while the Easter cycle contains Lent, Easter, and Pentecost.
Prayer is another sacred time for Christians. Prayer is a two-way conversation between God and an individual or group. Prayer can be formal or informal, long or short, verbal or silent. Prayer can involve singing. Different postures and different gestures can be used at different times for prayer. A person can pray anytime or anywhere. The Lord’s Prayer taught to the disciples by Jesus, is the one prayer common to all Christians! Have the students reflect on the Lord’s prayer. (A great resource is “If God Could Speak” from Vine and Branches I by Mary Ann Hakowski, St. Mary’s Press 1992.)
Sacraments are sacred times where Christians meet Christ.
- f. A major **symbol** for Christianity is the **cross**. The cross without a body is a symbol of the risen Jesus, the Jesus that Christians believe is present in all creation. The cross has both a vertical and a horizontal beam. The place where the beams meet symbolizes the place where the God of heaven is made flesh on earth. In turn, because of the life of Jesus, humans can participate in the divine.

“SECRET AMBITION”
Performed by Michael W. Smith

A young man up on a hillside
Teaching new ways.
Each word winning them over.
Each heart a candle flame.
Old men watch from the outside,
Guarding their prey.
Threatened by the voice of a paragon,
Leading their lambs away.
Leading them far away.

NOBODY KNEW HIS SECRET AMBITION
NOBODY KNEW HIS CLAIM TO FAME
HE BROKE THE OLD RULES STEEPED IN TRADITION
HE TORE THE HOLY VEIL AWAY
QUESTIONING THOSE IN POWERFUL POSITION
RUNNING TO THOSE WHO CALLED HIS NAME
BUT NOBODY KNEW HIS SECRET AMBITION
WAS TO GIVE HIS LIFE AWAY

His rage shaking the temple.
His word to the wise.
His hand healing on the seventh day.
His love wearing no disguise.
Some say death to the radical
He’s way out of line.
Some way praised be the miracle;
God sends a blessed sign.
A blessed sign for troubled times.

NOBODY KNEW HIS SECRET AMBITION
NOBODY KNEW HIS CLAIM TO FAME
HE BROKE THE OLD RULES STEEPED IN TRADITION
HE TORE THE HOLY VEIL AWAY
QUESTIONING THOSE IN POWERFUL POSITION
RUNNING TO THOSE WHO CALLED HIS NAME
BUT NOBODY KNEW HIS SECRET AMBITION
WAS TO GIVE HIS LIFE AWAY

NO, NO! NO, NO! I tell you nobody knew.
Until He gave His life away.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Jesus’ time in the desert	Luke 4: 1-2
Sermon on the Mount	Matthew 5: 1-12
A Woman’s Faith	Mark 7: 25-29

Healing boy with the demon	Mark 9: 20-27
Roman officer's daughter	Matthew 9: 18, 23-25
Praying in the desert	Luke 5: 15-16
Jesus goes to the temple	Mark 11: 15-17
Man with the withered hand	Luke 6: 6-10
Sanhedrin meeting	Matthew 26: 1-5
Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem	John 12: 12-13
Pharisees try to trap Jesus	Matthew 22: 15-22
Jesus & the children	Matthew 19: 13-15
The Last Supper	Matthew 26: 26-29
The Passion	John 19
The Resurrection	John 20: 1-7
Living Water	John 7: 37-38
	Matthew 28: 19-20

Compiled and written by Elaine Dankowski, Department of Lifelong Faith Formation
 Phone (716) 847-5516
 Email: edankowski@buffalodiocese.org

Rev. 3-09