



Protestant Council Of Rwanda

Brot
für die Welt
Pain pour le Monde -
Service protestant
de développement

Summary

The search for peace is the major concern for any society and every individual. In fact, human beings are in a permanent strife to survive and live; and every single characteristic of better life might be seen as contributing to peace. However, the world is always in struggle that prevent it to attain the real peace. And if peace is found as the lack of wars and troubles, it does not last or prevail in normal circumstances of life experience. Some people think peace can be found in material wealth but loose it throughout.

The Book “**Sustainable Peace in the Word of God**” is a contribution to the Religious Education for Senior Four Students. All through the reading and learning, they will get the consciousness about the better use of the Holy Scripture (Bible), relating them to practical life experience. This book covers three units: The Bible and its importance; the New Commandment; and Faith and decision making.

The first unit shows in thematic and comprehensive way, the basis, message, uses and importance of the Bible. It aims at enabling people to read it systematically and purposefully in order to apply its message towards a successful life.

The second unit links the two main parts of the Bible (Old Testament and New Testament) to their essential message: love is the centre; the everlasting foundation and the achievement of the Scripture.

The third unit puts into relation the faith and decision making with the cultivation of inner peace. It describes different steps and techniques of building inner peace, this will leading to lasting peace in general since peace starts from within. Therefore, readers, students and educators will gain through the use of the lessons from the Bible and practical techniques of inner peace towards the lasting and sustainable peace.



Senior Four

Sustainable Peace in the Word of God

2016

Protestant Council of Rwanda
Religious Education
Manual Upper secondary School
Senior Four
26-Aug-16



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Foreword

This content of the Protestant religion program has been designed for all members of the Protestant Churches which are members of the Protestant Council of Rwanda (CPR), namely:

- Pentecostal Church of Rwanda (ADEPR)
- Association of Baptist Churches in Rwanda (AEBR)
- Evangelical Friends Church of Rwanda (AEER)
- 7th Day Adventist Church (EA 7th day in Rwanda)
- Free Methodist Church in Rwanda (EMLR)
- Harvest Christian Church in Rwanda (HCC)
- Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (EPR)
- Anglican Church of Rwanda (EAR) (with 10 dioceses)
- Lutheran Church in Rwanda (ELR)
- Union of Baptist Churches in Rwanda (UEBR)
- Salvation Army (SA)

In addition to these protestant churches, there are also five Christian associations member of CPR who are equally the recipient of this document. Those are namely: Barakabaho Foundation, African Evangelical Enterprise, Youth For Christ, Scripture Union of Rwanda and African Leadership And Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM).

These content notes are considered a reference document for the Protestant religious education in all schools no matter the religious denomination of the teacher responsible for the teaching in a particular school. The document is shaped accordingly to the new curriculum of MINEDUC known as the “Competence-Based Curriculum” (CBC). Indeed, the Competence-Based Curriculum, in which BNEP has contributed mainly in the domain of Religious Education, has been a long process through many activities: research, planning, elaboration, trainings, evaluation and implementation.

The shift from knowledge-based to Competence-Based Curriculum is a good opportunity to CPR /BNEP who has already integrated competence based approaches through its program of PAP (Participatory and Active Pedagogy). The principles of CBC including merely learner-centeredness, competence, inclusion, flexibility, transparency, accountability and interconnection with cross-cutting issues, are also fundamental to PAP. The new curriculum integrates knowledge, skills, values and attitudes across all subject syllabi for the development of competences. Through formal and informal learning, students are expected to develop both basic and generic competences. It is, therefore, in this context that the curriculum of religious education was developed by a team composed of professors and representatives of religious denominations: Catholic, Protestant, Adventist and Muslim.

The chosen theme of Religious Education in Senior Four is “Sustainable Peace in the Word of God”. The choice of the title of the booklet is in the interest and the subject of Protestant education in post-genocide Rwanda. This forms the Rwandan youth to live and work for the promotion of abundant life characterized by justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romains14: 15).

Indeed, the teaching of religion must be consistent with the mission of the Church in the situation that is ours today. Particular accent must be put on the faith in Jesus Christ that we confess and we are called to teach our children. In fact, it is a living faith that commits us in the promotion of life and sustainable peace, in conflict resolution, in the fight against injustice and poverty. It directs us in joy, prosperity and freedom. With the publication of this document, we want to engage all users, all beneficiaries and all those working for Education in Rwanda and elsewhere to promote the sustainable peace through the practice of the Word of God and then enjoy abundant life that we encounter in Jesus Christ.

Since a large number of religious teachers do not have a Theological basic training to teach this course, we found it useful to develop different themes in order to provide the teacher with some detailed notes which serve as a background material on each topic of the program.

The realization of this document was made possible by the commitment of each others who contributed, especially Reverend Pierre Claver BISANZE who has assumed responsibility for developing and writing. We express our heartfelt thanks to him and the Technical Team of Christian Education in CPR, for having worked together in a successful spirit. We also express our thanks to the organization of Bread For The World / Protestant Development Service Germany who granted us funding to perform this work. This will facilitate significantly Christian Education in secondary schools in the country. We kindly ask the reader and / or any other user to send us his criticisms and suggestions to help us make the correction and adapt our next issue.

This content is a compilation of ideas, concepts and texts from several documents, books and publications. We therefore ask the indulgence and understanding of anyone who would come to see in this document a mistake or a failure to either rigor in the field of publication. To enable the reader to have both of these notes and sources or references documents, we felt it appropriate to annex, bibliography and the official curriculum of religion subject.

God bless you!

For the National Bureau of Protestant Education (BNEP)

Rev. Samuel MUTABAZI

Director BNEP

General Introduction

The subject of religion responds to the interest of both the State and the Church. It has its purpose as all the other subjects. The teaching of all subjects at school inculcates a culture, skills and basic references of specific knowledge. Religious education could not obviously be excluded from such training. The challenge of religion subject is to show that you can be passionate about the knowledge of the contemporary world and be, while believing in God.

In this regard, while keeping the autonomy of each discipline, a teacher of religion must be able to enter or create opportunities for him to place his ongoing dialogue, interaction or collaboration with other courses. Projects or interdisciplinary research where the religion course brings its specific share allow students to overcome the feeling of a fragmentation of learning and experiencing how a religious reflection can enrich life.

As an integral part of school education, religious education must fully implement the requirements and the character of the school reality programs seriously, scientific qualities of teachers. In this perspective, religious education, like other disciplines in schools is only one aspect of human formation. Religious education has the status of an ordinary matter, in all public, private or government aided schools.

The program of religious subject is for students from various Protestant denominations, and is open to all students whatever they are, Christians or non-Christians. It does not presuppose the faith of students and do not impose them. The Christian message is addressed to all without exception and requires no prerequisite. The teacher will ensure that no one is marginalized. In this context, for Christian students, the subject of religion will be truly a catechesis; that is a moment of deepening and maturation of their faith. For others, it will play a wakening role to the Christian faith. And, in any event, for all, it will play an informative and communicative role susceptible to contribute to the cultural enrichment.

The religious education program in senior four has the following key competencies:

- Describe the structure of the Bible and highlight its importance in the spiritual growth and Christian Worship
- Show the relationship between Ancient and New Testament in salvation History
- Practice the supreme commandment and the Golden rule
- Contrast the role of reflected decision making in promoting inner peace with the effect of blind obedience in obstructing inner peace

The religious subject should be based on young people's lives. It must be adapted to their mentality and their environment. It has to start from the daily events of their existence. The purpose of religious subject is to convey God's Word, to deliver his message, to allow students to know him, to make contact with him and live abundant life in Jesus Christ.

This subject should help students meet God, make contact with the Lord and deepen that contact. It should also help students pray and convert to Jesus Christ as their savior. The main objective included in these steps can be stated as follows:

- **Knowledge:** indissoluble link with the question of God with the meaning of human existence.
- **Skills:** The representation of God (what the student already thinks of God).
- **Attitudes:** Faith in Jesus Christ with its implications in daily life.

In general, religious Education will continue to merely highlight this subject as a way and not only as an occasion for the teacher and the learner to get scores to transcribe on its school report. In this optic, religion is the set of beliefs, practices and dogmas that bind man to the Supreme Being. Religion is the way that man borrows to try to return to God. Indeed, the word religion comes from "religare" Latin meaning rebind, connect. It therefore implies that the link was broken. The Bible tells us that this rupture with God goes back to the disobedience of the first man. During the history, people troubled by suffering, evil and death have tried different ways to find this communion with God. This view is the main purpose of teaching religious studies in our schools.

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UNIT 1: The Bible and its Importance

Read and discuss: Exodus 24: 7; 2 Kings 23:2

The word Bible comes from Greek 'Biblia' meaning simply books. The Bible is the collection of books which records the God's will and His actions in human's history and life. It describes the nature of God in relation to human behavior and his call to salvation. The Bible is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Christians refer to the Bible as "Holy Scripture" or "God's Word" for its inspired message of redemption.

1.1 Meaning of some concepts

Testament (or covenant): the word testament or covenant refers to a relationship between God and humanity or an agreement between two parties. A testament involves promises, obligations and rituals of contractors. The two parts of the Bible have been called "testaments" as they show the relationship between God and his people. The Old Testament describes specifically his relationship with Israel, his chosen people whereas the New Testament portrays the relationship with all believers worldwide.

Faithfulness: This is the nature of God towards his covenant. He keeps all his promises; He is trustworthy and therefore calls his people to be alike by respecting their duties, obligations.

Salvation: Salvation means deliverance or redemption. This is the action and purpose of God to engage himself in the covenant with the world and mankind.

Alliance: a treaty between nations, or between individuals, for their mutual advantage. At different times, Israelites formed alliances with neighboring nations. Examples: Abraham formed an alliance with some of the Canaanites' princes (Genesis 14:13), also with Abimelech (21:22-32). Joshua and the elders of Israel entered into an alliance with the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:3-27). When the Israelites entered Palestine they were forbidden to enter into alliances with the inhabitants of the country (Leviticus 18:3 Leviticus 18:4; Leviticus 20:22 Leviticus 20:23).

Solomon formed a league with Hiram (1 Kings 5:12). This "brotherly covenant" is referred to 250 years afterwards (Amos 1:9). He also appears to have entered into an alliance with Pharaoh (1 Kings 10:28 1 Kings 10:29). In the subsequent history of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel various alliances were formed between them and also with neighboring nations at different times.

Exodus: Exodus is defined as a departure of a lot of people from one place to another. In the Bible, exodus is the second book of the Old Testament telling about the Law of Moses and the departure of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land (Canaan).

1.2 Inspiration and revelation of the Bible

See Matthew 5:18; John 10:34-36; Acts 1:16, Galatians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21, Ps 119:105; 1Tim 3: 16; He 1:1-3

The Bible is the most read book of ancient time. Its impact has been influential in the lives of many people in the world as carrying the revelation of God and his message.

The idea of inspiration derives from the fact that authors got insight from God that they put in writings. Inspiration is different from dictation. Authors wrote God's message in their own language, style and culture. The original text of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew whereas the New Testament was written in Greek. Therefore the Bible is the Word of God written by man's hands.

1.3 Canonicity of the books of the Bible

Activity: Suppose you are appointed to evaluate book.

- a) Write down criteria that you can use to choose the best book. Share your impression in groups.
- b) What does serve you for reference in your everyday conduct and decisions?

The collection of the books of the Bible has followed a number of conditions and standards to be part of the canon. The word "canon" which means "rule or list" was applied to the reed or stick that was used for measurement. Jewish and Christians have referred to it for indicating the accepted books.

For years, books of the Bible have existed independently before the collection was made. The idea of collection reflected the belief that public revelation was ended, and hence the inspired texts were to be gathered into a complete and authoritative canon. Therefore, the Bible is collection of authorized books.

Criteria of canonicity

The books of the Bible have been subjected to criteria and discussion for their canonicity. These included: the authorship, the content, the community acceptance and recognition, personal edification, etc. For its approval, the book was to be:

- Written by a recognized prophet or apostle
- Written by those associated with recognized prophet or apostle
- Truthfulness (Deut. 18:20-22)
- Faithfulness to previously accepted canonical writings
- Confirmed by Christ, prophet, apostle (e.g. Luke 24:44; 2 Pet. 3:16)
- Church Usage and Recognition (witness from Christians)

Some books have been disputed among believers and considered as fully canonical, deuterocanonical or apocryphal according to different denominations.

1.4 Collection of the writings of the Bible

Read and discuss: Exodus 34: 27; Deuteronomy 27:3

Activity: How do you keep the testimony and the facts of God's actions in your personal life, family and nation? Do you find your technique adequate?

The books of the Bible have been written for a purpose and in different steps. The materials available in the writing time were used. These have included stones, wood, clay, papyrus, animal skins, metal, etc.

The purposes of writing were diverse including: the preservation of God's message and testimony, its propagation and precision. It may be said for the New Testament to have been written:

- Because of the demand of the early church (1 Thess. 5:27; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).
- Because of false doctrines (to counteract them).
- Because of missionary endeavors (to propagate them).
- Because of persecution and politics.

Remember:

Men die, and memories fail, but the written record remains.

1.5 Bible literature

The Bible consists of 66 books: 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 of the New Testament. The God's Word was written and transmitted in a variety of genres according to the contexts and styles of writers.

The main genres (styles) include:

- The Law:** The law states commandments, duties and obligations that regulate the relationship with God (worship) and human.

- b) **History** of Jewish people from the time after the conquest of the Promised Land (Joshua-Esther), the life and ministry of Jesus (Gospels) and the beginning and expansion of the early church (Acts).
- c) **Wisdom saying and Poetry** of ancient Israel (Job, Psalm, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and song of songs)
- d) **Gospels** or good news (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)
- e) **Letters** (See Epistles)
- f) **Prophecy** consists of the prediction of the future and communication of God's utterances to the people.
- g) **Apocalyptic writing** uses images and symbols (e.g. Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation, etc.)

1.6 Importance of the Bible

Activity: Study the following texts and discuss the importance of the Bible: Proverbs 14:34; Chronicles 7: 14, Heb 4:12 & Isaiah 55:11.

How often do you read the Bible (when, where)? Share with your peers' changes that you have experienced throughout the Bible reading.

The Bible is the revelation of God's will to the world and humanity. It contains the moral principles that guide the human choice in different circumstances, hence leading to healthier life. However the use of the Bible requires a particular respect and attention since the Bible is the revelation of God and His will. Through the Bible we seek and find the authentic message of God in our contemporary, and leading to a rational and meaningful life.

A deep reading and careful application would be helpful though it demands one's devotion. One of method of Bible reading would comprise five steps: reading, meditation, prayer, contemplation and action as outlined by Stephen J. Binz (2011, p. xii-xxi):

- Reading the text with a Listening Ear
- Reflecting on the Meaning and Message of the Text: seek its meaning today in our context, reflecting our experience, thoughts, challenges and questions in order to grow in understanding.
- Contemplation (praying in Response to God's Word): praying by heart, and without words. This is a quietly resting in God
- Faithfully witness in Daily Life by finding way to live the Word of God.

1.7 The Old Testament

1.7.1 Introduction

The Old Testament is the first part of the Bible comprising 39 books. Traditionally, it had three parts: the Law, Prophets and Writings. These three categories corresponded respectively to chronological and historical events: the beginning of earth and humanity up to the conquest of Canaan, from the conquest to the Babylonian exile and, the period during and after Babylonian exile. Christians adopted the Hebrew canon as the Old Testament in comparison with the New Testament. They hence categorized its books, according to modern classification, into four main groups:

- Pentateuch (5 books): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- Historical books (12 books): Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.
- Poetical books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs
- Prophetical books (17 books categorized into Major Prophets and Minor Prophets according to the volume of the book):
 - Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lamentation, Daniel.
 - Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The books that do not make part of the Hebrew canon have been considered by some Christians as Deuterocanonical books. They have been published firstly in the Greek version of Old Testament (Septuagint). Several Christians incorporated them in the Bible between two Testaments. However, other Christians call them apocrypha book (meaning hidden books).

Deuterocanonical books are available in some Bible versions and can be used for personal devotion and supplementary reading. They include:

- The complete books: Judith; Tobit; 1 Maccabees; 2 Maccabees; Wisdom; Sirach (Ecclesiasticus); Baruch.
- Parts of books or chapters added to the books of Old Testament in some versions: Daniel 13, 14, Greek Esther, etc.

The Old Testament carries the message of covenant between God and Israel and promise of the coming of the Messiah

1.7.2 Some themes of Old Testament

1.7.2.1 Genesis and creation

The creation is the main theme of the Bible. It takes an important place in both Testaments. The Bible starts in Genesis with the creation of heaven, earth and everything in it; while its last book (Revelation) reveals the new heaven and new earth. The name “Genesis” given to the first book means “generation or production”. It was called so due to its message about the origin of all things. The ancient books confirmed its message without contradiction. The book of Genesis highlights the major events of creation:

- God creates heaven and earth. (1, 2)
- The creation of light. (3- 5)
- God separates the earth from the waters, and makes it fruitful. (6- 13)
- God forms the sun, moon, and stars. (14- 19)
- Animals created. (20- 25)
- Man created in the image of God. (26- 28)
- Food appointed. (29, 30)
- The work of creation ended and approved. (31)

The creation is the act of God who engages himself to make things happen better: every created thing was good. The human created in the image of God has the responsibility of to take care of the whole creation (Genesis 1: 27-28; 2: 15). The human’s mandate was therefore to maintain and respect the law of nature, using everything for its purpose. The fruits of the garden were provided for food. However, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life were set apart (Genesis 2: 17; 3: 22). The failure to use everything exclusively for its purpose would lead the mankind to his/her own harm.

After the fall of man, the creation continued to be central in God’s mission to deliver his chosen people and the humanity in general (Isaiah 65: 17-25; Revelation 21: 1-5). Therefore, everything good and decent was and should be considered as the creation.

1.7.2.2 Evil

The word “evil” implies what is contrary to the “good”, virtue, what is condemned by the moral. In other terms, evil signifies what susceptible to harm, to cause suffering. Many people have attempted to think about the origin of evil. The author of evil is not God but Satan (Job 1: 6; Zachariah 3: 1; Luke 10: 18; Rev 12: 7; 2 Corinthians 11:14). Doing so, the Devil intends to separate mankind from God, leading him to eternal

damnation. However, in every situation, God is ready to deliver his people from the chains of evil. Indeed, evil is not eternal since it was not in the beginning and its author will be banished (Isaiah 65: 17-25; Revelation 21: 1-27). It can therefore be weakened by the daily practice of love.

1.7.2.3 Sin

The doctrine of sin is central to Christianity, since its basic message is about redemption in Christ. The study of the problem of sin (hamartiology) describes sin as an act of offence against God by despising his persons and Christian biblical law, and by injuring others. In Christian views it was an evil human act, which violates the rational nature of man as well as God's nature and his eternal law. According to the classical definition of St. Augustine of Hippo sin is "a word, deed, or desire in opposition to the eternal law of God. Some Christian scholars understand sin to be fundamentally relational, a loss of love for God and an elevation of self-love.

Due to original sin, humanity has lost any and all capacity to move towards reconciliation with God (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3). In fact, this inborn sin turns humans away from God and towards themselves and their own desires (Isaiah 53:6a). Thus, humans may be brought back into a relationship with God only by way of God's rescuing the sinner from his/her hopeless condition (Galatians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:4-10) through Jesus' substitutionary atonement (Romans 5:6-8; Colossians 2:13-15; 1 Timothy 2:5-6). According to Protestant tradition, God's grace, faith and Scripture are fundamental in the salvation process. The salvation is begun and completed by God alone through Jesus (Ephesians 2:8,9).

1.7.2.4 Suffering and death

The Genesis describes the suffering and death as consequences of the sin. The created world was perfect; without pain or violence. However, it was marred with the rebellion of the first man who cherished the plans of the Devil disregard God's will (Genesis 3). God has to judge iniquity by bringing about the penalty of man's action. The whole humanity and the universe in general had to undergo the suffering resulting from consequences of man's acts (Romans 8: 20-21):

- The shame and nakedness
- Pains in child delivery and childbearing
- Painful toil or labour
- The soil decay
- The violence between the living beings
- The separation from God

From then, the humans started to taste the judgment; that is a world full running down, full of death and suffering. However, God seems to have sought sacrifice to hide the human shame by clothing them (Genesis 3: 21).

The sin and its resulting sufferings (death, restlessness, separation, etc) were engraved in the human nature through generations. Humans became wicked as they increased (Gen 3:8, 10-12; 6: 1-7; 11: 4, etc.), so that God was regretful to have set man on earth; he regretted also for his destruction. After the big flood in the time Noah, God made a covenant of life with people and all the creation (Genesis 6: 1-7; 8: 21-22). Therefore, He made a covenant with the new generation and all the creation, a covenant of life. The rainbow is the symbol of that covenant (Genesis 9: 12-17).

The issue of suffering is however challenging, especially when it afflicts the righteous and innocent people. The Bible states many examples:

- Job endured the test and trial including the loss of his family and properties.
- Paul stated his conditions of suffering by persecution for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel.
- Finally, the Gospel is the message of how Jesus suffered, was crucified and died for the sake of the salvation of humanity.

Though sometimes we may be unable to explain in this life the reasons for some suffering, Paul's letters contain practical reasons for the suffering of God's children, even when they have done nothing wrong. For instance:

1. Suffering can 'perfect' us, or make us mature in the image of Christ. (Job 19: 25-27; 23:10, Hebrews 5:8-10).
2. Suffering can help some to come to know Christ.
3. Suffering can make us more able to comfort others who suffer.
4. Wisdom is better than weapons but one sinner destroys much good (Eccl 9: 18).

**Rejoice with those who rejoice,
Mourn with those who mourn (Ro 12: 12-13)**

The Epistle of James offers some attitudes to hold during suffering: prayer, confession and faith (James 5: 13-16).

1.7.2.5 The Patriarchs

God always wants the model people who would bring positive change through character and deeds. The book of Genesis provides an account on how God commended Abraham to leave his family and home in the city of Ur, eventually to settle in the land of Canaan (Gen 12:3). Abraham went with Lot, his nephew and God

promised to make a covenant with him and his descendants. The models from this family have been called Patriarchs which means fathers or forefathers. They include Isaac, Jacob (Israel) and Jacob's children.

The Sacrifice of Abraham

Read and sketch: Genesis 11: 31; Genesis 12:1-4; Genesis 22: 1-14.

Abraham became the pattern of faith and prototype because he accepted the calling from God to leave his country, his later prevailing to the test to offer his son Isaac. The sacrifices of human being were common in Canaan but God abolished by providing himself an appropriate sacrifice. God recommends humans to fully serve him with all their being.

Consider: *Life is a precious value and gift from God. It should be protected whatever circumstances.*

The children of Israel later moved to Egypt due to famine where after years they lived in slavery. When God revealed to Moses, giving him a rescue mission to his people, he reminded him his covenant to the Patriarchs: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3: 6-8, 11). Moses led the children of Israel from their liberation from slavery in Egypt, to the renewal of their covenant with God at Mount Sinai and their wanderings in the desert until a new generation was ready to enter the land of Canaan.

The choice of Israel was a calling to a special relationship with God and special role towards their fellowmen. To be chosen people was a great privilege but it was also a great responsibility. They were to be a kingdom of priests who served the only true God and they were to be a 'holy nation', who reflected the character of God in their personal, social and national life (Exodus 19: 5-6; Psalms 33: 12; Proverbs 14: 34; 2 Chronicles 7: 14).

In the New Testament, the choice and responsibility belong to all believers: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praise of one who called out of the darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2: 9).

1.7.2.6 Exodus and Deliverance

The exile from Egypt and deliverance from slavery is the salvation point of Israel's history. This event revealing the Lord's deep love and care for Israel has become central to Old Testament: This event was reminded whenever as introduction and emphasis whenever, the law was to be addressed to the people (Exodus 20: 1-2; Deuteronomy 5:6)

When at a later time the Israelites were alienated from the Promised Land and oppressed by foreign overlords, especially during the Babylonian exile, they recalled the great Exodus from Egypt and were encouraged. The exodus, from slavery to delivery is central message of the Old Testament.

The people inheriting God's promises, the remnant from exile have to remember His rescuing hand and abide to His laws/decrees.

The books of Pentateuch turn around this message in the following:

- Genesis 42-50: The children of Israel go to Egypt due to the famine, where they live after years in slavery.
- Exodus: the liberation from slavery and the journey through the desert towards the Promised Land, and the establishment of God's Law.
- Leviticus: Compilation of laws, rules and regulations focusing on the theme of holiness.
- Numbers: Israelites society is ordered in preparation for their arrival in the Promised Land, with God's patience on display many times in the face of Israel's disobedience.
- Deuteronomy: God renews His covenant with Israel, further establishing His law and expectations. Deuteronomy ends with the death of Moses and the commissioning of Joshua as leader.

1.1.2.7 Kingship in Israel and prophets

Activity:

- Discuss the importance of leadership.
- Suggest qualities of leaders and processes that should be followed to choose a leader.
- Identify the model kings and their main traits.

The rise of kingship was the necessity for Israelites. From Egypt they had been under the leadership of Moses and Joshua. After the death of Joshua, Israel fell under anarchy due to the lack of steady leadership. The book of Judges states repeatedly that "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

The nation was subdued by a chaos within and oppression from neighboring tribes (especially Philistine). Though Judges intervened, they were for a little time. The king was to unite people and organize them to protect their land during battles.

However, the king was to reflect the purposes of God: to be from Israelites’ tribes, appointed by God through unction (Deuteronomy 17: 14-20, Proverbs 31: 1-9). Samuel is referred as the last judge. He appointed the first two kings on God’s consent.

The kingdom of Saul was a reply to people ruthless request of a king (1 Samuel 8:5, 21) despite consequences that were predicted (1 Samuel 8: 10-18). Saul was replaced by David, a man in accordance with God’s heart (1 Samuel 13:14). His son Solomon as he became king was renowned to be the richest and wise king, before his anarchy. After Solomon the nation was divided into two kingdoms. Kings alternatively reigned northern kingdom (Israel) and Southern kingdom (Judah) until the Babylonian exile.

The people living in both of these kingdoms turned their hearts away from the Lord, and God had to judge them. God first judged the wicked northern kingdom of Israel by sending the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The Assyrians conquered Israel and carried away the people as captives. Later God judged the southern kingdom of Judah by sending the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. The city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Babylonians and the Jews were carried away to Babylon as captives. The prophets labored throughout the time of Israel’s monarchy, during the exile, and after the exile and return to their land.

By justice a king gives country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down (Proverbs 29:4).

Activity: If you were appointed as senior leader, which model kings would you imitate? Discuss their attributes. The list of them is the following:

Before the division of the kingdom:

King’s name	Attributes		
	Good	Good but sometimes bad	bad
Saul			
David			
Solom			

Find in the Bible the reason why the following kings are qualified “good” or “bad”.

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL			THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH			
(The Northern Kingdom)			(The Southern Kingdom)			
Jeroboam	I	(Bad)	Rehoboam		(Bad)	
Nadab		(Bad)	Abijah		(Bad)	
Baasha		(Bad)	Asa		(Good)	
Elah		(Bad)	Jehoshaphat		(Good)	
Zimri		(Bad)	Jehoram		(Bad)	
Omri		(Bad)	Ahaziah		(Bad)	
Ahab		(Bad)	Athaliah		(Bad)	
Ahaziah		(Bad)	Joash		(Good)	
Jehoram		(Bad)	Amaziah		(Good)	
Jehu		(Bad)	Azariah	or	Uzziah	(Good)
Jehoahaz		(Bad)	Jotham		(Good)	
Jehoash		(Bad)	Ahaz		(Bad)	
Jeroboam	II	(Bad)	Hezekiah		(Good)	
Zachariah		(Bad)	Manasseh		(Bad)	
Shallum		(Bad)	Amon		(Bad)	
Menahem		(Bad)	Josiah		(Good)	
Pekahiah		(Bad)	Jehoahaz		(Bad)	
Pekah		(Bad)	Jehoiakim		(Bad)	
Hoshea		(Bad)	Jehoiachin		(Bad)	
			Zedekiah		(Bad)	

1.7.2.8 Introduction to the Prophets

Activity: Read and discuss: Deuteronomy 17: 14-19, 21-22

A prophet is someone who can foretell the future and predict things that are to come. God had promised to raise prophets from his people. However, this name was also attributed to everyone who communicated the oracle or the will of God. Examples include Moses, Aaron, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, etc.

Prophetic books constitute a set that carries the message during the time of kings. They can be categorized into Pre-exilic prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah); Exilic prophets (Lamentations of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) and Post-exilic prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi):

- Pre-exilic prophets advised the kings and people to return to the law and

covenant, denouncing their injustice and the ungodly conduct. They warned them implicit condemnations, including the ruin of Israel and Judah and future deportation. Prophets however proclaimed the God's mercy and his faithfulness to his promise.

- Exilic Prophets portrayed the historical account of the life Jewish people where they were deported especially in Babylon. They prophesized against the deported Israelites, the nations and predicted the future restoration of Israel.
- Prophets after exile insisted on the return to the piety and reconstruction of the Temple.

Prophets to Judah: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah.

Prophets to Israel: Hosea, Amos

Prophets to the remnant: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Prophets to the other nations: Jonah and Nahum prophesized to Nineveh (the city of Assyria). Obadiah prophesized to Edom.

Prophets to exiles: Ezekiel, Daniel

Sometimes Prophets used a figurative language to describe prophetic events.

Examples:

- Jeremiah symbolizes the destruction of Jerusalem by breaking out the vessel (Jeremiah 19:10-11).
- Hosea uses the image of a prostitute and symbolic names of children to describe idolatry and unfaithfulness of Israel (Hosea 1: 1-11).
- Etc.

1.8 The New Testament

The New Testament is the second part of the Bible which records mainly the life and ministry of Jesus, the missionary activity of early church and the description of the last times. It contains twenty-seven books of Christian literature that was compiled originally in Greek. It comprises four genres:

- **Gospels:** The first four books of the New Testament are "Gospels", a term that literally means "good news". The four Gospels of the New Testament proclaim the good news by telling stories about the life and the death of Jesus: his birth, ministry, miracles, teaching, last days, crucifixion and resurrection. These books are traditionally ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We can declare that two of these authors were disciples of Jesus: Matthew, the tax collector mentioned in the First Gospel (Matt 9:9), and John, the beloved

disciple who appears in the Fourth (John 19: 26). The other two Gospels were written by associates of famous apostles: Mark, the secretary of Peter, and Luke, the traveling companion of Paul.

- **Acts of apostles:** an account of missionary activities of Jesus' disciples and the commencement of the early church. It has been written by Luke, the author of the third Gospel.
- **Epistles:** This section comprises twenty-one "epistles", these are letters written by Christian leaders to various communities and individuals.
- **Revelation:** The last book of the New Testament telling about the description of the last time as revealed to John at the island of Patmos.

1.8.1 Synoptic Gospels

The word Gospel means "Good news". This word has been applied to the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) because they chronicle the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, the basis of our salvation.

These first three Gospels are called "synoptic" because they "see together with a common view". The word synoptic literally means "together sight". Matthew, Mark, and Luke cover many of the same events in Jesus' life most of them from Jesus' ministry in Galilee in much the same order. Nearly 90 percent of Mark's content is found in Matthew, and about 50 percent of Mark appears in Luke. Most of the parables of Christ are found in the all Synoptics while the Gospel of John contains no parables.

There are differences, too. Matthew and Luke are both considerably longer than Mark. Matthew might have been written for a Jewish audience, Mark for a Roman audience, and Luke for a broader Gentile audience.

1.8.1.1 The Gospel according to Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew is a creative reinterpretation of Mark, stressing Jesus' teachings as much as his acts, and making subtle changes to reveal his divine nature. The divine nature of Jesus was a major issue for the community of Matthew, the crucial element marking them from their Jewish neighbors.

Comparing to Mark who recounts prior revelations in Jesus' lifetime on earth, at his baptism and transfiguration, Matthew goes back further still, showing Jesus as the Son of God from his birth, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The narrative tells how the Messiah, Jesus, rejected by Israel, finally sends the disciples to preach his Gospel to the whole world.

➞ Author

The author of the Gospel has traditionally been identified with “Matthew,” who according to this Gospel is one of Jesus’ twelve disciples. The author of the Gospel is a Christian Jew.

➞ Setting and date

The majority view among scholars is that Matthew was a product of the last quarter of the 1st century. This makes it a work of the second generation of Christians, for whom the defining event was the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE in the course of the First Jewish–Roman War (66–73 CE).

➞ Recipients of the Gospel

The author, Matthew wrote for a community of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians located probably in Syria (Antioch, the largest city in Roman Syria and the third-largest in the empire, is often mentioned). Unlike Mark, he never bothers to explain Jewish customs; unlike Luke, who traces Jesus’ ancestry back to Adam, father of the human race, he traces it only to Abraham, father of the Jews.

Matthew put down in his gospel his vision “of an assembly or church in which both Jew and Gentile would flourish together.

1.8.1.2 The Gospel according to Mark

➞ Author

The traditional account is that the Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark, the companion of Paul (Acts 12:25), the cousin of Barnabas (Col.4:10) and the companion of Peter (I Pt.5:13). The traditional account is that the Gospel was written to the Christians in the Church of Rome, that it recounted Peter’s own eyewitness stories of Jesus, and that it was completed either before Peter’s death in Rome in the persecutions under Nero in the year 65 or just after, before the year 70 AD.

Although the Gospel of Mark does not name its author, it is the unanimous testimony of early church fathers that Mark was the author. He was an associate of the Apostle Peter, and evidently his spiritual son (1 Peter 5:13). From Peter he received first-hand

information of the events and teachings of the Lord, and preserved the information in written form.

It is generally agreed that Mark is the John Mark of the New Testament (Acts 12:12). His mother was a wealthy and prominent Christian in the Jerusalem church, and probably the church met in her home. Mark joined Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but not on the second because of a strong disagreement between the two men (Acts 15:37-38). However, near the end of Paul's life he called for Mark to be with him (2 Timothy 4:11).

➞ **Date of Writing**

The Gospel of Mark was likely one of the first books written in the New Testament, probably in A.D.55-59.

➞ **Purpose of Writing**

Whereas Matthew is written primarily to his fellow Jews, Mark's Gospel appears to be targeted to the Roman believers, particularly Gentiles. Mark wrote as a pastor to Christians who previously had heard and believed the Gospel (Romans 1:8). He desired that they have a biographical story of Jesus Christ as Servant of the Lord and Savior of the world in order to strengthen their faith in the face of severe persecution and to teach them what it meant to be His disciples.

In brief, this gospel is unique because it emphasizes Jesus' actions more than His teaching. It is simply written, moving quickly from one episode in the life of Christ to another. It does not begin with a genealogy as in Matthew, because Gentiles would not be interested in His lineage. After the introduction of Jesus at His baptism, Jesus began His public ministry in Galilee and called the first four of His twelve disciples. What follows is the record of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Mark's account is not just a collection of stories, but a narrative written to reveal that Jesus is the Messiah, not only for the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well. In a dynamic profession, the disciples, led by Peter, acknowledged their faith in Him (Mark 8:29-30), even though they failed to understand fully His Messiahship until after His resurrection.

1.8.1.3 The Gospel according to Luke

➞ The Author

The Gospel according to Luke exhibits several differences from the other Synoptic Gospels. For instance, Luke is the only Gospel to have a continuation, the Acts of the Apostles. These two books are often referred to as a single unit called Luke-Acts. Another difference between Luke and the other Synoptics is the prologue (1:1-4). Luke's prologue can also be called an exordium, which is a literary device that was also used by other Greek writers.

The name Luke is only mentioned three times in the New Testament. From these three occurrences, it is evident that Luke was a physician (Col 4:14) and a companion of Paul (2 Tim 4:11; Philemon 1:24). It is more than likely that Luke was a Gentile, but he was not necessarily a Greek. It also seems as if Luke had some degree of association with Judaism because of his knowledge of the Septuagint (LXX)-the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Not only did Luke compose the longest Gospel, but he also wrote more than any other New Testament writer. This is remarkable considering the amount of attention he gets in comparison to John and Paul.

➞ Date and Location of Composition

The Gospel according to Luke was probably the last Synoptic Gospel to be written. Since Luke precedes Acts, it is essential to date Acts before a date for Luke can be determined. The abrupt ending of Acts may be the single most important factor in deriving a date. Luke leaves the reader with Paul being in Rome and waiting to present his case before Caesar. The best explanation for this is that Acts was finished before he Paul's final outcome was known. This would place Acts in the early Sixties with the Gospel of Luke being written in the late Fifties or early Sixties.

Other factors that support an early date are the uncertainty of where Christianity fits in amongst the religions of the Roman Empire; Luke-Acts does not mention the destruction of Jerusalem, and the uncertainty of Jew-Gentile relations at the same level as in Paul's epistles.

Regarding its location, it is generally agreed that Luke-Acts was not written in Palestine. Other suggestions have included Caesarea, Achaia, Decapolis, Asia Minor, and Rome.

➞ Audience and Purpose

Both the purpose of the Gospel and its audience can be found in the prologue (1:1-4). Luke first mentions that many others before him have made an account of the things

that have been fulfilled as they were handed down from the first generation. He also says that he cautiously examined everything from the beginning and this led him to write an organized account to Theophilus so that he might know the certainty of what he has been taught. Many believe that Luke was not writing to Theophilus exclusively, but that the two-volume work was intended to be distributed for ecclesiastical purposes. There is also the view, which seems to be growing in popularity, that Luke-Acts was specifically designed to aid Paul in his trial before Caesar.

➞ Main message

The Gospel of Luke presents the Son of God as the savior of mankind. It pays a particular attention to marginalized people, children, sinners, Gentiles. Jesus is the source of life with all his grace and compassion.

One of the most notable themes is of Redemption History by which he views the world in three major time periods. First, the time of the “Law and the Prophets” was in effect until John the Baptist (16:16a). After that came the time period of Jesus, when “the Gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached” (16:16b). The last time period begins after the ascension of Christ and continues until his return. This is the period of the church.

The idea of salvation is also prevalent in Luke’s Gospel. The words “salvation/deliverance” and “salvation/saving power” are used by Luke, but are not found in Matthew and Mark. Not only is the theme of salvation evident, but Luke also demonstrates Jesus as being sympathetic towards Samaritans and Gentiles (e.g. Good Samaritan 10:30-37; Centurion 7:2-10, see also 2:32).

Other issues such as peace, eschatology, early Catholicism, the plan of God, emphases on individuals, importance of women, children, the poor, the disreputable, the passion, prayer, and praise are also a part of Luke’s theology.

1.8.2 The Gospel according to John

The Gospel according to John (also referred to as the Gospel of John, the Fourth Gospel after the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John begins with the witness and affirmation of John the Baptist and concludes with the death, burial, resurrection, and post-resurrection appearances of Jesus.

It contains a variety of statements and information about Jesus not contained in the Synoptic Gospels. While John’s content may be unique, he presents a different side of Jesus that is complimentary to the other three Gospels and helps provide its readers with a clearer understanding of his divinity and pre-existence.

➡ Author

Chapter 21 states that the book derives from the testimony of the “disciple whom Jesus loved” and early church tradition identified him as John the Apostle, one of Jesus’ Twelve Apostles. The Gospel is so closely related in style and content to the three surviving Epistles of John that commentators treat the four books, along with the Book of Revelation, as a single body of John’s literature.

The only internal clue to the authorship of Gospel is John 21:20-24, which attributes the source of the account to ‘the Beloved Disciple’. ‘The Beloved Disciple’ is not named anywhere in the Gospel, but he is mentioned a few key times; he is beside Jesus at the last supper (John 13:22-25), is present at the crucifixion and is told to care for Jesus’ mother (John 19:25-27) and sees the empty tomb (John 20:1-8). The traditional identity of this disciple is John the Apostle.

➡ Date

There are two views concerning the date of John’s Gospel:

- The traditional view places the writing of John around A.D. 85 or later.
- Recently, interpreters have suggested an earlier date, somewhere around A.D. 50 but not later than A.D. 70.

➡ Purpose

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20:30-31)

John 20:30-31 gives a starting point for considering the purpose for John’s writing this Gospel. Clearly, believing in Jesus is the source of salvation. Not only that, but believing certain facts about Jesus, that he is the Christ (or Messiah) who is the Son of God. In the “upper room discourse” (chapters 13-17), Jesus give a wide description of the nature of faith, which includes obeying Jesus’ commands (John 14:12, 15, 21-24, 15:10), loving each other (John 13:33-34; 15:12-17) and proclaiming the message of Jesus (John 15:26-27). This is a strong theme throughout the whole Gospel.

1.8.2.1 Relationship to the Synoptic Gospels

1.8.2.1.1 Narrative Differences

The narrative of the Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels in a number of ways. Very few of the events which are common in the Synoptics are present in

John, and John contains many incidents which are not in the Synoptics. Some of the major narrative events which John does not relate are Jesus' birth, baptism, and temptation, Gethsemane, and Jesus' Ascension. There are also very few miracles and healing accounts in John, and no healings of those who are possessed by evil spirits. John also includes miracles that the Synoptics do not mention such as the Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11) and the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11). The only two miracles that are certainly the same as Synoptic events are the feeding of the 5000 (John 6:1-14) and Jesus walking on water (John 6:15-21), although a number of healings are similar to Synoptic accounts (John 4:46-54, 5:1-18, 9:1-7).

In general, John does not have the same emphasis on the many acts of Jesus that the Synoptics do. Instead there is an emphasis on the teachings of Jesus, with some very lengthy discourses recorded. With this emphasis, it is surprising that John contains no parables, which are one of the most common methods of Jesus' teaching in the Synoptics. Nor does John include the Sermon on the Mount or any of Jesus' other ethical 'sayings'. Instead, Jesus' speeches tend to revolve around himself and his identity. The account of the Last Supper does not have the "communion" speech of the Synoptics (ie. Mark 14:22-25). Instead, there is a description of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, and a very long discourse from him comforting the disciples and foreshadowing the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The narrative arc of John is also different to the Synoptics. John portrays Jesus' ministry as being three years long, and covering three separate Passover festivals (John 2:13, 6:4, 19:14) while the Synoptics only describe one Passover. In John, Jesus' ministry alternates between Jerusalem and Galilee a few times (see Structure), while the Synoptics describe a period of ministry in Galilee followed by a single journey to Jerusalem where Jesus dies. John also portrays a number of events in a different sequence to the Synoptics, most notably with Jesus clearing the temple at the start of his ministry, not the end (John 2:12-25 cf. Mark 11:12-19).

The passion narrative is also remarkably different. Jesus stands before Annas as well as Caiaphas at trial, and not the Sanhedrin. The trial before Pilate is very different, and Jesus holds a long conversation with Pilate. Details of the crucifixion are different or new; Jesus carries his own cross, he asks for a drink, his side is pierced by a spear and his final words: "it is finished", are different. Finally, John includes very different resurrection narratives.

1.8.2.1.2 Theological Differences

The theological themes of John are discussed in more detail below, but there are some notable differences with the theology of the Synoptic Gospels. The most

obvious is the very clear and ‘high’ Christology, where Jesus is clearly shown to be divine, and he makes claims to divinity and authority that are much stronger than those in the Synoptics. John shows little evidence of the messianic secret that the Synoptics display, and the people’s discussion of whether Jesus is the Messiah, and his admission of that fact, form a key structure to the narrative.

1.8.2.1.3 Similarities

Regardless of these differences, there are many similarities between John and the Synoptics. The general narrative arcs are the same; Jesus is baptized by John, teaches, performs miracles and healings, feeds 5000, walks on water, travels to Jerusalem, enters triumphantly, has a final meal with his disciples where he teaches them, is betrayed by Judas, tried by the Jews and Pilate, executed between two others and rises from the dead. Additionally, Jesus is shown to fulfill OT scripture, is declared to be the Messiah and calls himself the Son of Man. The general principle of his teaching is the same, as is the reason for and meaning of his death and resurrection.

1.8.2.1.4 Structure

It is generally accepted that John is divided into two halves, chapters 1-12 and chapters 13-21. Raymond Brown described these halves as ‘The Book of Signs’ and ‘the Book of Glory’. These terms are the most common descriptions for the two halves today. Beyond this, there are many more detailed break-downs of the structure; the most varied are the arrangement of the contents of the ‘Book of Signs’. Many scholars have highlighted the various elements of this section, including the geographical locations, signs, “I am” sayings and festivals, and have divided the “Book of Glory” up based on them. However, none of these schemes fully account for many the parallels and concentric structures found in the book. The table below sketches out the main events in the Book of John, and highlights a few of the main structural clues.

☞ Themes

- Dualism (Light and darkness, day and night),
- I AM statements (“I am the bread of life” (John 6:35, John 8:12; 9:5 10:7, 9; John 10:14; John 11:25; John 14:6; John 15:1, 5)
- Belief (15:1-11).
- The “hour” (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1).
- Sabbath
- Eternal life
- Signs (miracles): (John 2:1-11; John 4:46-54; John 5:1-18; John 6:1-14, etc.)
- Christology

1.8.3 Acts of Apostles

1.8.3.1 Introduction

The book of Acts was written by Luke, a disciple who traveled with Paul on his missionary journeys.

The Acts of the Apostles often referred as Acts, is the fifth book of the New Testament; it tells of the founding of the Christian church and the spread of its message to the Roman Empire.

Acts and the Gospel of Luke make up a two-part work, Luke–Acts, by the same anonymous author, usually dated to around 80-90 AD. The first part, the Gospel of Luke, tells how God fulfilled his plan for the world's salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Messiah. Acts continues the story of Christianity in the 1st century, beginning with Jesus' Ascension to Heaven. The early chapters, set in Jerusalem, describe the Day of Pentecost (the coming of the Holy Spirit) and the growth of the church in Jerusalem. Initially the Jews are receptive to the Christian message, but soon they turn against the followers of Jesus. Rejected by the Jews, under the guidance of the Apostle Peter the message is taken to the Gentiles. The later chapters tell of Paul's conversion, his mission in Asia Minor and the Aegean, and finally his imprisonment in Rome, where, as the book ends, he awaits trial.

Luke–Acts is an attempt to answer a theological problem, namely how the Messiah of the Jews came to have an overwhelmingly non-Jewish church; the answer it provides, and its central theme, is that the message of Christ was sent to the Gentiles because the Jews rejected it. Luke–Acts can be also seen as a defense of (apology) the Jesus movement addressed to the Jews. The bulk of the speeches and sermons in Acts are addressed to Jewish audiences, with the Romans featuring as external arbiters on disputes concerning Jewish customs and law. On one hand Luke portrays the Christians as a sect of the Jews, and therefore entitled to legal protection as a recognized religion.

1.1.3.2 How Is This Book Different from the Gospels?

The book of Acts is a continuation of the record Luke began in the Gospel of Luke. Luke's Gospel is his account of the life of Jesus Christ; the book of Acts is his description of the fulfillment of the command Jesus gave His Apostles to preach the Gospel "in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Both books were addressed to Luke's friend Theophilus (see Luke 1:1–3; Acts 1:1–3).

Acts is not a complete record of everything that happened in the Church after the Savior's Ascension. Luke wrote mainly about the ministry of the Apostle Paul and included a few records about Peter and the other Apostles. Acts is the last book in the New Testament that tells a story; the rest of the books are letters and visions from that time.

The principal divisions of the Acts of the Apostles are the following:

- The Preparation for the Christian Mission (1:1–2:13)
- The Mission in Jerusalem (2:14–8:3)
- The Mission in Judea and Samaria (8:4–9:43)
- The Inauguration of the Gentile Mission (10:1–15:35)
- The Mission of Paul to the Ends of the Earth (15:36–28:31)

1.8.4 Epistles

The word epistle comes from the Greek word *epistole* that means "letter" or "message." Epistles were a primary form of written communication in the ancient world, especially during New Testament times. Since many of the New Testament books were originally written as letters to churches or individuals, they are referred to as the Epistles.

An epistle would have been written on a scroll. Often, it was dictated and then reviewed by the author before being delivered by a trusted messenger. For example, 1 Peter mentions that it was Peter's letter written down by Silvanus, or Silas (1 Peter 5:12). Timothy was involved in the writing and delivery of several of the apostle Paul's letters (Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1:1), although Paul signed each one to verify that he was the author (Galatians 6:1). The Epistles are letters written to the fledgling churches and individual believers in the earliest days of Christianity. The Apostle Paul wrote the first 13 of these letters, each addressing a specific situation or problem. In terms of volume, Paul's writings constitute about one-fourth of the entire New Testament.

Four of Paul's letters, the Prison Epistles, were composed while he was confined in prison. Three letters, the Pastoral Epistles, were directed toward church leaders, Timothy and Titus, and discuss ministerial matters.

Epistles also generally followed a familiar format. Most of Paul's letters begin with an introduction that identifies his name and those of any associates, mentions his audience, and gives a greeting. The introduction is followed by the main body of the letter, and the epistles often conclude with a general blessing and personal notes to individuals within the recipient church.

The Epistles of the Bible are all found in the New Testament. They include 21 of the New Testament's 27 books, extending from Romans to Jude. Thirteen of these Epistles were written by the apostle Paul: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Within this group of Pauline Epistles is a subgroup labeled the Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) so-called because they were written during Paul's two-year house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30–31). The Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) were written to church leaders and include many teachings regarding practices within the early church.

Following these writings are eight General Epistles (sometimes called Catholic Epistles, since they were written to a "universal" audience) that include Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude. The author of Hebrews is unknown (though many have historically attributed it to Paul or one of Paul's associates). James was one of the earliest New Testament writings and was written by James, the half-brother of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7). The apostle Peter wrote 1 and 2 Peter. The apostle John (the same author of the Gospel of John and Revelation) wrote 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. The short Epistle of Jude was written by Jude, another half-brother of Jesus (Jude 1:1).

All of the known authors of the Epistles are either an apostle (Paul, Peter, John) or a family member of Jesus (James, Jude). Each of these individuals had a unique calling from the Lord Jesus that included writing letters to others. These letters, inspired by the Holy Spirit, are preserved as part of the New Testament's writings today.

1.8.4.1 The Epistles of Paul

Paul was not only the greatest of the apostles in the extent of his labors and his sufferings, but he was the most voluminous of all the writers of the New Testament. His writings occupy nearly one-fourth of the whole book. They are not printed in the order in which they were written. They all circulated originally, as did all the books of the New Testament, as separate documents; and when they were collected into larger volumes, they were placed without regard to chronological order.

We shall mention their dates, so far as these are known, when speaking of them individually; for it is important, before reading an epistle, to consider who wrote it, when and under what circumstances it was written, and to whom it was addressed.

Pauline epistles

- Romans
- 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians
- Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
- Pastoral Epistles: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus

1.8.4.1.1 Romans

Although the Epistle to the Romans was not the first written by Paul, it is well that it is placed first, and next after Acts; for its chief subjects is a discussion of the grounds on which a sinner is justified before God, and it is well for the sinner, as soon as possible after he has turned to the Lord, to be made acquainted with this subject. Passing out of Acts into Romans is the forward step which he next needs to take.

This epistle should be read in connection with the twentieth and twenty-first chapters of Acts, from which the reader can see that it was written in Corinth just before Paul's last journey to Jerusalem was begun. Being written to a church containing in its membership a large number of well-matured members with rich and varied experiences, its discussions of important themes are more profound than those in any other epistle.

The chief theme of the epistle is the great doctrine of justification by faith. The apostle shows that the ground of our justification before God is our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as distinguished from works of law. He was led to this discussion by the teaching of certain Jews that we are to be justified by keeping perfectly the law. To the propounding of his doctrine and the refutation of objections to it, the apostle devotes the first eleven chapters of his epistle, and the rest is given to exhortations and the recital of interesting experiences of himself and others.

1.8.4.1.2 First Corinthians

Some remarks in the last chapter of this epistle, connected with the nineteenth chapter of Acts, show where the apostle was when he wrote it. The planting of the Corinthian church is described in the eighteenth chapter of Acts, and these two chapters in the latter book should be read before beginning the study of the epistle. Not much information can be obtained from those about the condition of the church when the epistle was written; for this we are dependent chiefly on the epistle itself. As we read the latter, we find, one after another, the circumstances in the condition

of the church which called forth the epistle and suggested the topics which it treats. These are all of a practical character, corrective of various kinds of misconduct which had sprung up among the members of this church since Paul had left them. For this reason this is one of the most valuable of all the epistles for the regulation of the life and deportment of a church.

1.8.4.1.3 Second Corinthians

By comparing 2 Corinthians 1:8-11; 2 Corinthians 2:12,13; and 2 Corinthians 8:5-7 of the epistle, with Ac 19:23 20:1, we learn the place and the circumstances of the apostle when this epistle was written. He had heard through Titus, who is here mentioned for the first time, the effects of his first epistle to the same church, and this information led to the writing of the second. The condition of the church, together with the great peril through which the apostle had just passed in Ephesus, combined very greatly to depress his spirits; and consequently, this is the saddest of all the epistles in the New Testament. It reveals much more fully than any of the other epistles of Paul, or even the thrilling narratives in Acts, the depths of sorrow and suffering through which this great apostle was continually wading in the prosecution of his mission to the Gentiles. The inner life of Paul is more fully revealed here than elsewhere, and this gives the principal value to us of this admirable epistle.

1.8.4.1.4 Galatians

There is little in this epistle to indicate the time or the place at which it was written. The surprise which the writer expresses that the Galatians should have turned so soon away from him to another Gospel (Galatians 1:6), shows that it was written very soon after his last visit, but this is quite indefinite. He had come from Galatia to Ephesus, and after two years and three months there he went through Macedonia to Greece (Acts 18:23; Acts 19:1, 21, 22 Acts 20:1, 2). Some scholars think that he wrote the epistle while yet in Ephesus, which was less than three years from the time he left the Galatians; and others, that he wrote it after he reached Corinth, which was a few months later.

We know nothing of the Galatians churches except what we learn from the epistle; but from this we learn several very interesting facts as to their first reception of Paul and their present relation to him, and also the cause of their present alienation from him. These spring upon the reader of the epistle like flashes of light and sudden darkness, and we shall not anticipate them here.

In opposition to certain false teachers who were nominal Christians and perverters of the truth, Paul teaches here, as in Romans, that the ground of our justification before

God is obedient faith, and not works of law. The discussion is brief but conclusive, and he follows it with some admirable and always needed teaching and exhortations on the practical duties of Christian life.

1.8.4.1.5 Ephesians

It is doubtful, to say the least, whether this epistle ought to bear the title which it has; for there is a total absence of those personal greetings which abound in Paul's other epistles addressed to churches which he planted; and this is unaccountable if he was writing to a church with which he had labored more than two years-longer than he stayed with any other. He also speaks of the faith of these brethren as if it was with him a matter of hearsay rather than of personal knowledge (Ephesians 1:15, 16); and he refers to own apostleship to the Gentiles as a matter of hearsay with them, if they had heard it at all (Ephesians 3:1-4).

It is now most commonly supposed to have been written for a kind of circular letter, and sent to several churches, that at Ephesus among them; and that the name Ephesus got into some early copies from the fact that Ephesus was the principal of the cities for which it was intended. It was written while Paul was a prisoner in Rome (Ephesians 3:1 Ephesians 4:1; Ephesians 6:18-20).

The epistle opens with some very grand utterances about the eternal purpose and foreknowledge of God respecting Christ and his work of redemption, and also respecting the call of the Gentiles to be partakers with God's ancient people in his grace. This part closes with the third chapter, and Paul's prayer for the brethren addressed, which closes this chapter, is one of the most impressive passages in all his writings. It should be studied as a model of earnest prayer and lofty sentiment.

The remainder of the epistle is of a practical character, having respect to the unity of the church, to its growth in every virtue, and to the details of Christian life on the part of all classes of disciples. Especially remarkable and valuable is the passage in the last chapter, in which the apostle runs a parallel between the pieces of armor, worn by an ancient warrior, and the various duties and privileges of a Christian in his struggle against the power of darkness. Fighting and running foot races are favorite illustrations with Paul, because in each, as in the Christian life, a man has to be doing his best all the time to avoid being defeated.

1.8.4.1.6 Philippians

The account of planting the church at Philippi is given in Acts 16:6-40, and it should be read before beginning the study of this epistle. The fact that Paul was in bonds

at the time of writing (Philippians 1:12,13); that the pretorian guard, which was the body guard of the Emperor kept at Rome, had all heard of his preaching (Philippians 1:13,14); and that he sends to the Philippians the salutation of some belonging to the household of Caesar (Philippians 4:22), show very plainly that the epistle was written, as was Ephesians while Paul was a prisoner in Rome. This is the imprisonment mentioned at the close of Acts. The immediate occasion of his writing was the circumstance that a brother named Epaphroditus, having come from Philippi to Rome to bring a contribution for Paul's necessities (Philippians 4:10-20), had been taken sick, and the Philippians had heard that he was very near the point of death; so Paul sent him back, and doubtless made him the bearer of this epistle (Philippians 2:19-30). The epistle is full of tender sympathy, and not a word of reproach to the church is found in it, but many words of warm commendation.

1.8.4.1.7 Colossians

This is another of the epistles of the imprisonment, of which there are four, namely: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. That Paul was in prison when he wrote is seen from his remarks in Colossians 4:2-4, and Col 4:18. He appears to have sent the epistle by the hand of Tychicus, who also bore Ephesians (Colossians 4:8; Ephesians 6:21, 22), and this shows that they were both written and forwarded at the same time. This accounts for the fact of a very great similarity between the two epistles, greater than between any other two.

The first chapter of this epistle contains one of the grandest exhibitions of the present glory of our Lord Jesus Christ to be found anywhere in the New Testament. It also abounds in stirring exhortations to Christian activity and zeal, all of which are enforced by the apostle's own example.

1.8.4.1.8 First Thessalonians

In coming to this epistle we turn back in point of time, from Paul's imprisonment mentioned at the close of Acts, to his first visit to Corinth, described in Acts 18:1-18; for it was during that visit that the epistle was written. His labors at Thessalonica are described in Acts 17:1-9. He went thence to Berea (Acts 17:10), thence to Athens (Ac 17:15), and thence to Corinth (Acts 18:1). There Silas and Timothy, whom he had left behind, overtook him (Acts 18:5); and in the epistle he says: "But when Timothy came even now unto us from you," etc.; which shows that the epistle was written immediately on Timothy's arrival. This, as we learn from the chronology made out from the book of Acts, was in the year 52; and this is the earliest of Paul's epistles, and also the earliest book of the New Testament.

The epistle shows that the Thessalonian church was suffered greatly from persecution, but that it was conducting itself in such a manner as to spread the light of the Gospel abroad through surrounding communities (1 Thessalonians 1:2-10). These faithful disciples being but partly instructed in Christian teaching, were in trouble respecting their deceased brethren; and this led Paul to give them one of the plainest possible lessons about the resurrection of the dead, that by this information they might comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The same words have been a source of unspeakable comfort to the saints from that day to this, and they have served the purpose of a text on funeral occasions more frequently perhaps than any other passage in the Bible.

1.8.4.1.9 Second Thessalonians

This epistle seems have been written soon after the first to the same church; for the persecution mentioned in the first was still in progress (2 Thessalonians 1:2, 3), and the condition of the church in general was unchanged. It was written, too, when the writer was solicitous about being delivered from “unreasonable and evil men” {2 Thessalonians 3:2}, which agrees with the interval between his withdrawal from the synagogue in Corinth to the house of Justus and the assurance given him by the Lord that no one should set on him to harm him (Acts 18:5-10). The most conspicuous matters discussed in it are the fate of the wicked at the second coming of the Lord, and the coming of “the man of sin” here first mentioned by the apostle (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

It also contains some very plain and emphatic instructions as to how the church should deal with those members who walk disorderly; and in the close shows that Paul always wrote the salutations of his epistles with his own hand as a “token” of their genuineness (2 Thessalonians 3:17). He was in the habit, as we have seen from Romans, of dictating his epistles to an amanuensis; but his autograph in the salutation identified them as his.

1.8.4.1.10 First Timothy

When Paul wrote this epistle he had left Timothy in Ephesus and gone into Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3). During that portion of his life covered by Acts of Apostles he had never done this. He had only once gone from Ephesus into Macedonia, and then he had sent Timothy before him (Acts 19:21, 22; Acts 20:1). As Acts follows his career until his imprisonment in Rome, where it closes, he must have made the visit to Ephesus here referred to, subsequent to that imprisonment. He must therefore have been released from that imprisonment, as he expected to be, and have gone abroad once more in his apostolic work.

This epistle was especially intended for the instruction of an Evangelist, which Timothy was, in regard to his labors among the churches. Consequently, it should be studied exhaustively by every preacher of the Gospel for his own guidance and edification. But much of the instruction given in it has reference to the duties of church officers; and therefore the epistle is a study for them as well as for preachers. Moreover, the private members of the churches cannot know how to demean themselves toward the officers and the preachers, without knowing what duties and what authorities are imposed upon the latter; therefore it is a study for all church members, having different special aims for different classes. For knowledge of the practical detail of church organization, we are more dependent on this epistle than on any other.

It would be wise for the student, in connection with this epistle, or with the second to Timothy, to take his concordance and find all the places in which Timothy's name occurs, so as to become familiar with all that is written about him. He is one of the most interesting characters mentioned in the New Testament.

1.8.4.1.11 Second Timothy

Paul is once more a prisoner (2 Timothy 1:8,16-18 2 Timothy 2:9); and it is the imprisonment which terminated in his death (2 Timothy 4:6-8,16-18). It is the last writing which we have from his pen, and this imparts to it that peculiar interest which always attaches to the final utterances of a man of God. It is devoted mostly to personal matters, all the great doctrines of the faith having been set forth in previous documents. The sadness of his situation is indirectly revealed, especially in the first chapter.

The exhortations to Timothy, and to all the brethren, in the second chapter, are among the most stirring that Paul ever wrote; and the prediction of a great apostasy which chiefly occupies the third chapter, sounds almost like a wail of despair in regard to the church's future; but the shout of triumph with which he greets his approaching death in the fourth chapter, has thrilled the souls of the saints as scarcely anything else in the Bible.

If it so thrills us at the remote period, how must it have inflamed the hearts of Paul's fellow-soldiers and of his thousands of converts! He was anxious to see Timothy once more before he died. He begged him to come to him before winter, and to bring a cloak which he had left at Troas. He would need it in the fireless prison and the cold weather that was to come before his execution. He also wanted something to read, and he thought of doing some more writing; hence the request that Timothy should bring some books and parchments which he had also left at Troas (2 Timothy 4:13-21). No one can read this epistle thoughtfully without being better and wiser.

1.1.8.1.12 Titus

But little is known of Titus. He is not once mentioned in Acts; and all that we know of him is found in four of Paul's epistles. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas from Antioch to Jerusalem at the time of the conference on Circumcision (Galatians 2:1). He was afterward sent by Paul from Ephesus on an important mission to Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:12,13; 2 Corinthians 7:5-7; 2 Corinthians 8:16-23; 2 Corinthians 12:18). He was with Paul in the island of Crete after the release of the latter from Roman imprisonment, where he left him to set in order the things that were yet wanting in the churches planted there (Titus 1:5). Finally, he was with Paul in Rome during his last imprisonment, but went thence to Dalmatia before Paul's death (2 Timothy 4:10).

He was still in Crete when this epistle was addressed to him (Titus 1:5); but was requested by Paul to come to Nicopolis as soon as another evangelist should come to take his place (Titus 3:12). The purpose of the epistle is very much the same as that of First Timothy; that is, to instruct Titus as an evangelist in regard to his labors among the churches, and at the same time to impart indirectly the same instruction to the churches. It is a study for young preachers, and not less so for all who would be useful in the church. Its first chapter, in connection with the third chapter of First Timothy, furnishes full instruction with reference to the qualifications required for elders of the church; and as all members are sometimes called upon to act in the selection of these officers, these passages should be familiar to all.

1.8.4.1.13 Philemon

This is one of the epistles of the imprisonment; that is, of the first imprisonment in Rome (Philemon 1:1,13). It was written in behalf of Onesimus, a slave of Philemon, who had run away from his master, had landed in Rome, had turned to the Lord under Paul's preaching, and for a while had been assisting Paul in his ministry (Philemon 10-15). Paul broadly suggests to Philemon the propriety of setting him free, and promises to pay out of his own purse anything that Onesimus may owe Philemon (Philemon 17-21). We learn indirectly from Colossians that Colosse was the home of Onesimus (Colossians 4:9) and therefore of Philemon his master. The latter was for a man of great benevolence, and of apparent wealth. The Church met in his house (Philemon 2-7).

1.8.4.1.14 Hebrews

This epistle has been generally regarded from the beginning as one of Paul's; but from the second century to the present time many eminent scholars have doubted or denied its Pauline authorship. Three early writers, all born in the second century, but active in the early part of the third, may be regarded as the representatives

of the opinions on the question until recent times. Origen said that the thoughts were Paul's, but that the style was not. He was not able to decide who composed it. Clement of Alexandria was of the opinion that Paul wrote it in Hebrew, and that it was translated into Greek by Luke. He thought that the style was Luke's, but the thoughts Paul's. Tertullian ascribed it to Barnabas. In modern time Luther suggested that it might have been written by Apollos, and quite a number of recent scholars have revived and advocated this opinion. Perhaps the question will never be settled to the satisfaction of all. But though opinions may vary as to the person who wrote it, all believing scholars agree that it was written by some apostolic man, and that its contents are to be received as a true and authoritative.

The particular community to which it was addressed is left as obscure as the person who wrote it, though it is very clear from the contents that it was primarily intended for a community of Christian Jews, and ultimately for all such and for all believers. It was quite difficult in the first generation of the church to induce the Jews who became Christians to altogether give up those parts of their old religion which were set aside by the new. In fact, some were found who were inclined to go back to Judaism after having accepted the Christian faith. It was for the benefit of these that the epistle was written.

Its main line of argument shows the superiority of Christ as a priest over Aaron, and the superiority of his sacrifice of himself over the sacrifices of the law. It shows, indeed, not only the superiority of the former, but the priesthood of Aaron and the sacrifices of the law had been actually set aside to be observed no more. It shows also that all of the ritual of the law which depended on this priesthood and these sacrifices had passed away with them.

While this was the immediate design of the book, its value was not exhausted in its effect on the Jews; for it contains many trains of thought and many practical exhortations which are adapted to all the instruction and edification of all classes of disciples in every age and country. Its exhortations, examples, and warnings, like its chief argument, are drawn almost exclusively from the books of the Old Testament, and no one is prepared to read it intelligibly who is not familiar with those books, and especially with the law of Moses.

In studying it one must make almost constant reference, either by memory, or by the marginal references, or by a concordance, to the law books of Moses. Next to the epistle to the Romans, it is generally regarded as the most important epistle in the New Testament for setting forth the distinctive doctrines of Christ.

1.8.4.2 The General Epistles

1.8.4.2.1 James

The Epistle of James was written to Jewish Christians of the first century A.D. living in gentile communities outside Palestine, in an effort to expose hypocritical practices and to teach right Christian behavior.

➡ Author and date

The epistle of James is generally attributed to the brother of Jesus however there is some question concerning the authenticity of this claim. James is thought to have been written in 49 A.D. prior to the Jerusalem council held in 50 A.D.

➡ Themes

Major themes contained with James include:

- **Living Faith** - James wants believers not only to hear the truth, but also to do it. He contrasts empty faith (claims without conduct) with faith that works. Commitment to love and to serve is evidence of true faith. Living faith makes a difference. Make sure your faith is more than just a statement - it should also result in action. Seek ways of putting your faith to work.
- **Trials** - In the Christian life there are trials and temptations. Successfully overcoming these adversities produces maturity and strong character. Don't resent troubles when they come. Pray for wisdom; God will supply all that you will need to face persecution or adversity. He will give you patience and keep you strong in times of trial.
- **Law of Love** - We are saved by God's gracious mercy, not by keeping the law. But Christ gave us a special command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 19:19). We are to love and serve those around us. Keeping the law of love shows that our faith is vital and real. When we show love to others, we are overcoming our own selfishness.
- **Wise Speech** - Wisdom shows itself in speech. We are responsible for the destructive results of our talk. The wisdom of God that helps control the tongue can help control all our actions. Accepting God's wisdom will affect your speech. Your words will convey true humility and lead to peace. Think before you speak and allow God to give you self-control.
- **Wealth** - James taught Christians not to compromise with worldly attitudes about wealth. Because the glory of wealth fades, Christians should store up God's treasures through sincere service. Christians must not show partiality

to the wealthy, nor be prejudiced against the poor. All of us are accountable for how we use what we have. We should not hoard wealth, but be generous toward others. In addition, we should not be impressed by the wealthy nor look down on those who are poor.

1.8.4.2.2 First Letter of Peter

➔ Authorship

The author of this epistle identifies himself as Peter.

➔ Date of Composition

Those who favor Petrine authorship date the epistle sometime shortly before Peter's martyrdom which could have taken place as late as AD 68. The pro-Petrine group sets a date as early as AD 63-64. This is because the reference to Silvanus at the end of the epistle seems to indicate a date following Paul's arrival in Rome, though this is by no means a certainty.

➔ Original Recipients

Most scholars agree that the original recipients included a large (if not exclusively) Gentile element. The letter may well have been a circular letter that was sent to the first church on the list, where it was copied and then sent on to the next. Regardless, it appears that the recipients were undergoing some type of persecution that had caused them to consider abandoning The Way and returning to their former lifestyles.

1.8.4.2.3 Second letter of Peter

The second epistle of Peter was written to warn Christians about false teachers and to exhort them to grow in their faith in and knowledge of Christ.

➔ Author and date

The second epistle of Peter is generally attributed to the apostle Peter as the letter opens with salutation "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ". However there are some questions concerning the authenticity of this claim. Second Peter is thought to have been written about the year 67 A.D. possibly from Rome.

➔ Themes

Major themes contained within second Peter include:

- **Diligence** - If our faith is real, it will be evident in our faithful behaviour. If

people are diligent in Christian growth, they won't backslide or be deceived by false teachers. Growth is essential. It begins with faith and culminates in love for others. To keep growing we need to know God, keep on following him, and remember what he taught us. We must remain diligent in faithful obedience and Christian growth.

- **False Teachers** - Peter warns the church to beware of false teachers. These teachers were proud of their position, promoted sexual sin, and advised against keeping the Ten Commandments. Peter countered them by pointing to the Spirit-inspired Scriptures as our authority. Christians need discernment to be able to resist false teachers. God can rescue us from their lies if we stay true to his Word, the Bible, and reject those who distort the truth.
- **Christ's Return** - One day Christ will create a new heaven and earth where we will live forever. As Christians, our hope is in this promise. But with Christ's return comes his judgment on all who refuse to believe. The cure for complacency, lawlessness, and heresy is found in the confident assurance that Christ will return. God is still giving unbelievers time to repent. To be ready, Christians must keep on trusting and resist the pressure to give up waiting for Christ's return.

1.8.4.2.4 First letter of John

John the Apostle wrote this letter in order to reassure Christians in their faith and to counter false teaching.

🔄 Author and Date

The apostle John wrote this letter probably between 85 A.D. and 90 A.D. from the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor.

🔄 Blueprint

The first epistle of John is generally divided up into three parts:

- God is light (1:1 - 2:27)
- God is love (2:28 - 4:21)
- God is life (5:1-21)

John wrote about the most vital aspects of faith so that readers would know Christian truth from error. He emphasizes the basics of faith so that we can be confident in our faith. In our dark world, God is light. In our cold world, God brings the warmth of love. In our dying world, God brings life. When we lack confidence, these truths bring us certainty.

➡ Themes

Major themes contained in first John include:

- **Sin:** Even Christians sin. Sin requires God's forgiveness, and Christ's death provides it for us. Determining to live according to God's standards in the Bible shows that our lives are being transformed. We cannot deny our sin nature, maintain that we are "above" sinning, or minimize the consequences of sin in our relationship with God. We must resist the attraction of sin, yet we must confess when we do sin.
- **Love:** Christ commands us to love others as he loved us. This love is evidence that we are truly saved. God is the Creator of love; he cares that his children love each other. Love means putting others first and being unselfish. Love is action - showing others we care - not just saying it. To show love we must give sacrificially of our time and money to meet the needs of others.
- **Family of God:** We become God's children by believing in Christ. God's life in us enables us to love our fellow family members. The way we treat others shows who our Father is. We should live as a faithful, loving member of God's family.
- **Truth and Error:** Teaching that the physical body does not matter, false teachers encouraged believers to throw off moral restraints. They also taught that Christ wasn't really a man and that we must be saved by having some special mystical knowledge. The result was that people became indifferent to sin. God is truth and light, so the more we get to know him the better we can keep focused on the truth. Don't be led astray by any teaching that denies Christ's deity or humanity. Check the message; test the claims.
- **Assurance:** God is in control of heaven and earth. Because his Word is true, we can have assurance of eternal life and victory over sin. By faith we can be certain of our eternal destiny with him. Assurance of our relationship with God is a promise, but it is also a way of life. We build our confidence by trusting in God's Word and in Christ's provision for our sin.

1.8.4.2.5 Second Letter of John

John wrote this letter in order to emphasize the basics of following Christ - truth and love - and to warn against false teachers.

➡ Author and Date

The second epistle of John was written by the apostle John about the year 90 A.D. from the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor.

➞ Themes

Major themes contained in second John include the following:

- **Truth** - Following God's Word, the Bible, is essential to Christian living because God is truth. Christ's true followers consistently obey his truth. In order to be loyal to Christ's teaching, we must seek to know the Bible, but we must never twist its message to our own needs or purposes or encourage others who misuse it.
- **Love** - Christ's command is for Christians to love one another. This is the basic ingredient of true Christianity. To obey Christ fully, we must believe his command to love others. Helping and giving to meet others' needs put love into practice.
- **False Leaders** - We must be wary of religious leaders who deny or undermine Christ's teaching. We must not give them a platform to spread false teaching. Do not encourage those who are opposed to Christ. Politely remove yourself from association with false leaders. Be aware of what is being taught in your church.

1.8.4.2.6 Third letter of John

The apostle John wrote this letter so that he could commend Gaius for his hospitality and to encourage him in his Christian life.

➞ Author and Date

The third epistle of John was written by the apostle John about the year 90 A.D. from the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor.

➞ Themes

Major themes contained in third John include:

- **Hospitality** - John wrote to encourage those who were kind to others. Genuine hospitality for traveling Christian workers was needed then and is still important today. This is important as faithful Christian teachers and missionaries need our support. Whenever you can extend hospitality to others, it will make you a partner in their ministry.
- **Pride** - Diotrephes not only refused to offer hospitality, but he set himself up as a church boss. Pride disqualified him from being a real leader. This is important because Christian leaders must shun pride and its effects on them. Be careful not to misuse your position of leadership.

- **Faithfulness** - Gaius and Demetrius were commended for their faithful work in the church. They were held up as examples of faithful, selfless servants. We shouldn't take for granted Christian workers who serve faithfully. Be sure to encourage them so they won't grow weary of serving.

1.8.4.2.7 Letter of Jude

Jude wrote this letter in an effort to remind the church of the need for constant vigilance - to keep strong in the faith and to oppose heresy.

➞ Author and date

The book of Jude was written by Jude, the brother of both James and Jesus, about the year 65 A.D.

➞ Themes

Major themes contained in Jude include:

- **False Teachers** - Jude warns against false teachers and leaders who reject the lordship of Christ, undermine the faith of others, and lead them astray. These leaders and any who follow them will be punished. We must staunchly defend Christian truth. Make sure that you avoid leaders and teachers who distort the Bible to suit their own purposes. Genuine servants of God will faithfully portray Christ in their words and conduct.
- **Apostasy** - Jude also warns against apostasy, the turning away from Christ. We are to remember that God punishes rebellion against him. We must be careful not to drift away from a faithful commitment to Christ. Those who do seek to know the truth in God's Word are susceptible to apostasy. Christians must guard against any false teachings that would distract them from the truth preached by the apostles and written in God's Word.

1.8.5 The book of Revelation

Revelation is also a letter, but it is in the form of apocalyptic literature, which tells a story through symbols, images and numbers. Revelation offers comfort and encouragement to Christians of all ages that God is firmly in control. When the time is right, the forces of evil that seem to dominate our world will be utterly destroyed, and God's eternal kingdom will come into its fulfillment

Unit 2: The New Commandment

2.1 Ten commandments

The series of prohibitions that is contained in Exodus 20: 2- 17 and Deuteronomy 5: 6- 21 has a unique status within the Bible and the religious communities which accept it as Holy Scripture. Within the Sinaitic account, it is the first and most prominent proclamation of law; indeed, it is the only law spoken directly by God to the people.

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai to serve as principles of moral behavior for the human race. The Decalogue is recorded both in the Books of Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21, two of the five Books of Moses (also known as the Torah, Law, or Pentateuch). God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone on Mount Sinai in the Book of Exodus, which are the moral expression of the Sinai Covenant between God and his people the Israelites. Moses recounted the Ten Commandments of God to the Israelites in the Book of Deuteronomy.

The following are the Ten Commandments:

GOD	MAN
1: Do not worship any other gods	5: Honour your father & mother
2: Do not make any idols	6: Do not murder
3: Do not misuse the name of God	7: Do not commit adultery
4: Keep the Sabbath holy	8: Do not steal
	9: Do not lie
	10: Do not covet

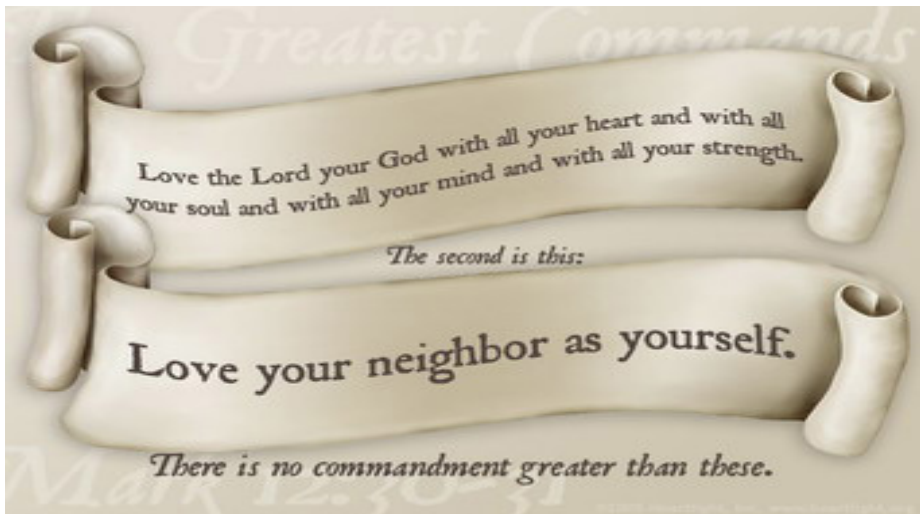
2.1.1 Comparison between Decalogue and the great commandment

The greatest and most important *commandment as stated by Jesus* is the love of God and neighbor. Compared to the Decalogue, this great commandment is the sum of all the commands of the two tables. The first four commands are in line with the love of God while the six remaining commands are imply the love of man (neighbor).

Briefly, the simple word of “love” affected by Jesus, resume the whole law of God. It reveals first of all the nature of God, which is presented as liberator. God is love, says the Scripture. It reveals the exact nature of the relationship that nodes human with his fellow. The Law of God has two dimensions: vertical on the one hand and a horizontal of another part. The love for God always precedes and prepares the real love for our neighbor. If we do not love God, we will be unable to love our neighbor.

2.1.2 The importance of laws in people’s lives

At the foot of Mount Sinai, God showed his people the true function and beauty of his laws. The commandments were designed to lead Israel to a life of practical holiness. In them, people could see the nature of God and his plan for how they should live. The commands and guidelines were intended to direct the community to meet the needs of each individual in a loving and responsible manner. By Jesus’ time, however, most people looked at the law the wrong way. They saw it as a means to prosperity in both this world and the next. And they thought that to obey every law was the way to earn God’s protection from foreign invasion and natural disaster. Law keeping became an end in itself, not the means to fulfill God’s ultimate law of love.



2.2 The greatest commandment (Matthew 22:35-40)

Jesus said that to love God supremely is the first and greatest Commandment. (Matthew 22:38). It is first and greatest in that it represents the heartbeat of every one of the Commandments. But while it is the first Commandment, it is not the only

one as Jesus quoting from the second of the Ten Commandments also said, *"If you love me, keep my Commandments."* John 14:15. He did not say, *"If you obey me, then you will love me."* Obedience does not lead to love but love does lead to obedience. The more we know God the more we love him, and the more we love him the more it becomes a delight to serve him and do his will. So if we truly love God, we will keep all the other Commandments as well as the greatest which comprises them all.

So Jesus explains that the first is to love God supremely, *"And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* Matthew 22:39. The connection in the following passage is very explicit, *"We love him, because he first loved us. 20. If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment has we from him, that he who loves God loves his brother also."* 1 John 4:19-21. It is our love for God that also empowers us to love other people.

2.2.1 The love commandment in the teaching of Jesus

In a number of New Testament texts, the will of God for God's human creatures is summarized by the love commandment. This summary is known as the "new law of Christ", under which all moral and legal teaching could be subsumed.

Biblical scholars and theologians have commonly sought to define the law of love by studying the Greek terms of love. The favored New Testament term for love, *agape*, is often contrasted to *eros* and *philia*, between which some distinction can be made.

Eros: It is a passionate desire for someone or something aroused by the object of love

Philia: It is the affection associated with friendship and family.

According to Mark 12: 28- 34, Jesus enunciates the love commandment during the final week of his life, which he spent in Jerusalem. A scribe approaches him in genuine curiosity and asks: "Which commandment is the first of all?"

Jesus answered by citing two passages of the Old Testament:

"Hear o Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength". (Deut. 6: 4- 5)

The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19: 18).

The love commandment, however, is a double commandment. (Dale Patrick: 1985)

2.2.2 The love commandment in John and Paul

The love commandment proper is a recurring theme in John 13: 34- 15: 27, introduced as a new commandment:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (13: 34- 35)

The love commandment is new in its basis of love for one another as an imitation of and a response to Jesus’ love and the identification of his community as his.

In 15: 12- 17, the love of Christ is said to be shown forth above all in his dying for his friends.

Paul follows the enunciation of the law of love with a contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit. The fruits of the Spirit are the good works, exhibiting faith and love that God empowers a believer to do. While Paul commands his readers to live the life of love, he nevertheless holds that any good work is to be ascribed not to the self but to God. (Dale Patrick: 1985).

2.2.3 The Golden rule about love (Matthew 7: 12)

“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”. (Matthew 7:12 English Standard Version (ESV))

The “Golden Rule” is the name given to a principle Jesus taught in His Sermon on the Mount. The actual words “Golden Rule” are not found in Scripture, just as the words “Sermon on the Mount” are also not found. These titles were later added by Bible translation teams in order to make Bible study a little easier. The phrase “Golden Rule” began to be ascribed to this Jesus’ teaching during the 16th–17th centuries.

What we call the Golden Rule refers to Matthew 7:12: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” Jesus knew the human heart and its selfishness. In fact, in the preceding verse, He describes human beings as innately “evil” (verse 11). Jesus’ Golden Rule gives us a standard by which naturally selfish people can gauge their actions: actively treat others the way they themselves like to be treated.

All societies and religions have moral principles, laws and rules. Although many of the less important rules vary, all traditions seem to have come up with a version of

“the Golden Rule”, “Do as you would be done by” or “Treat other people in a way you would like to be treated yourself” – there are more examples below. It can be expressed positively (as above) or negatively (“Do not treat others as you would not like to be treated yourself”). Some people think that the negative versions are better, because it is easier to agree on the things we would not like. In this regard, anyone can work out what would cause suffering to themselves or another person and then avoid doing it. For example, you wouldn’t want to be bullied, so you shouldn’t bully other people.

The Golden Rule requires kindness and care for the less fortunate, because this is what we would want in their situation, and it discourages actions like lying and theft because no one wants to be lied to or to have their property stolen. It is simple and clear, and works well in practice.

Unit 3: Faith and Decision Making

In general, Faith is *complete trust or confidence in someone or something*. It can also be defined as *a strong belief in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual conviction rather than proof*. This is somehow influenced by our decision making. How our decision making is taken is how long and strong will be our faith. Indeed, faith and decision making have also a very significant impact on our daily life in general and on our inner peace in particular. In this optic, it is a crucial need to cultivate, through our education system, a culture of making a positive judgment and right decision for promoting peace in our community and the culture of increasing our inner peace.

3.1 Meaning of inner peace

3.1.1 Peace

The concept of peace is etymologically in line with the latin **pax** and the greek **eirene** which are approximations of Hebrew **shalom** a cognate of the Arabic **salaam**, meaning safety, prosperity and security. Like other abstract terms, peace is intangible. But like “happiness”, ‘justice’ and ‘freedom”, **we recognize peace by its absence**. Peace denotes the opposite of things we don’t like, that disturb our peace. It is a linchpin of social harmony, economic equity and political justice. Unfortunately, **peace** is constantly ruptured by wars and other forms of violent conflict.

Peace is generally seen as a state of harmony, the absence of hostility. This term is applied to describe a cessation of violent international conflict; in this international context, peace is the opposite of war. **Peace** can also describe a relationship between any parties characterized by respect, justice, and goodwill. However, **Peace** is more than the absence of war. It is also “the maintenance of an orderly and just society”.

More generally, **peace** can pertain to an individual relative to her or his environment, as peaceful can describe calm, serenity, and silence. This latter understanding of peace can also pertain to an individual’s sense of himself or herself, as to be “at peace” with one’s self would indicate the same serenity, calm, and equilibrium within oneself.

Peace has ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ references as well as ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ meanings. ‘Outer’ peace tends to denote the absence of war and presence of harmony in the social and political realms, while ‘inner’ peace refers to a tranquil state of mind.

3.1.2 Inner peace

Inner peace (or **peace of mind** or **inner calmness**) refers to a state of being mentally and spiritually at peace, with enough knowledge and understanding to keep oneself strong in the face of discord or stress. Being “at peace” is considered by many to be

healthy (homeostasis) and the opposite of being stressed or anxious, a state where our mind performs at an optimal level with a positive outcome. Peace of mind is thus generally associated with bliss, happiness and contentment. Peace of mind, serenity, and calmness are descriptions of a disposition free from the effects of stress.

In some cultures, inner peace is considered a state of consciousness or enlightenment that may be cultivated by various forms of training, such as prayer, meditation, tai chi or yoga, for example. Many spiritual practices refer to this peace as an experience of knowing oneself. Traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism are often associated with the culture and practice of finding inner peace.

People have difficulties embracing their inner spirituality because everyday stressors get the best of them. Finding peace and happiness in the little joys of life can seem like a lot of work, and results do not seem all that gratifying. Achieving spirituality is a step-by-step process; there are ways through by which one can become more spiritual every day.

According to some practitioners likewise Dalai Lama, the practice of inner peace is very relevant in the world:

The question of real, lasting world peace concerns human beings, so basic human feelings are also at its roots. Through inner peace, genuine world peace can be achieved. In this, the importance of individual responsibility is quite clear; an atmosphere of peace must first be created within ourselves, then gradually expanded to include our families, our communities, and ultimately the whole planet.

One meaning of peace refers to inner peace: a state of mind, body and perhaps soul, a peace within ourselves. People that experience inner peace say that the feeling is not dependent on time, people, place, or any external object or situation, asserting that an individual may experience inner peace even in the midst of war.

3.2 Actions that can develop inner peace

Finding peace within is a wonderful but also a difficult thing. It is easy to go looking for it in the wrong places. So here are 5 timeless thoughts to help develop your inner peace:

- **Simplify**

The simplification of life is one of the steps to inner peace. A persistent simplification will create an inner and outer well-being that places harmony in one's life. Making

thing simpler has certainly brought a lot of inner peace to our lives. It is better to avoid complicated activities and overloaded lives. One must set limits for his or her daily tasks. Set a limit for commitments and say no to be able to feel less stress and produce better results.

- **Accept**

Acceptance of others, their looks, their behaviors, their belief, bring you an inner peace and tranquility – instead of anger and resentment. When you accept what is, you stop feeding energy into resisting what is. You don't make a problem more powerful and sticky in your mind. Instead, somewhat counter intuitively, when you accept what is it loses much of its power. It just is. And you feel stillness inside. Now, accepting what is doesn't mean to give up. It just means that you put yourself in a better position to take action if necessary. Because now you can see more clearly, you can focus your energy towards what you want and take the appropriate action to change your situation.

- **Forgive**

Inner peace can be reached only when we practice forgiveness. Forgiveness is letting go of the past, and is therefore the means for correcting our misperceptions. Forgiveness is important because as long as you don't forgive someone you are linked to that person. Your thoughts will return to the person who wronged you and what s/he did over and over again. The emotional link between the two of you is so strong and inflicts much suffering in you and – as a result of your inner turmoil – most often in other people around you too.

When you forgive, you do not only release the other person. You set yourself free too from all of that agony. One thing to keep in mind is to not just forgive others but also yourself. By forgiving yourself – instead of resenting yourself for something you did a week or 10 years ago – you make the habit of forgiveness more and more of a natural part of you. And so forgiving others becomes easier too.

- **Do what you enjoy.**

Never continue in a job you don't enjoy. If you're happy in what you're doing, you'll like yourself, you'll have inner peace. And if you have that, along with physical health, you'll have more success than you could possibly have imagined. When you do what you enjoy there is a natural peace that arises within. You are in alignment with your outer world. This also leads to a lot more success than if you have a lot of inner turmoil and really don't care that much for your work.

- **Be careful with your inner peace.**

“Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset.”

By using the tips above and by living in the present moment you can find a lot more inner peace. Not only during days when things go as planned. But also on days when your world is upset and things aren't so easy. On such days your inner peace will be very useful to help you make good decisions and to get things done. So be smart, stay calm and be careful with your inner peace.

3.3 Actions that can destroy inner peace

Habit makes our character and then after, our personality. When one does not develop a number of tips to maintain his or her inner peace, he or she will find him/herself dominated by stress and then overloaded by ideas and actions that can lead to a disharmonious life. Being so, inner peace will progressively die and lose its place in one's life.

3.4 Impact of inner peace

- **For an individual level**

Peace of mind gives us the strength to keep trying and keep walking along the path that we KNOW is right for our lives. Peace already exists within each of us, if we only allow ourselves to feel its comfort. When you find peace within yourself, you become the kind of person who can live at peace with others. No one can find inner peace except by working, not in a self-centered way, but for the whole human family. Brief, inner peace helps us to cope with our problems. It is our inside advice that influences actively and positively our daily life. He who lives in harmony with himself lives in harmony with the universe.

- **For community level**

It is when peace starts within each one of us that it will have a wider impact in our community or in the world at large. When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us. When our community is in a state of peace, it can share peace with neighboring communities, and so on. When we feel love and kindness towards others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace, (Dalai Lama). World peace will never be stable until enough of us find inner peace to stabilize it. We can only help make our lives and

our world more peaceful, when we ourselves feel peace. Peace of mind begins when we stop thinking about how far we have to go, or how hard the road has been, and just let ourselves feel peace.

3.5 Peace and security

3.5.1 Introduction

To begin with, let us understand the meaning of peace and security, the following interesting story may help you.

Activity: read and discuss the following case study about peace

Once, a King offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture on peace. Many artists tried. The king looked at all the paintings and shortlisted two, so that he could finally select one as the best painting. One picture showed a calm lake as a perfect mirror for mountains all around it. Overhead was the blue sky with white clouds, beautifully reflected in the lake. Everyone thought that it was a perfect picture of peace. The other picture also had mountains, but those were rugged and bare. Above was a stormy sky from which rain fell and in which lightening played. Down the side of the mountain a huge foaming waterfall releasing water at great force was also depicted. But behind the waterfall in a bush a bird had built a nest and was feeding her babies in perfect peace. Which painting do you think won the prize? The king chose the second picture. Do you know why? The King stated the reason, "Because peace does not mean the absence of noise, trouble, or disturbances. Peace means to be in the midst of all these and still remain calm in your heart." Do you think that the painting selected by the King depicted peace in the true sense of the term? Peace really does not mean a state of mind or a condition with complete absence of disturbances or conflicts. In fact, complete absence of disturbances or conflicts in human world is impossible. We are trying to understand peace in societal, national and international contexts and not in the context where the humans do not exist.

We may, therefore, define it as follows: Peace is a social and political condition that ensures development of individuals, society and nation. It is a state of harmony characterized by the existence of healthy relationships. It is a condition related to the social or economic welfare and equality. It is also related to a working political order that serves true interests of all. In the context of intra-national and international relations, peace is not merely the absence of war or conflict, but also the presence of socio-cultural and economic understanding and unity.

3.5.2 Security

The word security also appears in our daily conversations, in newspapers or in official discourse. The reference points of security ranges from individual, institutional, regional, national to international levels. All of us take various measures to secure our homes or areas where we live in. We know that Ministers and other VIPs are provided security individually. Security arrangements are made for key governmental and other important institutions or certain regions that are under threat. We also hear about national and international security. This multiple usage of the word security indicates its varied meanings. In general terms, it means a secure condition or feeling free from fear. It also means the safety of an individual, an institution, a region, a nation or the world. However, in its most basic sense, security implies freedom from extremely dangerous threats. It also relates to threats that endanger core values like human rights.

3.5.3 Peace versus Security

While accepting the varied perceptions of both the words, it is evident that peace and security are inseparable. Combined together, it is a condition where individuals, institutions, regions, nations and the world move ahead without any threat. In this condition regions or nations are generally more stable domestically, likely to be democratically governed and respectful to human rights. Conflict not only generates threat and fear, but also hampers economic, social, or political advancement. The culture to develop his or her inner peace in everyday life is the root of peacemaking in family and the community.

1.6 Ways of building inner peace

➡ Meditation

Meditation prepares the mind to calm down effortlessly. Within meditation, we prepare our mind to become still. Through meditation, we respond to our complicated situations with a peaceful mind. The most essential thing is not to react but, instead of that, we must respond to the questions of that situation. It brings the mind to the present moment which is the field of action. When we act with complete awareness of our action, when the mind is totally attentive to the moment, the action is perfect and mistakes do not happen.

The benefits of the meditation are evident:

1. It makes us mentally strong so we can face any situation with a smile.
2. It makes you peaceful. Inner peace reflects in outer situations also.
3. It increases emotional resilience.
4. It reduces the tendency to react and increases the tendency to respond.
5. It is an effective way to de-stress your mind.

In fact, peace of mind is largely a matter of attention. If we keep the flashlight of our attention on our negative circumstances, if we constantly attend to the “gloom and doom” voices in our heads, then we will surely be overcome by stress.

➡ Keep inner space clean

As we may know, all the problems begin from thoughts. Then they affect the subtle energy body, finally settling in the gross body, that is, the organ systems. Also problem begins when there is conflict between one's original nature of soul consciousness and acquired nature of body consciousness. The ultimate experience of soul and body consciousness is bliss and sorrow respectively. Keeping the inner space clean means being in a **state of bliss or at least sorrow free**. Being in a state of sorrow means keeping the **inner space dirty**.

With this background meaning of cleanliness of inner space, now let us mention some of the important tools for cleaning the inner space. The **five most important tools very commonly used by many, knowingly or unknowingly are**: Wisdom, Silence, Inner voice (conscience), Witness consciousness and Forgiveness.

Wisdom

Few points of wisdom which we can churn for ourselves at moments of sorrow are as follows:

- 1) In every misfortune, there is fortune hidden, which one may not be able to recognize at that moment. So just wait & watch without apprehension.
- 2) Faith in goodness of past, present and future.
- 3) Nothing is permanent; it applies to tough moments also. Remember the slogan, “This too will pass away”.
- 4) Pain is an unpaid therapist, who comes to teach us something. So don't ignore it. Just accept it.
- 5) Just as we turn to the Almighty at times of sorrow, so also try to see the unseen hands of the supreme in all your achievements and recognize the blessings of others in your success. Also never forget to count your blessings.

It may be difficult to think in the above said directions, but that is the beginning of Inner Space cleaning.

Silence

Silence is the commonest antidote prescribed by spiritualists for many problems to common people. But how does one experience it? The first thing we need to understand for experiencing silence is, speed thrills but definitely it takes us out of balance and kills. It is said that the **two best times when we can experience silence is:** Early morning and before bedtime

Early morning immediately after getting up from bed, choose any one positive thought that really touches your inner self. Then repeat the thought mentally at least 21 times (or write it on a piece of paper). This will work like a speed breaker when you are in the field of actions either at office, home or elsewhere throughout the day. Throughout the day during your actions, keep some traffic control timings (at least every 3 hours once). That is every once in 3 hours observe your breathing 3-9 times and simultaneously repeat the positive thought you gave to yourself in the morning. This practice will reduce the traffic of thoughts in our mind and helps in experiencing silence while in action field.

Before going to bed recollect the day's experience and prepare a nice positive thought for next day & sleep in that remembrance.

Inner voice

After one or two weeks of experiencing some amount of silence, now your inner judge is ready to guide you spontaneously at every moment as to what is right and wrong accurately than anybody else. That is, the inner voice of conscience will be loud enough for you to hear whenever you go in the wrong direction.

Simultaneously to strengthen and reinforce the inner guidance from our conscience, towards positivity, it is better to perform one or two simple acts of goodness to others that is easily doable by us. In this way, our conscience will become our best guide, if we properly listen to it, will help us to remain clean inside.

Witness consciousness

Looking at all the happenings, as if we are a third person, without any attachment to it is a highest kind of practice that can burn any kind of negativities which are deep down in the self. In practical terms basically it means not to be reactive to any

situation. Because all the solutions are inside us, but it can't be revealed until we keep ourselves stable and calm inside.

Sometimes people with this attitude may be looking like an aloof person to others, but in reality the bliss and the wisdom, which one can experience with this 'witness consciousness' is very profound. It also does not mean being numb and cold to emotions, it is a state of complete involvement with full detachment.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness comes out of love and compassion for others. In reality nobody wants sorrow. But somehow out of ignorance almost everybody does some kind of mistake at some point of time. If one imprints these mistakes and keeps on repeating them, even after many years of that incidence, then it's unnecessary garbage in their self, which leads to rotten smell in relationships, spoiling their health completely.

The moment we realize that it's me, who is holding the hatred inside, then it's easy to release. The lightness one can feel after releasing those unnecessary holdings inside is a real experience which reaches the person at the other end too, instantly.

3.7 Connection with nature

Nature has its own means of balance. If you observe nature, you will see that the five elements that form its basis are opposed to each other. Water destroys fire, fire destroys air. Then there are so many species in nature — the birds, reptiles, mammals — and all these different species are hostile towards each other, yet nature balances them out. We need to learn from nature how to balance opposing forces, both within ourselves and in the world around us. Connection with nature is important and relevant:

☞ Make a commitment to connect with nature

Our lives are busy, and our minds are even busier. Even if you already spend time in Nature, your mind's chatter can take over. If you don't set a clear intention to connect, you give away your power to build the relationship. To connect with the nature, you therefore need to *listen* and *communicate*. So the first step to developing your spiritual relationship with Nature is committing to doing so.

☞ Create time alone in nature

When we're with other people, we tend to talk to each other. Silences are experienced as uncomfortable. We're also concerned about what people think of us, so we edit

ourselves to ensure we're behaving according to social convention. And women and girls in particular are taught to focus on what other people are feeling and to take care of them, at the expense of being aware of our own authentic experience. All of these social patterns make it difficult to connect with Nature. That's why I've found that communicating with Nature works best in solitude, unless you're supported by a teacher or facilitator.

It's not as hard as you might think to create solitary experiences in nature. You don't have to go so far away from others that you'll be scared of animals or violent people. If you're on a popular trail, find a place where you can take a few steps off and be hidden by a rise in the land or a stand of trees. Bring a whistle if you're still concerned. If you're spending the day hiking with a friend, ask to spend an hour by yourself. You might be surprised to find that your companion appreciates this as much as you do. You can even spend time in your garden or a park.

➞ Find a good place

This doesn't need to be a complicated process, and you don't need the "perfect" place because all of nature is perfect. I tend to walk on the trail until I see an area or a feature that I'm drawn to, and then head for it.

➞ Sit down

Can you have spiritual experiences while walking or running or climbing? Of course. But I've found it's easier to connect spiritually while my mind *and* my body are quiet and focused. There's something about the rhythm of walking and running that encourages my usual thoughts to accompany me.

You can help ensure you have a good experience with a little preparation. If it's wet or cold, bring something to sit on. The cheapest and lightest option is a garbage bag, but if it is really cold, insulation will help. Crazy Creek chairs work well on snowy ground, and they're easy to hook onto a daypack.

You'll also want to dress for sitting rather than exercising. The longer you sit, the more your body temperature drops, so you'll be grateful for the extra layers.

➞ Relax and observe

Take in your surroundings. Notice little details and the larger lay of the land. See, hear, smell, and feel, and allow yourself to enjoy it. Then, try asking yourself: "What am I drawn to?" Is it a mountain? A creek? A flower? A tree? Allow your eyes to rest there, and focus your mind on it.

➡ Communicate

This is where it gets exciting. It's also where your mind may rebel. If you were raised in Western culture, chances are you've been taught that, while humans may have souls or spirits, many (or all) other animals do not. Certainly trees, rocks, flowers, and lakes do not! And certainly we can't *communicate* with these animals or natural elements.

But you've already felt a spiritual connection to Nature, and the rational, scientific worldview of the West can't explain this. You decide: is your yearning enough to throw off this conditioning, even just for a moment, to try something new?

If it is, try it. Try talking to the natural object that drew your attention. Questions are a great place to start. You might ask it about its own experience ("what's it like to be a tree?") or, you could ask if it has any insight into a problem you're struggling with.

Sometimes, words just appear in your mind, and they sure don't sound like ones that you'd come up with on your own. Sometimes, a quiet awareness or idea arises, and then you can try to articulate it with words to help you remember it better. Sometimes, you notice that your attention is drawn to a particular feature of the tree. Notice this feature, be with this feature, and you might comprehend a metaphor that sheds light on your question.

For example, let's say you share a frustration with a tree: your colleagues or supervisor at work won't allow you to pursue your ideas. Then, you notice that your tree looks like it was initially growing in one direction, but something got in the way and now it's growing—and thriving—in another. It's as if the tree is saying, "Grow where you can! Send your energy to where you will be nurtured!" A sense of peace envelops you as you lay down a fruitless struggle. Then a new creative space emerges as a more helpful question dawns on you: "Where can I grow?"

It can be hard to 'hear' nature in this way, but it gets easier with practice. The rewards are worth it. When I communicate with individual elements in nature in this way, such as a tree or a flower or a mountain, I am then more easily able to sense, communicate with, and belong to Nature as a whole. You'll be amazed at how much wonder and joy this brings!

➡ Working on one's spiritual growth

If spiritual growth is not a matter of your position in Christ, God's love, time, knowledge, activity, and prosperity, then what is spiritual growth? It is not mystical, sentimental, devotional, or psychological. It is not a result of some clever secret or formula that

can be easily applied to life as a guarantee of the future. Spiritual growth is simply matching my practice with my position. Now, my position in Christ is perfect: I am complete in Him. I have all things that pertain to life and godliness. I have received all spiritual blessings in the heavenly. But I need to progress in my practical life in a way that is commensurate with my position.

3.8 The Bible view of peace and inner peace

In the optic of the Bible, peace describes the state of those who love the Word of God (Psalm 119:165). It depicts the concept of peace expressed in the blessing of Aaron found in Numbers 6:24, wherein it sums up all other blessings and is closely associated with the presence of God. Peace is the result of God's presence in a person's life as God is the source of peace (Psalm 85:8).

3.8.1 The Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the primary Hebrew word for “peace” is shalom, and it refers to relationships between people (Genesis 34:21), nations (1 Kings 5:12), and God with men (Psalm 85:8). Peace is a desired status in each of these arenas, and shalom is often tied to a covenant or a promise kept. A familiar friend (literally, “friend of my peace” in Psalm 41:9) is one with whom you would be at ease, a trusted companion. “Peace” was the standard greeting (1 Samuel 25:6), still used in many cultures today.

Shalom denotes completion or wholeness. The general meaning of the root word is of entering into a state of wholeness and unity, a restored relationship. It also conveys a wide range of nuances: fulfillment, completion, maturity, soundness, wholeness, harmony, tranquility, security, well being, welfare, friendship, agreement, success and prosperity. The word shalom occurs more than 250 times in the Tanakh and appears in 213 separate verses.

3.8.2 The New Testament

In the New Testament, the primary Greek word for “peace” is eirene, and it refers to rest and tranquility. Peace is the state of law and order that gives rise to the blessing of prosperity. It is also used to denote peaceful conduct toward others. The New Testament use of eirene remains firmly based in the Hebrew traditions of shalom in the Tenach. It can describe both the content and the goal of all Christian preaching, since the message is called the Gospel of Peace (Ephesians 6:15). The word is found 91 times in the New Testament, 24 of which are in the Gospels.

A key focus of peace in the New Testament is the advent of Jesus Christ, as announced by the angels in Luke 2:14 (“Peace on earth . . .”). Isaiah had predicted the Messiah would be the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and He is called the Lord of peace in 2 Thessalonians 3:16. It is through Christ’s work of justification that we can have peace with God (Romans 5:1); and that peace will keep our hearts and minds secure (Philippians 4:7).

God commands us to seek peace (Psalm 34:14; Matthew 5:9). We should “make every effort to do what leads to peace” (Romans 14:19). Of course, there will be some people who do not desire peace, but we are still to do our utmost to be at peace with them (Romans 12:18). Believers have an obligation to “let the peace of God rule” in their hearts (Colossians 3:15). This means we have the choice either to trust God’s promises (letting His peace rule) or to rely on ourselves and reject the peace He offers. Jesus gave His disciples peace based on the truth that He has overcome the world (John 14:27; 16:33). Peace is a fruit of the Spirit, so, if we are allowing the Spirit of God to rule in our lives, we will experience His peace. To be spiritually minded brings life and peace, according to Romans 8:6.

The world will continue to have wars and interpersonal conflicts until Jesus comes to establish true, lasting peace (see Isaiah 11:1-10), but God will give His peace to those who trust Him. Jesus took the chastisement of our peace (Isaiah 53:5) and has made it possible for us to have peace with God. Once His peace rules in our hearts, we are able to share that peace with others; we become publishers of peace (Isaiah 52:7) and ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).

3.8.3 Inner peace according to the Bible

A word often translated “peace” in the Bible actually means “to tie together as a whole, when all essential parts are joined together.” Inner peace, then, is a wholeness of mind and spirit, a whole heart at rest. Inner peace has little to do with external surroundings. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” He had also told His followers that “in this world you will have many troubles. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). So peace is not the absence of trouble; it is the presence of God.

Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). When the “God of all peace” comes to live inside a believing heart (1 Corinthians 6:19), He begins to produce His own characteristics in that life. Inner peace comes from knowing that circumstances are temporary and that God is sovereign over all (Isaiah 46:9–11). Peace comes from exercising faith in the character of God and His Word. We can have peace in

the midst of challenges when we remember that “all things work together for the good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). We can choose peace rather than give way to fear and worry. Inner peace resulting from a relationship with God allows us to keep things in proper perspective. We can accept difficult situations on earth by remembering that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

When He was about to leave His disciples, Jesus told His followers, “I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart.” (John 14:27a NLT) This peace stays with us even when we have something upsetting in our lives – like the raging waterfall under the sleeping bird. God does not want me to worry about it. He wants me to trust Him. Peace comes from knowing that God is in control. Remember, Jesus was sleeping peacefully in the boat during that raging storm. The disciples panicked while Jesus slept. Jesus trusted His heavenly Father. Jesus knew that His dad had Him in the palm of His hand. Just like Jesus, we will have peace when we trust that God is in control of everything.

The separation from God is the loss of peace as it is the case of Adam in Genesis (Genesis 3: 6-19); but God wanted to restore the peace we had with Him, so He promised to send a Savior, His Son the Prince of peace, to restore that peace (Isaiah 9:6). In his ministry, death and resurrection, Jesus has proclaimed and confirmed the message of inner peace to his disciples. Through Jesus the mankind is made right with God and his/her peace is restored (Acts 10:36b)

3.9 Critical thinking, Judgment and decision

3.9.1 Critical thinking

3.9.1.1 Definition

Critical thinking is the general term given to a wide range of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions needed to effectively identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments and truth claims; to discover and overcome personnel preconceptions, to formulate and present convincing reasons in support of conclusions and to make reasonable, intelligent decisions about what to believe and what to do.

Generally:

- Critical thinking is a higher order of thinking: it is the practice of using a number of different advanced thinking skills in a variety of complex ways.
- Critical thinking focuses on thought: it looks at how facts are proven, arguments are formed, conclusions are reached, not just what the facts, argument or

conclusion may be.

- Critical thinking is self-reflexive: it involves reflecting on, questioning and testing your own thinking processes.
- Critical thinking is discipline-specific: it engages in particular forms of reasoning, such as mathematical reasoning, historical analysis or literary interpretation, which are specific to a particular discipline.

3.9.1.2 Standards of critical thinking

Among the most important intellectual standards of critical thinking, are clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, consistency, logical correctness, completeness and fairness. The critical thinking process aims generally at these different standards.

3.9.1.3 Benefits of the critical thinking

Critical thinking is beneficial for many reasons: It can help students to better in school by improving their ability to understand, construct, and criticize arguments. It can help people succeed in their careers by improving their ability to solve problems, think creatively, and communicate their ideas clearly and effectively. It can also reduce the likelihood of making serious mistakes in important personnel decisions; promote democratic processes by improving the quality of public decision making, and liberate and empower individuals by freeing them from the unexamined assumptions.

3.9.1.4 Barriers to critical thinking

Major barriers to critical thinking include egocentrism, sociocentrism, unwarranted assumptions, relativistic thinking, and wishful thinking.

Egocentrism: is the tendency to see reality as centered on oneself.

Sociocentrism: a group-centered thinking. One can have the tendency to see one's culture or group as being better than others.

Unwarranted assumptions: are things we take for granted without good reason. Often, unwarranted assumptions take the form of stereotypes.

Relativistic thinking: is thinking that is based on the idea that there is no objective or absolute truth because truth is simply a matter of opinion.

Wishful thinking: is believing something because it makes someone feel good, not because there is good reason for thinking that it is true.

3.9.1.5 Characteristics of critical thinkers

Critical thinkers exhibit a number of traits that distinguish them from uncritical thinkers. Among the most important of these are: a passionate drive for clarity, precision, accuracy, and other intellectual standards that characterize careful, disciplined thinking; a sensitivity to the ways in which critical thinking can be skewed by egocentrism, wishful thinking, and other psychological obstacles to rational belief; honesty and intellectual humility; open-mindedness; intellectual courage, love of truth and intellectual perseverance.

3.9.2 Judgment

3.9.2.1 General consideration

When we judge, we are often expressing our feelings of approval or disapproval. Sometimes however, we make judgments which conflict with what we personally approve of. In fact, at times it is essential to disregard your personal feelings of approval or disapproval when you judge. For instance, a judge in a courtroom should render evaluations based on the law, not on his or her personal preferences.

3.9.2.2 Differences in Judgments

Many of our disagreements with other people focus on differences in judgments. As a critical thinker, you need to approach such differences in judgments intelligently. You can do so by following these guidelines:

- Make explicit the criteria or standards used as a basis for the judgment.
- Try to establish the reasons that justify these criteria.

For example, if I say that Professor Kamali is an excellent teacher, I am basing my judgment on certain criteria of teaching excellence. Once these standards are made explicit, we can discuss whether they make sense and what the justification is for them. Identify some of your standards for teaching excellence. Remember that there may be disagreements on a judgment. When these disagreements occur, your only hope for resolution is to use the two steps previously identified:

- Make explicit the standards you are using.
- Give reasons that justify these standards.

In short, not all judgments are equally good or equally poor. The credibility of a judgment is depends on a criteria used to make the judgment and the evidence or reasons that support these criteria. For example there may be legitimate disagreements about judgments on the following points:

- Who was the greatest president?
- Who is the best Rwandese musician?
- Which music is best for dancing?

In fact, in these and countless other cases, the quality of judgments depends on your identifying the criteria used for the competing judgments and then demonstrating that your candidate best meets those criteria by providing supporting evidence and reasons.

3.9.3 Decision

Identifying and reaching the goals in our lives involves making informed and intelligent decisions. When our decisions are poor, they involve relatively minor issues. An important part of becoming a good thinker is learning to make effective decisions. Let's explore the Method for making effective decision:

- Define the decision clearly.
- Consider all the possible choices.
- Gather all relevant information and evaluate all the pros and the cons of each possible choice.
- Select the choice that seems to best meet the needs of the situation.
- Implement a plan of action and then monitor the results, making necessary adjustments.

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ANNEX

Religious Education Syllabus

Topic Area: Holy Scriptures and Beliefs

Sub-topic Area: Revelation of God and biblical studies

S4 : Religious Education	Unit 1. The Bible and its importance			No. of periods: 50
Key Topic Competency: To be able to describe the structure of the Bible and the main themes that emerge from both Testaments.				
Learning Objectives			Content	Learning Activities
Knowledge and understanding	Skills	Attitudes and values		
Define the Bible and identify the main parts. List the books of the Bible Identify the main themes and their respective messages in the main parts of Old New testaments	Compare the Bible with other books Explain the relationship between the main parts of the Bible Write essays on different themes in the Old and New testaments. Research different concepts that emerge from the Bible. (canonicity, biblical law, alliance between God and his people)	Respect and carefully read the Bible Appreciate the Gospel's message. Appreciate the reasons behind canonicity of the bible.	Basic concepts and themes in the Bible: Testament, alliance, salvation, faithfulness, exodus Inspiration and revelation of the Bible Canonicity of the books of the Bible Bible literature The Old Testament: Genesis and creation, Evil and Sin, Suffering and death, the Patriarchs, the Sacrifice of Abraham(Isaac), Exodus, Royalty in Israel, Introduction to Prophets The New Testament: Synoptic Gospels, Gospel according to John; Apostles Acts; the Epistles	Research on internet and library the concepts of canonicity of the Bible, why was canonicity necessary, how was it achieved, what did it achieve? Students present their findings as a PowerPoint presentation. (group work and presentation). The teacher assigns tasks to students individually to research on the main themes and their message from the parts of Old Testament and new Testament. Students summarise their results in form of essay and submit to the teacher. The teacher marks the essays and offer feedback to students and draws out the main themes of the research. In pairs, explain the following journeys in the Bible by illustrating them on maps highlighting the major events in the Bible, exodus, the conquest of Canaan, Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. Students compare the maps with each other and those that the teacher has done.
Links to other subjects: Geography (maps), History (Ancient history and persecution)				
Assessment criteria: Students are able to correctly describe the structure of the Bible and the main themes that emerge from both Testaments.				
Materials: Bibles, maps, internet, books, post paper, marker pens.				

Topic Area: Spiritual and moral values

Sub-topic Area: Spiritual growth

S 4 : Religious Education		Unit 2: The New Commandment		No of periods: 10
Key Topic Competency: To be able to understand the new commandment and to observe the golden rule about love				
Learning Objectives			Content	Learning Activities
Knowledge and understanding	Skills	Attitudes and values		
State the Ten Commandments of God (Decalogue). List works of charity	Compare each commandment of Decalogue with the Love commandment. Discuss the importance of each commandment	Appreciate the meaning of the Golden rule.	Ten Commandments of God Importance of laws in people's lives The greatest commandment of God (Love) The Golden rule about love (Mt 7,12)	Research using the internet and library the ten Commandments given on the Mount Sinai and the reason why God gave them to Moses. The teacher asks them what can happen; and if there was no rule in their community. Group Discussion the importance of commandments in the life of a Christian. In groups, learners write down on post paper of different colours what they would like others do to them and what they would not like, post them on two different sheets (discuss for each part the reasons; presentation). The teacher put on the board the Golden rule (Mt 7:12) and ask learners to assess what they posted according to the Golden rule. Discuss decisions to be taken for the sake of their community.
Links to other subjects: Social studies (Ethics and moral)				
Assessment criteria: Students are able to understand the New Commandment and observe the Golden rule about love				
Materials: Bibles, images of road sign posts, post paper, flip chart and wall chart r, marker pens.				

Topic Area: Faith and Life

Sub-topic Area: Family and peace

S 4 : Religious Education		Unit 3 : Faith and decision making		No. of periods:12	
Key Topic Competency: To be able to make positive judgment, right decision and promote the inner peace in the community.					
Learning Objectives			Content	Learning Activities	
Knowledge and understanding	Skills	Attitudes and values			
State the actions that can develop inner peace Identify the actions that can destroy the inner peace.	Distinguish peace from security. Explain the impact of inner peace for a person and for a society in general.	Be peacemaker in family and in the community Prevent all kinds of the dehumanization	Meaning of inner peace Critical thinking, judgment and decision Ways of building inner peace: mediation, keep inner space clean, connection with nature, working on one's own spiritual growth,	Learners in pairs identify, then share in four, eight, and so on their understanding on inner peace, actions leading to inner peace and barriers to inner peace. Discuss in the groups each action leading to inner peace and the way they can promote it in their daily life in the community and how they can solve personal and social problems. Describe all aspects of peace and peace building strategies.	
Links to other subjects: Social studies (peace-making)					
Assessment criteria: Students are able to make sound critical judgement, right decision and promote the inner peace in the community.					
Materials: Bible, images, tactile maps, books, Internet					