

Making Choices

In this unit students explore living in right relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the whole of creation. Students learn about the freedom to choose given to them by God. They examine the belief that freedom of choice also involves being responsible for the consequences of their choices. At the conclusion of the unit the students identify ways they can make positive choices.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

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

#1704 The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will he is capable of directing himself towards his true good. (See *Compendium* #358 *What is the root of human dignity?*)

#1711 Endowed with a spiritual soul, with intellect and with free will, the human person is, from his very conception, ordered to God and destined for eternal beatitude. He pursues his perfection in 'seeking and loving what is true and good' (*Gaudium et Spes* 15, #2). (See *Compendium* #359 *How do we attain beatitude?*)

#1970 The Law of the Gospel requires us to make the decisive choice between 'the two ways' and to put into practice the words of the Lord. It is summed up in the *Golden Rule*, 'Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; this is the law and the prophets'. (See *Compendium* #374 *How is a moral conscience formed to be upright and truthful?*)

#1733 The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to 'the slavery of sin'. (See *Compendium* #366 *What place does human freedom have in the plan of salvation?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

How complex is it to make informed decisions?

For many believers decision-making involves prayerful reflection on what one considers to be right and true in a given situation, and a trust, sometimes fragile, in where one believes one is being led by God. At other times people have a strong sense of what is being asked of them and the choices that need to be made. People make the best choices they can, given their reflection, prayer and knowledge of a situation. Consider the significant decisions you have made. How did you come to make them? Did prayer and reflection have a place in the decision-making process? Did you have a sense of God in the decision-making process?

Consider the limitations of personality and temperament, or the limitations of knowledge or experience. These can mean that the ability to choose freely is often restricted. Do people ever have complete free will?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Students are limited in the choices they can make for themselves and others. Many choices are made for students by others. *What are the choices which students can make in their lives?*

The school and classroom can be places where students experience multicultural and multifaith relationships. *How do you cultivate respect and understanding amongst diverse groups in your grade? What opportunities exist for students to share their heritage and traditions?*

Students are beginning to understand that each person has rights. *How can students come to understand the link between rights and responsibilities?*

Students are becoming aware that they are called to use their gifts in a responsible and just manner. *What does it mean to be responsible with our gifts given to us by God?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Gen 2: 5–7 The Second Story of Creation

In the second account of Creation in Gen 2: 4b–25, in contrast to the first Creation account in Gen 1: 3–31, the human person is the first of God's creations rising out of a world that is waterless and lifeless. Formed from earth, the man is imbued with the very breath or spirit (ruach) of God. He is given the name 'Adam' from 'Adamah', meaning an earth creature of flesh and spirit. As this creation account unfolds there is a strong sense of God's generosity and providence, especially as the garden grows to provide for the man's needs. The man works in cooperation with God, naming the animals, and therefore having both dominion over them and responsibility for them. With the creation of the woman God provides the man with an equal 'bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh' (verse 23). This is someone who will share his life and be a companion. Only when the two sexes exist is humanity complete.

Ps 139: 13–14 God Knows Me

Psalms 139 puts before us an intimate conversation with God; the God who knows us completely just as we are, and who is always with us. We really cannot get away from God even if we try very hard, so the psalmist tells us. In many ways this is a psalm of innocence. The two verses we are considering here tell us that God created the very person that we are. God put us together in the womb. God is intimately involved with the making of each person, and in the face of such an enormous mystery the psalmist exclaims with thanks and praise: 'For the wonder of myself, for the wonder of your works' (v. 14). If we look at the Hebrew text for that last line it says, 'I am wonderful, your works are wonderful' (v. 14).

Jn 4: 1–30 Jesus Christ and the Samaritan Woman

This is a good story to point out to the students that Jesus did not discriminate against anyone. In this story Jesus meets a woman from Samaria. There was great hostility between Jews and Samaritans because the Samaritans were Jews who had inter-married amongst the Assyrians. They were considered not to be Jewish. Samaritans read the Torah but did not attend the Temple in Jerusalem. By Jesus' time Jews were to have no dealings with Samaritans.

Questions one might ask of John's story are: Why did Jesus speak to a Samaritan woman, given the ethnic and religious barriers? Why did the woman come to the well in the hottest time of the day? (Other women would not mix with her.)

In the story of the Samaritan woman we see that God's offer of salvation and conversion is made to all. Jesus listened to the woman the same way as he would have listened to any of his disciples. The fourth gospel is a gospel of personal relationships. In the gospel Jesus Christ not only speaks about his own relationship with his Father, with the disciples, and the relationships of the disciples with one another. Jesus reveals himself in his relationships with individual people. In these relationships he takes the initiative in that he discloses himself to people, and they in turn discover who he is and what he means to them. In his meeting with the Samaritan woman Jesus progressively revealed himself and invited her to faith. She gave a positive response and came gradually to discover who he is. The invitation to enter into the life of God goes beyond the bounds of gender and ethnicity. It is an invitation offered to all.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Allow a few moments of silence to guide the students in a 'breathing' meditation. Encourage them to see that even our breath can be a prayer, leading us to an awareness of God's presence. Prayer does not need words.
- Introduce students to meditation on the Scriptures, using Gen 2: 5–7. Read the narrative slowly, allowing the students to imagine that they are the human being in the story.
- Create an environment for class prayer that contains pictures of the children as babies. (You may wish to share this prayer time with parents.)
 - Proclaim or sing Ps 139: 13–18.
 - Students read their own prayers of thanksgiving to God for the gift of life that has been given to them.
 - Conclude the prayer by rereading the words of Psalm 139, and responding before and after, 'For all these mysteries I thank you' (*KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 3, Chapter 2, p. 18).
- Students use Dan 3: 57–88a as a model to create their own Hymn of Praise. Invite students to share their Hymn of Praise during prayer in the classroom.
- Prepare a simple examination of conscience that can be used at the end of each day, e.g. Have I made good choices today? Have I shown kindness to others? Allow a few moments of silence for reflection after each question.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 3: Chapter 2, Created by God, Called to Love; Chapter 3, God Calls Us to Respect Ourselves and Others.

Faith concepts: creator, creation, choice, free will, respect, relationship.

Seeking understanding:

What are good choices?

How can my choices affect others?

What choices did Jesus Christ make and what were the consequences for himself and others?

Understandings:

Human beings are created in the image of God and are unique.

Each person has dignity, rights and responsibilities.

Each person is free to make choices, and all choices have consequences.

Christians are invited to develop relationships based on respect and valuing individual differences.

Scripture Text: Gen 2: 5–7 The Story of Creation; Jn 4: 1–30 Jesus Christ and the Woman of Samaria.

Unit specific learning:

Students will learn about	Students will learn to	Students will undertake to
<i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	<i>Reasoning & Responding</i>	<i>Personal & Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ways that people express their uniqueness and creativity in the choices they make.• The consequences and effects of the choices we make.• The challenges of making good choices.• Ways in which Jesus Christ exercised freedom of choice.• The consequences that arise from a person's decisions.• Choices that build relationships and	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect upon ways they can use their freedom to make good choices.• Evaluate their own choices in light of the Church's teaching on free will.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design an action plan that involves good choices.

choices that can harm relationships.

PHASES OF STUDENT INQUIRY

Additional Reading for Teachers	Orientation to Inquiry <i>What do students already know, think or feel in relation to the topic? What are students' questions about the topic? What experiences and reflections can we offer students to become engaged with the topic?</i>	Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brainstorm Brainstorm with the students the concept of creating something, e.g. building with Lego blocks, baking a cake, building a fence. Invite the students to share examples of things they have made.• Construction Students are presented with a variety of construction materials, e.g. Lego, matchsticks, icy-pole sticks, blocks, cardboard boxes, etc. Using a design brief students create a free choice object, e.g. new classroom, an imaginary animal, spacecraft, building, bridge. Students use construction materials to complete their design. Students present and describe the different elements of their design that make it unique. Students share their feelings of how they felt making it.• Personal Reflection Using B-A-R strategy students analyse their creation and decide:	

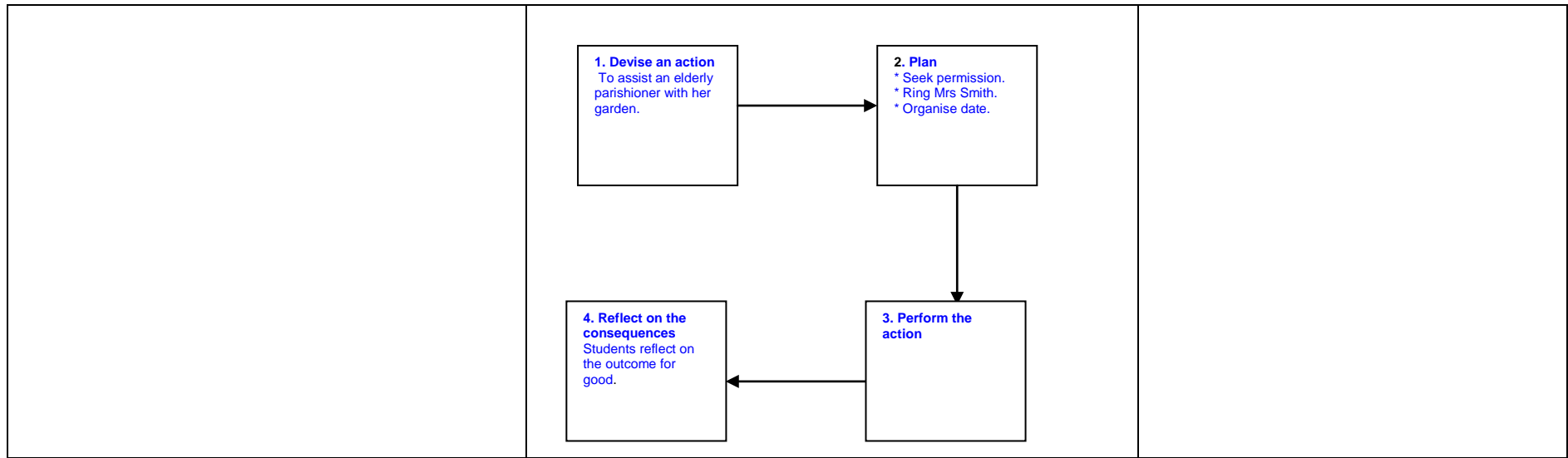
<p>We often present the concept of freedom to children in terms of ‘choices’. But freedom of choice has become a destructive force in our society. Life is not a supermarket of choices where whatever you choose is OK. The act of choosing is not more important than what you choose. In recent history and in our personal lives we see that there are bad choices; freedom can be abused; people can choose evil; others can be treated as things, not persons. When we respect others and respond to God, weighing up our choices in the light of God’s moral norms, we are directing our freedom back to its source – God the Creator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – what they need to make Bigger – what they need to Add – what they need to Replace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm Share picture story books with students to explore choices, e.g. <i>Worst Best Friends</i> by Max Dan, <i>Rose Meets Mr Wintergarten</i> by Bob Graham or the novel, <i>Grommet Saves the World</i> by James Moloney. <p>We are not like puppets. God gives us freedom to make choices.</p> <p>Ask students: What are good choices? How do you know if you have made a good choice?</p> <p>Accept all answers at this stage and display them for further reference as students’ understanding develops during the unit.</p>	<p>Assessment for Learning This brainstorm will indicate students’ present understanding of what it means to be free to choose.</p>
<p>Additional Reading for Teachers</p>	<p>Development <i>What experiences and religious texts will provide new learning for students? What skills will students need in order to work with these resources? What strategies and tools will enable students to think and reflect on these experiences and texts? How will students process their thinking and learning?</i></p>	<p>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p>
<p>The whole person is body (corporeal) and soul (spiritual). We are made of the dust of the stars and the living breath of God. We belong at the same time to this material universe and to the Creator of all things visible (material) and invisible (spiritual). God wills each of us to exist. Reflect on that unique dignity. God wills you to be who you are.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scripture: Gen 2: 4–25 Introduce the concept of the world and human life as part of God’s creation. <p>Students listen to the Story of Creation assisted by <i>KWL</i> Creation Posters. Alternatively, tell the story using 2D symbols and images from the text.</p>	

<p>The man works in cooperation with God, naming the animals, and therefore having both dominion over them and responsibility for them. Free will is not about limitless choices, but the freedom God gives humans to work in cooperation with him.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scripture Probe Using a Scripture Probe analyse the Story of Creation (Gen 2: 4–25) using these headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – main characters – repeated words or phrases – story setting – symbols/images used – what is the message of this story? – what does it tell us about human beings? – what does it tell us about God? 	
<p>In the Catechism of the Catholic Church we are reminded that ‘Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts’ (No. 1730). This sentence from St Irenaeus (c. AD 140–202) reminds us that, as persons, we reflect God. This is evident in our capacity to reason, to design, to plan and ultimately to direct the course of our lives. Above all, it is evident in our capacity to reflect – to think about our thinking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Uniqueness To assist students to develop a concept of their uniqueness, students fill a Grab Bag of items that reflect their uniqueness. Their bags may contain sporting equipment, musical instruments, photos of important events or people in their lives, achievement awards, or special gifts they have been given. Students present their Grab Bags to the class. At the end of the session the teacher highlights that each student is unique because of their gifts. One of the gifts we have been given by God is free will or the ability to make choices. 	
<p>Free Will: All people have the ability to make choices without being forced by another person. As Christians we believe this gift has been given to us by God.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prodigal Son To highlight the concept of free will students listen to the story of the Prodigal Son and His Brother (Lk 15: 11–32). Discuss with the class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Who are the characters in the story? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What were the different choices made by each of the characters throughout the story? - What were the consequences of each of the choices made? <p>Students explore further the choices and consequences of each character through one of the following small group tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a rap to retell the story, highlighting the choices made and their consequences. - Mime moments from the parable in which choices are made, the feelings associated with the choices and depict how these choices affect others. - Conduct an imaginary TV interview in which each character is asked about their choices, how they felt when making them, how they affected others. 	<p>Assessment of Learning Each task will show how students understand the effect and consequences of the choices made in the story of the Prodigal Son and His Brother.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus Makes Choices Ask students: Does Jesus ever make choices? <p>Students form four groups. Each group is given one of the texts below. Alternatively, each group could work with the same text. They prepare a dramatisation for their text to highlight the choices made, and present it to the class. Class discussion is held after each presentation.</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus is tried and denied (Mk 14: 53–65) - The boy Jesus in the temple (Lk 2: 41–52) - Jesus cleanses the leper (Lk 5: 12–16) - Jesus prays in Gethsemane (Mk 14: 32–42) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: Ryan’s Well Students watch the documentary ‘Ryan’s Well’. This is the story of a young boy who was motivated to help raise money to build a well for a community in Africa. Students discuss what choices were made by Ryan, and the consequences of his actions. 	
<p>Though both Jews and Samaritans were descended from ancient Israel, there was long-standing hostility between them.</p> <p>Samaria was located between Judea and Galilee. When many of the Jews who lived there were deported to Babylon in 721 BC, the Assyrian conquerors settled in their place. These Gentile settlers intermarried with the remaining Jews. The resulting population considered themselves to be Jewish and followed the Torah in their own way.</p> <p>Jews and Samaritans would rarely speak to each other or share food together. A Jewish man should not speak with a Samaritan woman, and would not share a drinking utensil. The Samaritans believed that Mount Gerizim (near the town of Sychar, where Jesus met the woman) was the centre of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scripture: Jesus Christ and the Woman of Samaria (Jn 4: 1–30) In ‘Ryan’s Well’ we see the effect a choice has on a whole community. Ryan embraces the community, and in turn they discover who he is and what he means to them. The students read ‘Jesus Christ and the Woman of Samaria’ (Jn 4: 1–30), and answer the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who are the characters in the story? - What is the problem in the story? - How does Jesus respond? - What does the woman do? 	

worship, not Jerusalem.														
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tough Choices I Make Students brainstorm scenarios at home and at school where they make tough choices: <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4" style="text-align: center;"><i>Scenarios</i></th> </tr> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Good choices</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Consequences</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Not so good choices</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Consequences</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>Scenarios</i>				Good choices	Consequences	Not so good choices	Consequences					<p>Assessment of Learning This activity will indicate students' ability to reflect on and understand their attitudes and choices, and how they exercise freedom of choice.</p>
<i>Scenarios</i>														
Good choices	Consequences	Not so good choices	Consequences											
Additional Reading for Teachers	SYNTHESIS <i>How will students demonstrate their understandings, beliefs, values, skills and feelings in relation to the topic? How will students take action based on their learning? What strategies and tools will enable students to discern their action, to plan and implement action and to evaluate their action?</i>	Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning												
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan Students identify choices which will have positive consequences for the class or school or local community. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Devise an action. 2. Write a plan on how they will execute the action. 3. Perform the action. 4. Reflect on the consequences. 	<p>Assessment as/of Learning This will demonstrate how students understand what makes a good choice and how they think through and reflect on their actions. This activity will give students an opportunity to monitor and evaluate their choices.</p>												



RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Year 3: Chapter 2, Created by God, Called to Love; Chapter 3, God Calls Us to Respect Ourselves and Others.

Student Resources

Dan, M 1982, *Worst Best Friends*, Penguin, Australia.

French, J 2001, *Dark Wind Blowing*, Angus & Robertson, NSW.

Graham, B 2003, *When Rose Meets Mr Wintergarten*, Walker Books, Sydney.

Moloney, J 2003, *Grommet Saves the World*, Penguin, Australia.

Teacher Resources

Elliott, M 2005, *A–Z Learning Strategies*, Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Brisbane .

DVDs, Video, CD ROMs

Ryan's Well 2001, documentary, The Video Project, San Francisco.

Websites

The Ryan's Well Foundation website

<<http://www.ryanswell.ca>>

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 3 standards.

Students identify with biblical characters and people in the past and present Church by making inferences about their actions, feelings and motives. Students evaluate their choices and actions by reflecting on Scripture and Church teaching.