

## *Religious Studies 25 – Unit One*

### *WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?*

**In this unit students will:**

**G.O. 1- explore how believing is integral to human living.**

**G.O. 2 - investigate the role of truth, goodness, the spiritual and religious community in the search to believe.**



# *G.O. 1 Students will explore how believing is integral to human living.*

A1. What do you believe?

S.O. 1.1 -- To explore aspects of believing. a. define belief in relationship to • faith • knowledge • truth b. religious beliefs

## **Sacred Scripture**

Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into his side, I will not believe." Now a week later his disciples were gathered again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your finger here and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." (John 20:24-29)

**Reflection:** What do I believe about God, Religion, and Afterlife?

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**Reflection:** What do I base my belief on? What evidence do I have to support my opinion?

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**Inquiry:** What is the difference between knowledge and belief?

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Of what we accept as true, what would fall into the category of knowledge and what would fall into the category of belief?

Knowledge	Belief

*G.O. 2 – The student will investigate the role of truth, goodness, the spiritual and religious community in the search to believe.*

**Inquiry:** After Jesus stated that he, “came into this world to testify to the truth.”, Pontius Pilate asked this question, “What is truth?” (John 18:37,38). What do you say truth is?

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**Inquiry:** How do we arrive at the truth?

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*Distractions from the truth*

*“Whenever we introduce something irrelevant into an argument, we are avoiding the question. When someone is avoiding the question and asserting something irrelevant, we say they are introducing a ‘red herring’ into the argument. A red herring is a dead fish – a dead fish that has started to become ‘ripe’ and smelly.” (The Fallacy Detective, 27)*

**Reflection:** What are some *red herrings* you have experienced? Either ones you have used or ones that have been used against you?

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There are two types of truth: objective and subjective. Subjective truth is based simply on opinion. It can however, move toward becoming objective truth as objective evidence is provided for support.

Subjective  
Truth



Objective  
Truth

## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

**Reflection:** There are times in our life when it seems easy to believe in God and times when it is difficult to believe. Considering this, fill in the following chart.

### *Religious Subjectivism*

*Religious Subjectivism really means religion is made by us, dependant on us "true" only as a fantasy is "true." The is a polite way of saying that God is just an adult version of Santa Claus and that religious believers are just adults who never grew up.*

*The claim is too sweeping and vague to be fair. It cannot even be argued about until it becomes specific. It is like a claim that "science" has disproved "religion." The reply has to be: Which science? Which discovery? By Whom? When? What is the proof of it? Which religion? Which doctrine? What does this doctrine really mean, really claim? And are these two truth-claims then logically contradictory or not? (Handbook of Christian Apologetics, 379)*

What are some things that are obstacles to one's belief?	What are some things that help one's faith?



## *G.O. 1 Students will explore how believing is integral to human living.*

*A2. Why do we express our religious beliefs?*

*S.O. 1.2 To identify experiences that give rise to religious beliefs and practices. A –who am I? – Why is there evil in the world? B. practices - teachings.*

### How Could a Good God Allow Evil and Suffering? by Randy Alcorn

#### **Introduction: The Problem of Suffering**

A year and a half ago I walked through the Killing Fields in Cambodia. I saw the skulls piled up, and stood by the mudpits where hundreds of bodies were thrown. I saw a human jawbone lying at my feet. I picked it up, held it in my hand, and wept. The darkness was overwhelming—the ground cried out at the tragedy in which two to three million Cambodians, nearly one third of the country's population, were murdered by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge.

I was escorted by a gentle Cambodian couple, Vek and Samoeun Tang, who survived the Killing Fields. Samoeun's parents both starved to death. One of her brothers was known dead, another brother was never seen or heard from. Presumably he was murdered and thrown into one of the thousands of unmarked graves, many of them containing hundreds of bodies each.

Vek's brother and sister-in-law and six children all perished in this holocaust. We stood together at a tree where Khmer Rouge soldiers killed children by holding their feet and swinging them into the tree to smash their heads.

I've been at Yad Vashim, the holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, which to me is even more powerful than the Holocaust memorial in Washington, DC, though I recommend that one too. I recently finished a novel set in China, dealing with the horrible persecutions of China that took place under Mao.

In Africa, children are dying of AIDS and starvation. Last weekend, a mother of three died in car accident when she fell asleep at the wheel. One child had his jaw broken in three places. Worst of all, he lost his Mom.

Today at our church, my wife is at a memorial service. One of our church families has been living in Turkey. A week ago today their three year old child didn't wake up from

his nap. Little Eli died. Their lives came to a screeching halt. They'll live each day with this terrible loss.

My Mom and Dad and my best friend from childhood all died of cancer. Why am I telling you all this sad news? Because I want to address what is perhaps the most common argument against religion in general and the Christian faith in particular—the problem of suffering and evil.

#### **Evil and Suffering as an argument against God**

This is the first of seven major objections to belief in God dealt with by Lee Strobel in his book *The Case for Faith*. I brought plenty of copies today—pick one up afterward if you'd like to read it.

The logic goes like this:

There may be no God at all.

There may be a God who is all good.

There may be a God who is all powerful.

**But there cannot be a God who is all good and all powerful**, because such a God could not allow such evil and suffering as we see in this world.

Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote the New York Times best-seller, *Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?* He concluded God is all good but not all powerful. Kushner said, "It's too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming their innocent victims."

In other words, God wins some and he loses some. But he's just not strong enough to stop evil. This is not the picture of God portrayed in the Bible.

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Some Eastern religions teach there is no such thing as suffering and evil, it's all an illusion. Evil and good are really the same. God is nature and nature is God. Whatever is, and either everything is good or there are no moral qualities by which to judge anything as good or bad.

## Sacred Scripture

*Faith, Hope, and Love*

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access [by faith] to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that afflictions produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us. (Romans 5:1-5)

Another position is *dualism*, which you see in religions such as Zoroastrianism. It's the Star Wars theme, a cosmic battle between two equal opposites, good and evil, or God and Satan. This too is never taught in the Bible. God and Satan are not equal opposites. Satan is a created being, the equal opposite not of God, but Michael the archangel.

I believe that neither atheism nor polytheism nor pantheism nor dualism adequately explains the universe. Though I was not raised to believe the Christian faith, I came to believe it while in high school. One of the most difficult questions for me was the issue of suffering. It seemed so unfair not only that there is suffering, but that some suffer far more than others.

There are no easy answers to this sobering question. But here are some perspectives to consider as you wrestle with this issue.

**Responses to the Question, "How Can A Good God Allow Evil and Suffering?"**

**1. The Bible attributes the origin of human evil to people exercising their free will; when they choose to disobey God's standards, it brings suffering.**

God said "You can eat the fruit of every other tree, but if you eat from this one, you will surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). The Bible says "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). We are free to choose, but there will be severe consequences if we choose to disobey. The first man and woman chose that path, and when they did evil, death and suffering kicked in.

The Bible teaches that the whole earth was under man's dominion and care, and that not only man, but animals and all creation suffered the effects of human sin. Romans 8 says "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration...in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

Thus, one of human sin's consequences is a disordered creation, including natural disasters. But the greatest tragedies of history, which have caused the most suffering, are not natural disasters, but wars and persecutions and murders conducted by sinful human beings.

People are quick to lay the blame for this at God's feet. They point to portions of the Bible that speak of terrible things. But there is much the Bible records that it does not endorse. And when God orders military aggression against a particular people group, we should take a closer look at the group and their cancerous influence on surrounding nations. We may still not understand, but at least we'll have a more accurate picture of what was at stake.

God condemns the human choices that have brought the great majority of suffering. Men blame God. But God blames men. Jesus looked at the suffering of Jerusalem, and wept over it. He longs for people to live by his standards. If we did there would not be evil and suffering. As we'll see, God did not stay at a distance, but did something startling to deal with the problem of evil and suffering.

**2. To argue that God should not permit evil or suffering is to argue against human beings having free choice.**

Is moral freedom good? Is it right that people have the ability to choose for themselves? Or would it be better if

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human beings were choiceless, mechanistic robots who walked around and did good because we had no other choice?

If God had made us without the ability to choose, wouldn't we resent him for that too? Actually, we *wouldn't*, but only because we wouldn't have the capacity to criticize Him.

According to the Bible, when we question God we're exercising the same freedom of choice as when we choose good or evil. We're having this discussion only because God has created us with a freedom to make choices.

*What does freedom mean?* Doesn't it necessarily involve the capacity to choose evil? Of course. You cannot have true freedom of choice if you can only choose good but not evil.

And what if evil was stripped of all its consequences, so you could choose evil but it wouldn't bring any suffering? Well, then it wouldn't be evil any more, because evil and suffering are inseparable, just as good is inseparable from the desirable consequences it produces. Strip evil of its consequences, and we wouldn't be exercising real choices. It would only be a facade.

*The freedom to choose is sacred in this society.* Isn't it ironic to blame God for giving us the very freedom we so highly prize?

Ask yourself this question: If you were God, how would you have created people differently?

Would you have withheld from people the capacity to make wrong choices as well as right ones? If you would have, then human beings—as we know ourselves to be—would not exist.

### **3. The things we consider the greatest virtues would not be known in a world without evil and suffering.**

Here's a short list of desirable qualities: compassion, mercy, heroism, courage, justice, sacrifice.

Think about it. Could there be...

Compassion without suffering? Mercy without need? Heroism without a desperate plight? Courage without danger? Justice without injustice? Sacrifice without compelling cause for it?

Which great virtues could be seen in a world without suffering or evil? Don't most if not all of the greatest virtues come into play in response to evil and suffering?

Think of your favorite books and movies. Take *Gladiator*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Schindler's List* or *Amistad*. Or take fiction like *Star Wars* or *Lord of the Rings*. The virtues and camaraderie that inspire us in these stories *could not exist without evil or suffering*.

If you could snap your fingers and remove all evil and suffering that has ever happened, would you?

If you did, there could be no Hellen Keller, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Susan B. Anthony, Corrie ten Boom or William Wilberforce (who abolished England's slave trade).

We must not minimize suffering. But we must also admit that we praise the virtues that have emerged from suffering—and in so doing we make an unspoken recognition, *that good can come out of suffering*.

Isn't it logically inconsistent to say the virtues that emerge out of contexts of suffering are good, then turn around and say there's no way a good God couldn't allow evil and suffering? You can't have it both ways. Is it possible that the good coming out of permitting human freedom to choose outweighs the evil that results?

If you think that's not even possible, what qualifies you to know this? You can say, "In my limited understanding of all things, I don't think the good outweighs the bad." Fine, that's your opinion. But to say "I know for sure the good cannot outweigh the bad" would require that you be all-knowing. (And if you think you are all-knowing then you do believe in God after all—you believe that *you* are God!)

### **4. Short-term evil and suffering sometimes accomplishes long-term good.**

The Bible shows God using evil deeds for his good purposes, deeds done through the willing actions of moral creatures.

For instance, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. It was a terrible evil, and God held them accountable. But many years later Joseph has risen to power in Egypt, and under his guidance they have stored up huge amounts of grain to survive a great famine. Citizens of Israel and other nations came to Egypt to get grain. Joseph said to his brothers who

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sold him into slavery, "You intended it for evil, but God intended it for good—to save many lives." (Genesis 50:20).

God can and does use human acts of evil—and the suffering that comes out of it—for other people's good. The book of Romans says "we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

After all his years in the gulag, Solzhenitsyn wrote: "It was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good...Bless you, prison, for having been in my life." Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl didn't glorify suffering, but he did speak of definite good that came out of it.

One effect of suffering is to draw people to God. 2 Cor. 1:8-9 says we endure suffering "in order that we should not trust in ourselves but in God, who raises the dead."

The British preacher Charles Spurgeon suffered from a very painful disease. He said, "If I did not believe my disease came from the hand of God, I would be in despair." This is very different than Rabbi Kushner who tries to console himself and his readers by believing God lacks the power to prevent our suffering. In fact, there is little comfort in a God who lacks the power to control things! There is much more comfort in a God who permits suffering and can use it for our good, to fulfill a sovereign purpose.

### **5. Our moral objection to evil and suffering is itself an argument for a good God.**

Only by appealing to a standard of goodness that's bigger than ourselves can we determine that evil is evil and there is something fundamentally wrong with suffering.

How could moral evil evolve out of lifeless matter? Chemicals mixing and molecules banging against each other cannot account for good and evil. Nor can they account for the profound human awareness of good and evil.

An atheist may say evil proves there is no God. But follow this to its logical conclusion. Without God there is no reference point for good and evil. Who can condemn nature for evil? Nature is what nature is. And we should have no capacity to break outside the system and evaluate it if we are really the product of blind evolution rather than intelligent design. (By the way, I hope you've read the New York Times bestseller *Darwin's Black Box*, by biochemistry

professor Michael Behe, one of many scientists who argues that the complex machinery which exists on the cellular level can only be explained by intelligent design.)

On what basis can we call one thing good and another evil? If there is no God, then "good" and "evil" are nothing more than subjective feelings reflecting what our culture has taught us to approve or disapprove. Evil is nothing more than whatever I happen to oppose or dislike.

### **Sacred Scripture**

In the days when he was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, declared by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:7-10)

Suppose you object to murder, but I think it's fine. You think rape is evil and someone else thinks it's okay. Apart from some external objective moral standard we're just exchanging opinions. Why is your opinion or mine more valid than Adolf Hitler's or Jeffrey Dahmer's?

People who claim to be moral relativists say there's no such thing as a moral absolute—but they can't live within in their own system. Ask them, "if I were to beat you over the head with a baseball bat, rape your sister, kidnap your child, or burn down your house, do you think that would be absolutely wrong?" Of course—if we admit it, we do believe in moral absolutes. *But who or what is behind those standards?* Who besides human beings has set them up so we can appeal to them?

Our belief that there is good and evil is itself an argument for the existence of some outside standard of good and evil. If we're merely the blind product of time, chance and natural forces, we're part of a system with no transcendent ability to step outside it. We're stuck in the system.

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A gazelle runs from the cheetah, but gazelles don't sit around the campfire and discuss how unfair it is that cheetahs kill gazelles. There's something in us that cries out "something's wrong," something needs fixing. That thing that cries out is what the Bible calls the conscience, God's law written on our hearts (Romans 2:15). We are made in the image of God. We are more than just animals. We have a conscience, a moral code built into us. That's what allows us to step outside of what we see around us and call it good or evil.

If there is no God, there is no such thing as objective evil. What we would call evil is merely projecting our subjective feelings onto events. But that doesn't satisfy our instinctive outrage over evil and suffering. Morality is more than an evolutionary trick played on our minds.

The very fact that we recognize evil and object to it, is evidence that a God of goodness has planted in us the notion of goodness. We are using God's own standards of good, which he has written on our hearts, as an argument against him.

My question to some of my atheist friends is, "**If there is no God, why are you so angry at Him?**"

There are no atheists in foxholes. They are either shaking their fist at God in anger or crying out to God for mercy. But in either case, they are recognizing the existence of the God they have denied. Suggestion: don't wait until your deathbed to come to grips with the question of God. No question is more important. Don't procrastinate finding answers to this question.

**6. If you argue that evil is evidence there is no God you must also admit that good is evidence there is a God.**

You can't have it both ways. You can't argue for the negation of a thing, a good God, by the existence of evil unless you also argue for the thing itself, a good God, by the existence of good. If not for a good God, where would goodness come from?

Is there anything in the blind evolutionary process of survival of the fittest that would cultivate kindness and putting other people first? How much good should we expect to see in a self-generated world? None. We should only see ruthlessness and the will to survive at everyone else's expense. We do see plenty of that, of course, but we also see kindness, compassion, sacrifice and love. I'm convinced that without a good God, who created in us an

appreciation of virtue—and empowers people to do good—we would see none of those.

**7. Our understanding is limited. If there is an all-knowing God, it shouldn't surprise us that He might have purposes in suffering which we cannot comprehend.**

Isaiah 55:8 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Protagoras said, "Man is the measure of all things." Well, that's one world view. But it's not the Bible's. **God is the measure of all things.** We see the universe as anthropocentric, man-centered, while the Bible claims it is theocentric, God-centered. We think we're the main characters in the drama. The Bible says God is.

How much do you know? Let's say you're the smartest person who's ever lived, and that you know .1% of all there is to know in the universe. Is it possible that in the 99.9% of all that you don't know, there is enough good in the universe to outweigh the evil? **Is it possible that in the 99.9% you don't know, there exists a good God,** and even a rational explanation—if you were smart enough to understand it—of why a good God would permit suffering? Is it possible that the evil, bad as it is, has been used to accomplish good purposes?

Ever been to a football game at half time when the band forms words or pictures in the middle of the field? They look great from up in the stands. But have you ever been on the sidelines when the band forms its symbols? You can't see them. What the band's doing appears pointless, confusing, apparently meaningless. **We see life from the sidelines.** God sees it from above, in the grandstands. The Bible invites us to walk up in the stands and get a better perspective.

In my novel *Edge of Eternity*, after seeing many events of this life that are terrible, something happens to the main character, Nick Seagrave, toward the end:

A vast fabric stretched across the sky. Bending back my head, I saw on the fabric countless unsightly lumps and knots, like thick, rough yarn with frayed strings.

Suddenly, Marcus beside me, I was yanked up into the sky and pulled through a hole in the center of the fabric. Now I was on the other side, the topside. I looked down and saw

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a beautiful work of art, like needlepoint or cross-stitching, a magnificent tapestry. The yarn and threads had been perfectly knitted together in elaborate design by the hands of a master craftsman. I saw in the center of the tapestry the Woodsman on a tree. I saw how a senseless murder, history's worst act of betrayal, was the centerpiece of a glorious design. Surrounding it I saw other tragedies, absurd and incomprehensible events that now had clear meaning and purpose.

"It's stunning," I said to Marcus. "Before I saw only the underside, the ugly knots and frays. I never saw the design, the beauty."

"No wonder," Marcus said. "Until now, you have always lived on the wrong side of the tapestry."

A few years ago a woman named Mary came to my wife and me, because she was dying of cancer. One day she seemed perfectly healthy, the next she was going in for chemotherapy. She wondered why, if there was a loving God, he had let her life fall apart like this.

My wife Nanci used an analogy. She said imagine a three year old boy has swallowed poison. The father calls poison control and they say "You have to get him to the hospital, and whatever you do, don't let him fall asleep. If he falls asleep, he'll die."

It's a cold winter night and the boy's in his pajamas. His father rushes him to the car. He's sitting beside him in the front seat. Dad rolls all the windows down. The boy's head starts to drop. His father reaches his right arm over and slaps him in the face. The boy cries. His head starts to nod again. The father slaps him again and again, all the way to the hospital.

**Can the child understand why his father is slapping his face?** Of course not. He's only three years old. His father, through tears, says "I love you, son." But if this is love, the boy doesn't want any more of it.

Even though the child isn't able to understand, the father is acting in his best interests. What the father is doing is good. It appears to be out of line with what the child knows about his loving father. But what the child thinks of as cruelty is actually kindness. His father is doing what is best for him.

**Is it possible that God is showing his love in the midst of human suffering, and that like three year old children, we sometimes don't understand?** (By the way, during her

illness, our friend Mary came to faith in Christ, and a short time later died. I believe with all my heart I'll see her again in heaven.)

Because we lack omniscience, holiness, justice and love, we are unqualified to pronounce judgment on God. After Job has questioned God about why he has allowed him to undergo suffering, we're told in Job 38, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!"

God asks Job question after question that Job is too young and puny to begin to understand. Then he says, "Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. Then he adds a humorous bit of sarcasm. He says, "Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!"

We know so little. We have lived so short a time. Read the last five chapters of Job. Then ask yourself if you know enough to put God before your judgment seat rather than stand before his.

### **8. Those who are most critical of God for allowing suffering usually do very little to help alleviate it.**

We ask God, "Why aren't you doing more to help the needy?" God might respond, "Look at all the resources I've put into your hands, so no one needs to go hungry. What are you doing with the solutions to world suffering that I have put into your hands? Why aren't *you* doing more to help the needy?"

We could spend less on houses, drive less expensive cars, spend less money on clothes and toys, and give the money to keep whole villages alive. For the cost of what some of us spend on Starbuck's coffee, we could feed whole families. Before you cast stones at God for not doing what you think he should about human suffering, ask yourself what you could be doing.

Why is it fair for us to judge God for allowing suffering, when we're doing so little to alleviate it? We ask, "If God can help the poor why doesn't he?" Maybe we should ask "If God has given us so much to help the poor, why don't we?"

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The answer may come down to something very unpleasant and unpopular: that the problem of evil and suffering doesn't point the finger at God, but at us.

The Bible says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). *God will not stand before our judgment seat. We will stand before His.*

### Conclusion

Corrie ten Boom, from the depths of a concentration camp, wrote: "**No matter how deep our darkness, He is deeper still.**"

Suffering is many things, but in the end it is God's invitation to us to trust Him, and to look forward to place where all suffering will forever be replaced by Joy—Heaven. In light of that, we need to understand exactly how we can get to heaven.

The Bible says it's our responsibility to admit that we're at fault for our share of the evil and suffering in this world. It says "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). It says, "if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (Rom. 10:9-10)

We're told there's no work we can do to contribute to salvation. "For by grace you have been saved by faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not by works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

How many ways are there to get to the Father in heaven? Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me." (John 14:6) That's an exclusive statement, and therefore not a popular one. It's not politically correct these days. But Jesus said it. And I believe Him. Do you?

People spend their lives moving from person to person, relationship to relationship in search of the right person, the person who can meet all their deepest needs. But many never find the person they're longing for. They move from house to house, from city to city, looking for that perfect mountain chalet, that ideal beach house, that beautiful house in the country. But they never find the place they're longing for.

We were all made for a person and a place. Jesus is that person. Heaven is that place. No one else and no place else will satisfy. The suffering and evil that plague us here and now, in that short period while we live under the unnatural conditions of sin's curse, will have no place then and there, in heaven.

### ***ASSIGNMENT 1***

*In groups of 2-4 students determine the meaning of the assigned section from the above article. Present this point through creative means such as a poster, movie, skit, puppet show. Illustrate how this point would manifest itself in contemporary society. Give a modern example.*



**ASSIGNMENT 3 - Immaculee Ilibagiza – Evil and Suffering Response**

Read the article, *How Could a Good God Allow Evil and Suffering* (pg 5-11) and then decide which 3 of the 8 points in the article best apply to Immaculee's situation. There are a total of 3 paragraphs to be written. In each, the student will summarize and describe the point from the article, demonstrating his or her understanding of the point. Then she will, providing detailed examples, explain how that point applies to Immaculee's story.

**Do not simply write out the heading from the handout as your summary.** You will need to demonstrate that you understand each of the points from the handout as you, in a few sentences, summarize the point and then, in a few more sentences, describe how it applies to Immaculee's situation.

The video can be found here: <http://www.faithandreason.ca/RS25/fakeley/>

**Rubric**

**Point One**

Student has demonstrated an understanding of the points chosen from the handout, How Could a Good God Allow Evil and Suffering.

1      2      3      4      5

Connection to Immaculee's story

1      2      3      4      5

**Point Two**

Student has demonstrated an understanding of the points chosen from the handout, How Could a Good God Allow Evil and Suffering.

1      2      3      4      5

Connection to Immaculee's story

1      2      3      4      5

**Point Three**

Student has demonstrated an understanding of the points chosen from the handout, How Could a Good God Allow Evil and Suffering.

1      2      3      4      5

Connection to Immaculee's story

1      2      3      4      5

*Why doesn't God do something to protect those who are suffering?*

Peter Kreeft, a philosopher and theologian, suggests that we are not really meant for this world. Just as an unborn baby is not meant for the womb neither are we meant for this world. For us, this world is like the second womb. The second womb prepares us for our ultimate destiny. Some live for just a few days in the first womb, some live for a long, long, time in the second womb.

What is my purpose? Why am I here? From a Catholic perspective the answer is simple:

*My purpose is to know, love, and serve God in this world, and be happy with him forever in the next world.*

When we understand our true purpose the evil and suffering of this world is easier to face.

God's greatest concern is for the protection of that which will last forever, our souls. Like the flowers in the fire, which will die soon after anyway, our bodies will not last forever and will at some point, whether it is sooner or later, die. Our soul is like the family heirloom which can be passed on forever. God wants to preserve our soul and offers his protection for those who, in this life, indicate that they want to be with him in the next life.

## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

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Imagine a man strings a tightrope across Niagara Falls. Pushing a wheelbarrow, he walks back and forth across the tightrope over the falls. As you could imagine he would attract a lot of attention. As the crowds grew, he stopped at one end and asked, "Who thinks I can make it across again?" They all cheered, shouting "Yes!" He then asked, "Who wants to get into the wheelbarrow?" The crowd was silent.

Real faith and real belief means making a real commitment of trust. "Blessed are those who believe without seeing"

A person indicates that they want to spend eternity with God through their belief in him. Just as a player demonstrates his or her belief in a coach by doing everything they can to do what the coach has asked, so too does a person demonstrate their belief in God by doing everything they can to follow God's teachings.

Like in any relationship, there are times when we must acknowledge that we have done something to damage the relationship. We must ask for forgiveness. This repentance is met with unconditional forgiveness, providing the repentance is genuine. It only destroys the relationship more if we, rather than repent, claim that there is nothing wrong with what we have done.

If heaven exists, God would never force himself on someone who, in this world, rejected him either through their words or actions. Naturally God wants all to accept his love, but his love is never forced and must be freely accepted.

## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

### The Parable of the Airport

A family arrives at an airport with excited anticipation of the journey ahead. For months now they have been planning this trip. It has been years since they have gone on a vacation together. This vacation will be more like a family reunion than a regular vacation. In order to keep costs down, however, they have booked flights on various airlines at various times. Arriving at the airport together, their plan is to check their luggage, go through security, and then get started on the many stories that will be shared over the next few days.

Getting through security can be a painful, sometimes tedious process. But, eventually they make it. With some eating, some visiting, and even some snoozing, they all gather together waiting for their flights to be called.

Abruptly, in the middle of an excited story about life on the farm, the flights for grandpa and grandma are announced over the PA system. Hastily gathering their belongings, they give hugs and kisses. Grandma tells everyone that she will prepare the condo so that it is ready when they arrive.

A few moments after grandpa and grandma leave to board the plane Jonathan comes out of the bathroom. With a bewildered look on his face he asks, "Where are grandpa and grandma?"

"Oh, their flight was called. They had to go." mother explained.

"But I didn't have a chance to say goodbye."

"Don't worry honey," mother continued, "you will be able to see them soon enough."

After an hour or so, another of their flights was called and a couple more members of the

family gathered their things and headed for the long hallway that stretched out to the plane.

This same process continued throughout the day, each on various planes at different times, but all heading for the same place.

Finally, mother and Jonathan were the only ones left waiting.

"Why is this taking so long?" Jonathan asked, "It seems like forever since grandpa and grandma left. I wish I could have heard the end of the story."

"I know it seems like a long time while we are here waiting, but once we are there, the time here will seem like it came and went in the blink of an eye" mother replied.

Moments later, over the loud speaker, a friendly woman's voice announced the name of the airline and their flight number. With a quick glance at their tickets, they knew it was time to go.

A movie, a meal, and a short sleep later, mother and Jonathan's attention was brought to the fact that they were about land and that they needed to fasten their seat belts.

The ride in the taxi from the airport to condo passed quickly. Before Jonathan knew it, he and his mother were standing at the front door with their luggage in hand. Just as he was about to ring the doorbell the door swung open and grandpa and grandma welcomed him with a breathtaking hug.

"Jonathan, we are so glad to see you!" exclaimed grandma. "Now grandpa can finish telling you his story."

**How can Science be an obstacle to belief?  
(brainstorm notes on this page)**

### *What is the Big Bang Theory?*

*According to National Geographic Science, the Big Bang took place, "10 billion to 20 billion years ago," and consisted of "a massive blast allowed all the universe's known matter and energy—even space and time themselves—to spring from some ancient and unknown type of energy."*

*Apparently, "in the instant—a trillion-trillionth of a second—after the big bang, the universe expanded with incomprehensible speed from its pebble-size origin to astronomical scope."*

*<http://science.nationalgeographic.com/science/space/universe/origins-universe-article.html>*

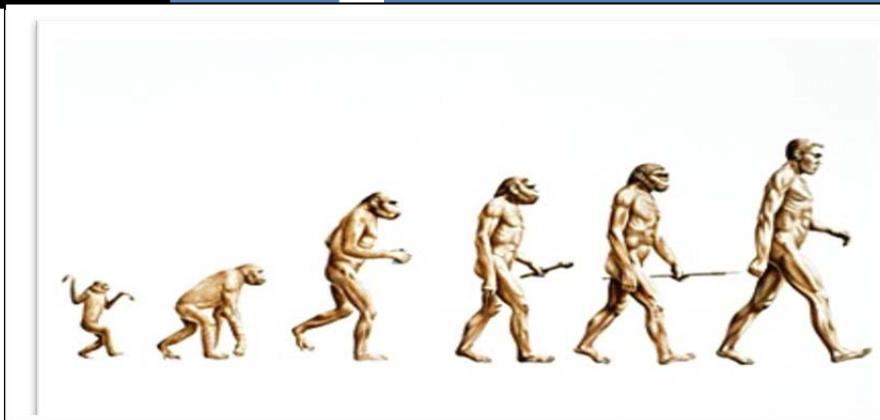
### *Creation and Evolution*

The doctrine of creation and the theory of biological evolution do not necessarily contradict each other. We do not know how God arranged for the world he created to come to perfection. He could have used the evolution of species by natural selection ("the survival of the fittest") to produce the human body. Scripture says he "formed" it out "of dust from the ground" (Gen 2:7). However, the breath of life (the soul) was then "breathed" into man by God (Gen 2:7). Souls cannot evolve from matter but must be directly created by God.

Insofar as evolution explains bodies it does not contradict the doctrine of creation. Insofar as it claims to explain souls, it does. But it is unscientific and illogical to try to explain immaterial souls by material biology.

Insofar as evolution explains natural processes, it does not contradict creation. Insofar as it denies supernatural divine design, it does; but then evolution goes beyond its scientific scope and becomes a theology instead of natural science.

There can be no real contradiction, ever, between true science and true religion, because truth can never contradict truth. (Catholic Christianity)



## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?



**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:** What amount of faith does it take to believe that all matter, energy, space and time began in an area small enough to fit in a thimble?

What evidence do you have that proves this actually took place?

Read through the two creation accounts. Circle points within the accounts that are the same and underline the points that are different.

## Genesis 1

1 In the beginning when God created\* the heavens and the earth,<sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God\* swept over the face of the waters.<sup>3</sup>Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.<sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.<sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.'<sup>7</sup>So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so.<sup>8</sup>God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so.<sup>10</sup>God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.<sup>11</sup>Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so.<sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good.<sup>13</sup>And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let

## Genesis 2

2 In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,<sup>5</sup>when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground;<sup>6</sup>but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—<sup>7</sup>then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground,\* and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.<sup>8</sup>And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.<sup>9</sup>Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches.<sup>11</sup>The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;<sup>12</sup>and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are

## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,<sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so.<sup>16</sup> God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.<sup>17</sup> God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth,<sup>18</sup> to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.<sup>19</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.'<sup>21</sup> So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good.<sup>22</sup> God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.'<sup>23</sup> And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so.<sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

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

<sup>27</sup> So God created humankind\* in his image, in the image of God he created them;\* male and female he created them.

there.<sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush.<sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.<sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;<sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

18 Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.'<sup>19</sup> So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.<sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man\* there was not found a helper as his partner.<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.<sup>22</sup> And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.<sup>23</sup> Then the man said,

## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'<sup>29</sup>God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.'<sup>30</sup>And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so.<sup>31</sup>God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**2** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude.<sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.<sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

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

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

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.<sup>25</sup>And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Summarize the main message from the first Creation account

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Summarize the main message from the second Creation account

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Realizing that the texts are different, what can we assume about the intention of the person who put the texts side by side?

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What do the following passages of Scripture say about the Jews and their relationship with God and the reason for the Babylonian Exile?

Judges 2:10-19

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1 Kings 11:1-13

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2 Chronicles 36:5-21

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Baruch 1:13-2:6; 6:1-6

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# Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

## Understanding the historical context of the first chapter of Genesis

1. **SCRIPTURE** - To determine the **meaning of a text**, we need to determine:

- **Who** is the author?
- **When** was it written?
- **Why** was it written?
- **For whom** was it written?

2. **SCRIPTURE** - The Pentateuch, which is made up of **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**, was originally thought to have been authored by **Moses**.

3. **SCRIPTURE** - Modern Biblical Scholars recognize that there were several authors whose writings were combined to create the Pentateuch.

The authors are referred to not by name, but by style of writing.

4. **SCRIPTURE** - It was the **Priestly** author who wrote portions of the Pentateuch and then, **around 500 BC**, edited and compiled all the other authors' portions together.

It is unreasonable for us to assume that he didn't notice that the creation accounts were **different**.

Therefore, we must conclude that he **never intended** them to be understood **literally** in a way that would cause them to contradict one another.

5. **HISTORY** - The kings and people of Judah were practicing various **abominations** and were **polluting** the temple. This is why God allowed the temple to be **taken captive** by the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar.

Prior to the exile, the Jews had **turned their backs on God**.

This was the beginning of the Babylonian exile.

The authors responsible for the two creation stories are the:

**Priestly** (First Creation Account)  
**Yahwist** (Second Creation Account)

6. **BABYLON** – While in Babylon, the people of Judah would have been greatly influenced by **Babylonian** culture.

The **Enuma Elish** is known as the **Babylonian Genesis**. It is their creation story.

The **Enuma Elish** contains a dramatic account of a battle between a god, Marduke and a lesser god Tiamat. Marduke cuts Tiamat in two and her body parts begin the **creation** of the world.

7. **Biblical Creation Account** - Rather than a **battle** between two gods, the **Biblical creation** account has one God who **creates** all things. The Biblical creation account reveals a **purposeful** act on behalf of God rather than an incidental consequence between two **angry** gods.

8. **Biblical Creation Account** - The Priestly author would have used the Babylonian creation account as the **foundation** for his creation account. Some suggest that the Biblical creation account was the **original** and the Babylonians adapted it to their belief. The **Priestly** would then have **restored** the story to its **original form**.

## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

**9. PURPOSE** - The Priestly author wanted to teach the Jewish people about their **faith**. He needed to start at the very **beginning**.

**10. PURPOSE** - The Priestly author used the **Babylonian** creation account as the **foundation** for his creation account. This story would have been well known to the **Jewish people** at the time because they were still in **exile** in Babylon and would be for almost **fifty** years.

Enuma Elish	=	Genesis 1
1. Begins with a conquest of chaos by order	=	The opening statement of Gn. 1:1-2
2. Heavens created and separated from the water	=	Day 2, the creation of heavens and separation of the waters
3. The earth is set over the waters	=	Day 3, the land appears from the waters
4. Creation of sun and moon	=	Day 4, sun and moon are set in heaven
5. (No mention of plants or animals)	=	(Days 5-6, the creation of fish, birds, and animals)
6. Creation human beings	=	Day 6, the creation of human
7. The gods rest and celebrate	=	Day 7, God rests

**11. The Covenant** - The **Priestly** author doesn't follow the **Enuma Elish** exactly. He stretches the story out ending it on the **seventh day**. He does this **intentionally** because he wants show the Jewish people exactly what separates them from everyone else. The difference is that, although they have, to a great extent, **forgotten** their **relationship** with God, they are, in fact, in a **covenantal relationship** with God. This **covenant** was established, between **God and His people**, at **Mount Sinai** with **Moses** and the **10 Commandments**.

### Nehemiah 9:13-14

<sup>13</sup>You came down also upon Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments,<sup>14</sup>and **you made known your holy sabbath to them** and gave them commandments and statutes and a law through your servant Moses.

**12. The Covenant** - The **Hebrew** word for **seven** is "**sheba**". The Hebrew word that means to "**swear an oath**" is "**shaba**". By ending the creation on the **seventh day** which is also the **Sabbath** it reminds the Jewish people that God **swore an oath** as He entered into a **covenant** or **relationship** with them.

## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

### St. Augustine on Science and Religion

St. Augustine (2006, p. 186), writing in the fourth and fifth centuries, cautions Christians against entering into dialogue about things of science of which they may have limited or inaccurate knowledge. He emphasizes the fact that Non-Christians, while not necessarily possessing a fundamental knowledge of the faith, may have a substantial understanding about the material world. He states, "it is a disgraceful and disastrous, something to be on guard against at all costs, that they [non-Christians] should ever hear Christians spouting what they claim our Christian literature has to say on these topics..." (p. 186). If a non-Christian hears a Christian speaks inaccurately on things of science using Scripture as his foundation for belief, how is the non-Christian "going to trust those books on the resurrection of the dead and the hope of eternal life and the kingdom of heaven, when they suppose they include any number of mistakes and fallacies on matters which they themselves have been able to master either by experiment or by the surest of calculations?" (p. 187). Before people of faith make assertions about science basing it on Scripture, they need to make certain that they understand adequately both.

**13. God and Science** - Which is it then, **creation or evolution**? This isn't an either or question. **Did God create? YES**, that is a **Dogma of the faith**. It is up to **science** to determine **HOW** life came to be what it is today.

**14. God and Science** - The **role and the aim of science** is to determine the **specifics of the age of the earth and the mechanics of creation**.

**15. God and Science** - Neither the **Big Bang Theory** nor the **Theory of Evolution** say anything one way or the other about the **existence of God**.

**16. God and Science** - **Pope John Paul II (1996)**, in his address to the Pontifical Academy of Science stated, as it pertains to **evolution** and the origin of man, that "**truth cannot contradict truth**." **Jesus Christ is 'Truth'** (Jn. 14:6) and if what is discovered through science is true then there is **no contradiction**. It is **not** something that the **Church is threatened** by.

**17. Purpose** - The **priestly** author wanted to **re-establish** the foundational **beliefs** of the **Jewish people** while at the same time **refuting** Babylonian beliefs.

## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

### ORIGIN OF "THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS" An Underground Catechism

You're all familiar with the Christmas song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas" I think. To most it's a delightful nonsense rhyme set to music. But it had a quite serious purpose when it was written.

#### A modern version of The Twelve Days of Christmas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3aCw-RurOk>



It is a good deal more than just a repetitious melody with pretty phrases and a list of strange gifts.

Catholics in England during the period 1558 to 1829, when Parliament finally emancipated Catholics in England, were prohibited from ANY practice of their faith by law - private OR public. It was a crime to BE a Catholic.

"The Twelve Days of Christmas" was written in England as one of the "catechism songs" to help young Catholics learn the tenets of their faith - a memory aid, when to be caught with anything in \*writing\* indicating adherence to the Catholic

faith could not only get you imprisoned, it could get you hanged, or shortened by a head - or hanged, drawn and quartered, a rather peculiar and ghastly punishment I'm not aware was ever practiced anywhere else. Hanging, drawing and quartering involved hanging a person by the neck until they had almost, but not quite, suffocated to death; then the party was taken down from the gallows, and disembowelled while still alive; and while the entrails were still lying on the street, where the executioners stomped all over them, the victim was tied to four large farm horses, and literally torn into five parts - one to each limb and the remaining torso.

The songs gifts are hidden meanings to the teachings of the faith. The "true love" mentioned in the song doesn't refer to an earthly suitor, it refers to God Himself. The "me" who receives the presents refers to every baptized person. The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge which feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings, much in memory of the expression of Christ's sadness over the fate of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have sheltered thee under my wings, as a hen does her chicks, but thou wouldst not have it so..."

## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

The other symbols mean the following:

2 Turtle Doves = The Old and New Testaments

3 French Hens = Faith, Hope and Charity, the Theological Virtues

4 Calling Birds = the Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists

5 Golden Rings = The first Five Books of the Old Testament, the "Pentateuch", which gives the history of man's fall from grace.

6 Geese A-laying = the six days of creation

7 Swans A-swimming = the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven sacraments

8 Maids A-milking = the eight beatitudes

9 Ladies Dancing = the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit

10 Lords A-leaping = the Ten Commandments

11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful apostles

12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed

--Fr. Hal Stockert, Fishnet (<http://www.ewtn.com/library/HOMELIBR/TWELVDAY.TXT>)

***The Priestly author restored the creation account to its original intent with its focus on God and the Creator and on the Covenant that God enters into with His people on the Sabbath.***

***Some would argue that the world we live in has fallen so far away from God that many have forgotten the purpose of the various Christian celebrations.***

***We see signs like the first one that is still missing the point of the celebration of Christmas.***

***More accurately, it should read:***

***We need to get back to the real meaning of Christmas...spending time with friends and family!***



***“We need to get back to the real meaning of Christmas...celebrating the birth of the saviour of the world!”***

## Religious Studies 25 Unit One: What do you believe?

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***Evaluation Questions Type the answers to these question and either hand them in or email them.***

- 1. You are out with friends and someone says that science proves that God doesn't exist because the Theory of Evolution proves that God didn't create the world in six, 24 hour days as it is written in the first chapter of Genesis. Respond to the person in a way that demonstrates your complete understanding of the material covered.***
- 2. Based on what we have discussed about the Jewish people prior to and during the exile, describe how modern Catholics might be like the ancient Jews and our modern society is like ancient Babylon.***
- 3. What other Christian celebrations have been forgotten by our contemporary society? What should the celebration focus on? What does it focus on instead?***