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| **Strands** | Meditation, Prayer and Worship; World Religions; The Bible and Christian Belief | | | |
| **Stage of Development** | Lower Secondary (Years 7-9) | **Created** May 2021 | | **Review** 2025 |
| **Aim** | Students learn that stillness and silence, prayer and reflection have a rich history in Christianity and other world religions. Different ways of ‘being still’ are considered including: Lectio Divina, Mantra, Contemplative Prayer, prayer Labyrinths, reflection on an icon or object, visualisation and an overview of Eastern meditation. Students are provided with the opportunity to learn about these methods including their history as well as experience them. The unit also considers some of the strategies that have been popularized by modern psychology including mindfulness, controlling our self-talk and gratitude. | | | |
| **Content Descriptions** | **Knowledge and Understanding**   * Different traditions (ancient and modern) have developed methods that people can use to ‘be still’ * The different objectives people seek when ‘being still’ * The benefits of ‘being still’ * The relationship between ancient traditions and strategies promoted by modern psychology * The place of stillness and silence in the Christian tradition | | **Religious Studies Skills**   * Concept cracking * Meditation and being still | |
| **Resources** | <https://www.theschoolofmeditation.org/> and <http://www.wccm.org/> | | Resources and information based on the work of Laurence Freeman. | | |
|  | Coming Home A Guide to Teaching Christian Meditation to Children by Ernie Christie | | Written by the Director of Religious Education and Curriculum for the Catholic Education Office of the Diocese of Townsville. Contains helpful lesson plans, explanations and resources. | | |
|  | <https://www.headspace.com/meditation> | | This website lists and explains meditation techniques from the perspective of modern psychology. | | |
|  | Series: The Abbey (available on ClickView) | | Considers the life of a group of sisters living in an Abbey. | | |

| **Lesson** | | **Key Questions** | **Lesson Activity Ideas** | | **Resources** |
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| **1** | Being Still | What does it mean to be still?  How does the Christian tradition of being still compare with other traditions?  How can more recent mindfulness and meditation techniques be connected back to historical traditions of ‘being still’? | 10min  5min  5min  5min  20min | Activity: Take the students back to their childhood and play a game of musical statues. It would be good to use loud, busy music for the game. Discuss the difference between the noise and movement and being still and in silence when the music stops OR play students two different songs one loud and busy and the other calm. Ask students to compare the way the songs make them feel.  Discuss: What does it mean to be still? What’s the difference between mental stillness and physical stillness? Are both important? Is it possible to still amongst chaos or disorder? What methods do students use to be still?  Watch or read: Mark 4:35-41 Jesus Calms the Storm (<https://www.bible.com/videos/3177-mark-4-35-41-from-lumoproject-dot-com>). In this passage Jesus rebukes the waves and the wind and orders them to ‘Be still’. Discuss the contrasts we see in this story between the chaos and disorder of the ocean and calmness and stillness of the wind and the waves after Jesus’ rebuke.  Read: Psalm 41. Discuss the psalm and what the student’s think it means. In this psalm we see a description of chaos and disorder but a command to ‘Be still and know that I am God’. This reminds us of some central Christian truths including God’s control over all things. It tells us that our job in the chaos is to be still and know that God is God and we are not. This seems to involve both a physical stillness and a mental or spiritual stillness. Discuss the contrast in the psalm between humankind’s job/role and God’s role? This psalm presents a calling to empty our mind of our fears and to do lists and fill our minds with the knowledge that God is in control.  Worksheet: Being Still. Break the students into small groups and ask each group to research different ways of being still e.g. Dhyana in Hinduism and Buddhism, Christian Hesychasm, Islamic Sufism or Jewish Kabbalah. Ask students to provide a brief history and description of their allocated tradition. These will fit into two categories and it would be helpful to note the distinction with students as they report back. Some will be focused or concentrative meditation and some will promote open monitoring or mindfulness. Discuss how modern mindfulness and meditation might be connected back to some of the older traditions.  Ext: Ask the students to create a stillness and silence ECG where they chart their activity and noise on their average day. Look at when you could add some stillness and silence, and where you could go to get some quiet time. | Music, open space.  Lumo Project clip of Mark 4 <https://www.bible.com/videos/3177-mark-4-35-41-from-lumoproject-dot-com> (1min 32sec).  Bible or BibleGateway  Worksheet: Being Still  Internet and tablets for group research  For an explanation of types of secular meditation that have been developed from theses religious methods (<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/techniques>) |
| **2** | Lectio Divina | What is Lectio Divina?  Where did Lectio Divina originate?  Why might Christians participate in Lectio Divina? | 5min  10min  15min  15min | Activity: Put a word up on the board and ask students to reflect on it e.g. COVID, Summer, Happiness. Ask the students what it means to reflect on words and how different words might impact us differently e.g. COVID v Happiness.  Watch: This clip on Lectio Divina. It explains Lectio Divina as a form of Christian meditation that historically involved four steps (read, meditate, pray, contemplate) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=246&v=gKYEOc3ik9k&feature=emb_title> (5 min). Discuss with students why people might need to ‘be still’ to engage with this ancient form of Christian meditation. Ask the students to describe Lectio Divina in their own words.  Research: Research the history of a Christian contemplative community such as the Order of Saint Benedict, World Community of Christian Meditation, Anglican Benedictine Abbey of St Mark (Camperdown, Victoria). Write a paragraph describing what life was/is like in this community and why people might be motivated to join this community. Discuss as a class.  Activity: Ask students to observe or participate in a guided Lectio Divina  e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq7_tJ-z39E> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drGayBcsHnU> | Teacher resource from the Anglican Communion on Lectio Divina <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/253799/1-What-is-Lectio-Divina.pdf>  Clip explaining Lectio Divina  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=246&v=gKYEOc3ik9k&feature=emb_title>  Internet |
| 3 | Mantra and hesychasm | What is a mantra?  What is the *Jesus Prayer* and what is its connection to the tradition of Hesychasm?  How is mantra and the *Jesus Prayer* used by people to help them be still? | 10min  15min  10min  10min | Watch: The ASC video on Christian Meditation (4min) and discuss.  Explain and Experience: A mantra is a single word or short phrase that a person repeats throughout the meditation period. The use of mantra in Christian meditation seeks to clear the mind so that the participant can increase their focus and attention on God. One word that is often used is ‘Maranatha’ which is Aramaic for “come Lord” and is a prayer mantra of the Christian tradition. This word can be said over and over to help clear the mind and focus attention on God. Focus on breathing with the syllables Ma(inhale) Ra(exhale) Na (inhale) Tha (exhale). Guide students in a period of meditation using the word ‘Maranatha’   * Ask students to sit in a comfortable position. * Ask students to quite their bodies. Then quiet the mind. * Ask the students to close their eyes. Breath slowly in and out. * When the students have become quiet, you may ring a bell, or chime or simply say, “We begin our meditation now”. Advice to students can be “say the mantra until you can no longer say it and as soon as you realise you have stopped saying it, start saying it again”. As the teacher, you keep track of the time and ring the bell when the period comes to the end.   Research: Explain the *Jesus Prayer* is a Christian Orthodox method of meditation. Ask the students to find two facts about the history and origin of this tradition.  Activity: Guided meditation based on the Jesus Prayer. Students could be given the option of observing or participating. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZumEIi2DvA>). | ASC video on Meditation  Teacher resource on leading Mantra Meditation (<http://www.cominghome.org.au/practice/dsp-default-d.cfm@loadref=138.html>)  Bell, chime  Internet  Guided meditation using the Jesus Prayer. |
| **4** | Prayer Stations | What is prayer?  What are some different types of prayers and different ways we can pray?  How can we ‘be still’ in prayer? | 5min  40min | Watch: ASC video on prayer. Discuss.  Activity: Prior to the lesson set up a number of prayer stations for students. You could do this in your classroom or school chapel. Allow students to move between the stations at their own pace during the lesson. Some examples are below. From <https://www.ascmission.org/spirituality/prayer/> Prayer Sand Box – Tactile Prayer A shallow box filled with sand might be used as a prayer station where students write their prayers. Other mediums could also be used to create the same effect. Play dough could allow student to mould the things they wish to prayer for. Finger paints could also allow students to write the things they wish to pray for on large sheets of butcher’s paper. Request Box Place a decorated cardboard box with ‘Prayer Requests’ at one of the stations with coloured pencils and papers. Students can write their prayers and place them in the box. Let students know that they can be anonymous or named and that either the prayer group or the chaplain will pray for these things. Confession Prayers Have a pile of stones that people can place in the bowl of water as an act of confession, or of letting go of hurts and anxieties. Bubble Prayers Bubble tubes, lava lamps and other slow-moving, coloured-light objects are useful in prayer spaces because they create a calm, relaxed atmosphere. Students are invited to write prayers on Post-It notes and stick them onto the tube. Students watch the bubbles rising as a symbol of their prayers ‘rising’ to God.  A station could also be set up with bubble blowing equipment for students to use as they pray. Breathing Prayer Station Create a comfortable space where students can engage in silent prayer. Instruct them to get into a comfortable position.  On the instructions tell them to: “Ask God to calm their mind and heart.  Slow their breathing and think about the rhythm of their breath.  Invite students to be still and to listen. Praying in Sign Language One station could be set up with a video showing how to pray the Lord’s Prayer in sign language. Prayer comes not just from our mind, heart and mouth, but also from our physical bodies. Go to this link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHZiPWxpEvM> to learn the Lord’s Prayer in sign language. | Resources for prayer stations.  Extra resource: video on what Christian prayer is like <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrdlXOk_QdQ> (5min).  Teacher resource (<https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/>) |
| **5** | Prayer Labyrinth | What is a labyrinth?  What is the history of the labyrinth?  How have labyrinths been used by Christians in history? | 5min  15min  10min  15min | Share: ask students to share how different activities or experiences make their mind ‘feel’ e.g. sport, hot bath, walking bare foot along the beach, walking in a crowd of people etc  PowerPoint: Labyrinths  (Ext: watch this 3 minute video on the Labyrinths <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7u80ZLEh3M>)  Activity: Ask students to draw their own labyrinth using this YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1m5-ygVdqc> (6min 46 sec). If you had the space, you could get groups of students to draw labyrinths on the ground with chalk.  Worksheet and experience: Worksheet on walking the Labyrinth. You could consider constructing your own labyrinth in your Chapel or classroom with rope or chalk or students can walk their hand drawn labyrinth with their finger. | Teacher resource (<http://www.cathedrale-chartres.org/fr/,121.html>).  Blank paper, rubber and pencil and YouTube Clip on how to draw a Labyrinth.  Worksheet: Walking the Labyrinth  Labyrinth (drawing above or on the ground) |
| **6** | Icon | What is an icon?  How can icons help us be still? | 20min  15min  10min | Activity: Ask the students to make a PicCollage or another form of digital poster of different religions icons. After completing the activity ask students to define what an icon is (icon is from the Greek word resemblance). NB: A icon may be “written” or “painted”.  Research: Break the students into small groups and ask them to research the ‘Icon of the Holy Trinity’ by Andrei Rubley (1425). Ask the students to describe the painting and comment on the meaning different people have attributed to the painting. Share responses. In the icon three persons are represented, God the Father on the left, God the Son in the centre and God the Holy Spirit on the right. All the faces are the same = the mystery of the trinity. The son is painted in strong colours while the other two are almost transparent. Christ is God made known to us. Note within the circle there is another seat. This seat is reserved for us = opportunity of a personal relationship with God. If you want to stretch students, ask them to research the connection between the painting and the story of Abraham in the Old Testament.  Guided meditation using the icon <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8K5P_RZ7po> (6min). | Device, internet.  Device and internet.  Video or visual of the icon. |
| **7** | The Examen | What is the Examen?  Where did the Examen come from? | 5min  5min  10min  15min  10min | Read: “During the bombing raids of WWII, thousands of children were orphaned and left to starve. The fortunate ones were rescued and placed in refugee camps where they received food and good care. But many of these children could not sleep at night, fearing waking up to find themselves once again homeless and without food. Finally, someone hit upon the idea of giving each child a piece of bread to hold at bedtime. Holding their bread, these children could finally sleep in peace. All through the night the bread reminded them, ‘Today I ate and I will eat again tomorrow.’” (Sleeping with Bread: Holding onto What Gives You Life, page 1). Discuss What do you think it means to hold onto what gives you life?  Explain: The Examen is adapted from a method developed by St Ignatius. It is a habit of prayerful reflection on the events of each day. It’s an ancient practice that can help us see God’s hand at work in our whole experience.  Watch: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/into-the-examen-video/> (4:52min). This video features a student in America completing the Examen. Ask the students to describe what happens in the video and what explanation they might have for the way the boy is feeling.  Activity: Print out a Examen prayer card for each student Prayer Card: Give the students time to go away and use the card individually.  Share: come back together and reflect on the students’ experiences. | Prayer Card: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Examen-Prayer-Card.pdf>  Extra resource: Children’s Book Sleeping with Bread: Holding onto What Gives You Life by Dennis Linn, Fabricant Linn, Matthew Linn.  Teacher info: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/#handouts>  Prayer card: Prayer Card: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Examen-Prayer-Card.pdf> |
| **8** | Mindfulness | What is mindfulness?  What is the relationship between mindfulness and Eastern meditation techniques? | 5min  15min  10min  10min | Activity: Use this 1 minute guided mindfulness video <https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness>. Most students would have previously been exposed to mindfulness in the school setting. Discuss if students find mindfulness helpful? Why or why not?  Activity: Complete this mindfulness attention awareness scale with students and discuss their results and what they might mean. <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/mindfulnessscale.pdf>  Research: Break the students into small groups and ask the students to research Vipassana and list the similarities between this practice and modern mindfulness. You could draw students’ attention to the similarities by drawing two columns on the whiteboard to record features of each as students report back to the class.  Mindfulness Stations: Set up several stations in the classroom. You could use a series of different online guided mindfulness activities or in the centre of each station place half sentences like the ones listed below. Break the students into small groups and ring a bell when it is time for them to move between stations. At each station ask them to reflect ‘mindfully’ and silently on their answer to the unfinished sentence.   * Right now I see… * Right now I hear… * Right now I am touching… * Right now I smell… * Right now I feel… | Internet  Internet  Resources for mindfulness stations |
| **9** | Self-talk & Gratitude | What is self-talk?  What are some of the different types of self-talk?  How can self-talk impact our ability to be still?  What strategies can we use to be still when our self-talk feels out of control? | 5min  25min  5min  10min | Discuss: “*Watch what you tell yourself, you’re likely to believe it.”* What do students think this statement means? Ask the students to define self-talk based on their existing knowledge. (Self-talk is the internal narrative you hold about yourself. It’s your inner voice. Our self-talk can have a much bigger influence on the way we see ourselves, and the world around us than we realise.)  Activity: Ask students to go through the selection of magazines to pick out keywords, phrases or pictures that they feel best to represent emotions, experiences, and goals they have. Ask them to focus on the words that create these feelings. Using either pin boards or cardboard, students can stick or pin their chosen words and photos in a style that suits them – use different pens too and ask them to get creative with something that speaks to them. Ask students to reflect on what their display reveals about their self-talk. Discuss helpful and unhelpful ways to respond to our self-talk.  Explain: sometimes it can feel like our self-talk is out of control. It may be out of control because we are anxious, fearful, overtired, feeling guilty, etc. There is a lot of resources from the field of psychology about turning negative self-talk into positive self-talk. One of the strategies suggested is gratitude or hunting the good. The Christian tradition also demonstrates this e.g. many of the psalms focus on the good things God has done. This offers us the chance to refocus when our self-talk is in a state of chaos.  Activity: We see gratitude illustrated in the Psalms. An example is  Psalm 103 were we see David recount the blessings of God: forgiven sin, healing disease, His love, mercy and grace. Read Psalm 103 to the students and then ask them to write their own Psalm of gratitude. | Teacher resource: <https://positivepsychology.com/positive-self-talk/>  Selection of old magazines, newspapers or books that can be cut up, selection of pens and pencils, scissors and glue, pinboards or old cardboard for sticking affirmations to  Teacher resource: Article on the Benefits of Gratitude (<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_changes_you_and_your_brain>) |
| **10** | Student led Meditation | What do you need to do to prepare a guided meditation session? |  | Activity: Break the students into small groups ask each group to prepare a guided mediation based on one of the methods studied. Use 1/2 lesson to prepare and 1/2 lesson to present/participate. This can be done in small groups. |  |