

The Stories of God's People

In this unit students explore the Bible as the sacred story of God's relationship with God's People. In Part 1 they learn about some key figures and events of the Old Testament. In Part 2 they explore the concept of the Kingdom of God as it is expressed in some of the parables of the New Testament.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#109 In Sacred Scripture God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.
(See *Compendium #19 How is Sacred Scripture to be read?*)

#136 God is the author of Sacred Scripture because he inspired its human authors; he acts in them and by means of them. He thus gives assurance that their writings teach without error his saving truth.
(See *Compendium #18 Why does Sacred Scripture teach the truth?*)

#104 In Sacred Scripture the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, 'but as what it really is, the word of God'. In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them.
(See *Compendium #24 What role does Sacred Scripture play in the life of the Church?*)

#125 The *gospels* are the heart of all the Scriptures 'because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Saviour'.
(See *Compendium #22 What importance does the New Testament have for Christians?*)

#2653 The Church specially exhorts all the Christian faithful ... to frequent reading of the divine Scriptures ... Let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading. For 'we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read'.
(See *Compendium #570 What is meditation?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Stories are a means through which people express who they are, where they have been and what they value and believe.

The Old Testament tells how the Hebrew people were formed and how they experienced God. The New Testament tells us how the early Christian community was formed, how they experienced the Risen Christ and how God is revealed through Jesus Christ.

What biblical stories are significant to you? In what ways do these texts resonate with you?

Are there particular biblical texts that have taken on special meaning at key times in your life? What sense of God do they give you?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Many students at this level enjoy reading, listening to, watching and telling stories. They are also still gradually becoming familiar with biblical stories. Allow them to explore and enjoy the stories and their characters, and to ponder and wonder about the God who is revealed in these sacred texts.

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Mt 13: 33 Parable of the Yeast

Chapter 13 of Matthew's Gospel is entirely devoted to parables and is often called the parabolic discourse or dialogue. The parables relate to the Kingdom or Reign of God, and Chapter 13 is the centre and high point of the gospel. The Greek word for 'parable' means *a comparison*, while the Hebrew word is broader, meaning *sayings, stories* and even *riddles*. So parables are stories about ordinary life but with a depth of mystery and meaning that can change as our understanding matures. This parable of the yeast is a simple one-liner, but profound in the beauty of its imagery of the hidden and all-pervasiveness of the kingdom. Just as yeast spreads through bread unseen, so the Kingdom of God is everywhere in the world and in people's lives.

Mt 13: 44–46 The Treasure and the Pearl

Here are two short stories from Jesus, again told in parable form. There seem to be at least two levels of meaning here. First the pricelessness of the kingdom – it is both a treasure and a very expensive pearl. And listeners are encouraged and empowered to willingly, joyfully and with great abandon give up all to obtain it. It is the chance of a lifetime. There are no half measures. But what is the Kingdom or the Reign of God? All the parables of this chapter discuss it. Is it God's presence among people and their nearness to God? Is it God's loving care and covenant in their lives? Is it all this and more – all one could ever dream of? Treasures and pearls are the stuff of dreams. Dreams do come true. What is my dream for the kingdom? What is it in my life?

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Decorate the prayer place with the images and symbols that will be explored in this unit, e.g. different copies of the Bible, the related big books, treasure box, pearls, mustard seeds and a bowl of flour. These symbols can be used as a focus for prayer at various times throughout the unit.
- Sing a hymn or song about the Bible as the word of God, or create a rhythm for the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 1, p. 13.
- Form a Procession of the Word as a way of showing reverence for the Bible. Incorporate this Procession of the Word in prayer. Sing as you process. A good song for this purpose is 'Sing for Joy' (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP

Publications) as clapping and dancing can be incorporated. The responses from the Liturgy of the Word in the Mass could be used before and after the reading.

- Gather around the prayer place. Light a candle and pray the 'Our Father' together. Tell the children they are also precious; add photos of the children or cards with their names to the treasure box. Conclude with the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 16, p. 121.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edition, Book 1: Chapter 1, God's Book, the Bible; Chapter 13, The Kingdom of God; Chapter 14, And It Grew and Grew; Chapter 15, Great Changes; Chapter 16, Look Until You Find It.

Faith concepts: story, communication, relationship, tradition.

Understandings:

The Bible is a collection of different stories about God and God's people.

The Old Testament tells us stories about God's people and God's relationship with God's people.

The New Testament tells us stories about God's son, Jesus Christ, and his relationships with others.

The Bible is a sacred book that has been handed down through the years.

Story involves listening, thinking about the story and responding to the story.

Unit specific learning:

Students will learn about <i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	Students will learn to <i>Reasoning & Responding</i>	Students will undertake to <i>Personal & Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The two main parts of the Bible: Old and New Testaments.• Some of the characters and events in both testaments.• The teachings or messages in parables about the Kingdom of God.• Ways in which Christians can help the Kingdom of God to grow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on ways they can help the Kingdom of God to grow by living the Word of God.• Express their understanding and perceptions of biblical stories and characters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage in songs about God's word.• Be part of an action that helps the Kingdom of God to grow in a classroom, family, etc.

Part 1: The Bible

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The Bible is the word of God written in human words. It is a collection of books written by many authors over many thousands of years. The two main sections are the Old Testament, written in Hebrew before the time of Jesus, and the New Testament, written in Greek after the time of Jesus</p> <p>God is revealed in the Bible. In reading the stories about the people and events in the Bible we discover the truth about God and about the people of God.</p> <p>The Church has gestures and rituals that express our reverence for the Bible as Sacred Scripture. The ambo or lectern gives the Scriptures a place of importance within the church building. We listen to the Word of God in the Liturgy of the Word and when we gather as a community to pray. We stand for the proclamation of the gospel during the Mass. These are gestures that remind us of the importance of the Word of God.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Students identify their favourite story, its characters and storyline. Share this orally with a partner.</p> <p>Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 1, p. 4.</p> <p>Wondering Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder if there are any stories you like to hear over and over? I wonder why people tell stories? I wonder what stories are very special to you and your family?</p> <p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students write a story about someone special in their lives and read it to the class <p>Suggested Home Activity Students ask a family member to tell them a family story from their past. Students share this story orally with a partner.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>One way to model the belief that the Bible is the Word of God and show reverence for it is to keep a copy of the Bible in a place within the classroom – a sacred space or prayer space. Be mindful of how you show reverence for the Bible when using the Scriptures with the class. In order to bring children to a greater appreciation of the Bible as sacred, teachers need to highlight this reverence for the Bible within the classroom. This is possible in early primary years as children do not have individual copies of the Bible in class. By showing reverence and care for the Bible as it is used in the classroom, children will hopefully grow to care for the Bible as they use it.</p> <p>The parables used in this unit are useful for exploring the place of the Bible in the life of the Church. The parables of the pearl, the hidden treasure and the yeast are all parables of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is one of peace and love, justice and integrity.</p> <p>While giving children time to imagine what this Kingdom of God is like, the focus is on the special place of the Bible in revealing God and the Kingdom. When each person and the community hear and live the Word of God, the Kingdom grows. We build the fullness of the Kingdom and wait for its fulfilment in the end time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students brainstorm what they know about the Bible. • Students write questions they have about the Bible. • Students brainstorm any characters or stories from the Bible they can recall. Teacher reads one of the stories from Scripture and compares it to the child's version. • Students may bring in a special Bible from home to share with the class. • Play Chinese Whispers with the students. The teacher whispers a message to the first student in the circle. They then whisper it to the person next to them, and so on around the circle. The last student then says the message out loud. Discuss what happened to the message as it went around the circle. • Invite an Indigenous person into the class to tell stories that are significant in their culture. 	<p>Assessment for Learning</p> <p>These tasks will indicate what knowledge, perceptions and experience of the Bible students bring to the topic.</p>

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Telling the Story <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 1, pp. 5–11.</p> <p>Wondering I wonder why it is important for us to listen to stories about God? I wonder if you know any stories about God? I wonder if you know any special stories that Jesus Christ told? I wonder where you would see the Bible?</p> <p>Responding In groups students illustrate stories from the Old Testament and New Testament. These are then displayed, and the class discusses the differences between the two collections of stories.</p> <p>Telling the Story Visit the church with the priest/parishioner. Show the students the lectern and explain that this is where the Word of God is proclaimed.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit the sacred space in the classroom where the Bible is kept. Make a special focus of this area. Read a story from the Bible for daily prayer. • Explain that the Old Testament has stories about God’s people: the people who waited and prepared for Jesus. • During the course of the unit students explore the stories related to the following characters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Noah – Abraham – Sarah – Joseph – Moses • Students record discoveries about the Old Testament stories. Students are given an organiser that resembles an open book. Students can record their discoveries from the Old Testament on the left page of the book. 	<p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>Students demonstrate their ability to retell the story of a figure from the Old Testament.</p>
	<p>Praying the Word</p> <p>Students participate in a simple prayer ritual focusing on the notion of story.</p>	

Part 2: New Testament

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Parables are the stories that Jesus Christ used to teach the people. These riddles or lessons were used to explain, with simplicity, profound truths and realisations, e.g. The Story of the Sower; The Good Samaritan; The Forgiving Father.</p> <p>Miracle stories were carefully recorded by the authors of the gospels. In these stories people came to Jesus for healing of body or mind. Jesus broke with Jewish tradition (e.g. touching a woman, a dead body or a leper) and in his compassion healed the sufferer. Jesus often asked the person if they wished to be healed, and then admonished them to sin no more. The encounter with Jesus Christ was often enough to perform the miracle, e.g. Zacchaeus, the woman taken in adultery, the woman at the well.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Brainstorm with students what they know about Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>Assessment for Learning This activity will indicate students' prior knowledge, perceptions and understandings of Jesus Christ.</p>
	<p>Set up a carousel of activities based on New Testament stories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Computer Station: The Refuel website has three New Testament stories that students can view and hear. See the Resources section below for the Web address. 2. Video station of a New Testament story, e.g. The Christmas Story. 3. Feltboard story characters or concrete materials to retell New Testament stories. 4. New Testament picture story books. 5. Listening Post or MP3 player with songs or audio version of gospel stories. 	
	<p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students use their book organisers and record New Testament discoveries (illustrating words, symbols, pictures, etc.) on the right 	<p>Assessment of Learning The statements will indicate the development of students' knowledge and understanding of the Bible.</p>

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>page.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students make statements to explain what they have found out about the Bible. These statements can be recorded below the open book organiser or in a workbook. 	
	<p>Telling the Story Choose a story that is relevant, e.g. a story the students all know, or something that has happened in the yard, etc. that the students can retell. Choose four people to tell the story, without any of them hearing each other's version.</p>	
<p>The four gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – were probably written in the years following AD 60. Each gospel paints a unique portrait of Jesus Christ. The gospel authors would have been influenced by the memory and needs of the Church community for which their gospel was written.</p>	<p>Wondering Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder what you noticed about the four stories? I wonder why the stories were different?</p> <p>Responding Explain that the New Testament has four versions of stories about Jesus written by four different people named Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.</p> <p>Wondering Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder why these people told stories</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The Kingdom of God is God's reign and presence with us in the here and now, and the hope of coming to its fullness in the Kingdom to come. The stories of the Kingdom in Scripture – e.g. the pearl of great price, a treasure, a lost coin – remind us that the Kingdom is so valuable and important that we must be prepared to sacrifice everything to be part of it.</p> <p>The Beatitudes give us the ideal way of living life. To be poor in spirit, meek, merciful, pure of heart, to seek after justice and peace and have compassion are the fruits of a life devoted to spreading the Kingdom.</p>	<p>about Jesus Christ? I wonder what we can learn about Jesus from these stories?</p> <p>Telling the Story Choose from the following stories and activities to develop the students' understanding of the Kingdom of God. Explain that Jesus Christ was a storyteller whose stories had a message and taught us how to live.</p> <p>Chapter 13: The Kingdom of God Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 13, pp. 96–101.</p> <p>Explore the Beatitudes, illustrating each verse and creating a class book.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create a Kingdom wall with bricks on it, recording on each brick, words that describe what the Kingdom is like, and that we need to build it up. – Create a character who shows how to build the Kingdom. – Write a prayer asking God to help us bring about the Kingdom of God. <p>Chapter 14: And It Grew and Grew Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 14, pp. 104–107.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Plant seedlings and discuss what they need in order to grow. – At the same time plant seedlings that 	<p>Assessment of Learning This activity will indicate students' ability to identify ways in which they can participate in the Kingdom of God.</p>

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>are placed in a cupboard or dark place where they are not nurtured and looked after, and discuss the effects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Compare this with what is needed to make God’s Kingdom grow, e.g. love, nurturing. – Make a Kingdom Tree from paper. Students are invited to write on the leaves things we need to do to keep the Tree growing, e.g. be kind, tolerant, loving, honest. <p>Chapter 15: Great Changes Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 15, pp. 110–114.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Make bread and discuss the ingredient that is needed to make it grow/change. Discuss with the students that yeast is like the Kingdom of God that keeps growing. – Students illustrate their favourite part. <p>Complete the sentence: ‘The Kingdom of God is like ...’</p> <p>Chapter 16: Look Until You Find It Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 16, pp. 116–120.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create a treasure box. Invite students to bring along photos of themselves to place in the box as precious gifts. – Students draw, paint or write about 	<p>Assessment of Learning This activity will indicate students’ understanding of how they can contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God.</p>

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>something that is precious to them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Read the story <i>Wilfred Gordon Macdonald Partridge</i> by Mem Fox. – Students write a prayer asking God to help them to bring about the Kingdom 	
	<p>Responding Students choose a way to respond and demonstrate their understanding of stories from the Bible and the discoveries that they have made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a portrait of a character in the Bible. • Students choose their favourite story to roleplay using themselves, playdough, concrete materials or feltboard characters. • Students create their own short story with illustrations on a folded strip and glue into an empty matchbox. (Matchboxes can be collected to form a set of mini class Bible stories.) • Create an action plan of how you can help the Kingdom of God to grow in our classroom, our school, your family. 	<p>Assessment of Learning These tasks will enable students to demonstrate their understandings and perceptions of the biblical stories they have explored.</p>
	<p>Praying the Word Students sing a song from <i>Great Times With Jesus</i> by Kate Abba and Julia Abrahams. Consider singing 'The Word of God' and 'Pass it on'.</p> <p>Students participate in a class liturgy focusing</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	on the Word of God.	

RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Book 1: Chapter 1, God's Book, the Bible; Chapter 13, The Kingdom of God; Chapter 14, And It Grew and Grew; Chapter 15, Great Changes; Chapter 16, Look Until You Find It.

CDs

Farrell, B 2000, 'Sing for Joy' in *Share the Light*, OCP Publications.

Student Resources

Fox, M 1984, *Wilfred Gordon Macdonald Partridge*, Omnibus, Australia.

Websites

At the Refuel website students can view and hear the Parable of the Lost Sheep, the Parable of the Good Samaritan and the Healing of the Blind Man

<http://www.refuel.org.uk/curric/infant_topics/new_testament/new_testament.html>

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 2 standards.

Students interpret biblical stories and stories in Church Tradition by making a response and expressing their own ideas, feelings and perceptions.