Unit 6

“Byzantine Era

(& Honour & Piety)”

Grades

7 - 10

History & Social Studies

History & Social Studies (Grades 7-10)

"Byzantine Era (& Honour & Piety)"

SUMMARY:

This term the students examine the development of Christianity from the early Church through the Byzantine period, focusing on how honour, devotion, and reverence shaped belief, leadership, culture, and society. Through richly narrated historical case studies – including the life of Jesus, the early Church, persecution and martyrdom, Constantine, Church councils, Byzantine art, sacred spaces, and daily Christian practices – the course explores how faith influenced civic structures, governance, cultural expression, and moral decision-making. Students investigate historical significance, continuity and change, belief systems, and responses to challenge, while developing skills in historical inquiry, source analysis, explanation, and ethical reflection aligned with Australian Curriculum v9 HASS Achievement Standards.

RESOURCES:

All the information you need is included within the informational story in each lesson plan. The hands-on or creative activities are designed to use materials you will likely have already in your home, but you should maintain some **art and craft materials.**

Each child will also need a **History Journal** (i.e., a lined exercise book for writing responses to questions and writing activities).

It is also helpful to have a good **dictionary** and a **Timeline or 'Book of Centuries'.**

To enjoy a richer learning experience, you could **supplement the lessons with extra books** about the topics in this unit, from your local library.

Some suggestions for extra reading include but are not limited to...

Humanities:

- "Bible Investigators: The 7 C's of History" from Answers in Genesis [Ages 7 & up]

COPYRIGHT of IMAGES:

Images of paintings are sourced from the copyright-free site of WikiArt.org. Other photos and diagrams are from WikiMedia Commons accessed at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page, or are AI assisted original creations. These images are in the public domain and are free to use without requiring any copyright royalties.
Any alternate sources are acknowledged under the image.

Prior to starting each week, review the recommended resources.

Contents

Topic	Description	Page
Topic 1	The Good News of the Gospel	
Topic 2	Acts of the Apostles	
Topic 3	Loyal Unto Death	
Topic 4	Attributes of God & of Christians	
Topic 5	Growing as a Disciple of Christ	
Topic 6	Constantine	
Topic 7	Cathedral Church	
Topic 8	Love, Kindness, Generosity	
Topic 9	Assessment	

TOPIC 1	THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL

Lesson 1.1: Jesus' Life, Death & Resurrection

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

- **AC9HH7K01** – The nature of history and the sources used to investigate the past.
- **AC9HH8K01** – How historians investigate history, including sources and methods.
- **AC9HC8K02** – The roles of groups and individuals in society and how they influence social cohesion and identity.
- **AC9HG10K01** – The influence of religion and belief systems on people's identity and values.
- **AC9HH9S01 / AC9HH10S01** – Analyse and synthesise evidence from different types of sources to develop reasoned explanations and arguments.

A) Introduction

Welcome to your first lesson in this Christian History and Civics course. Today, you'll learn about the most significant person in world history: **Jesus of Nazareth**. His life, death, and resurrection are at the very heart of the Christian faith.

But this is not just a religious story. Jesus' life shaped the development of civilisations, law, education, art, and morality. His teachings influenced how we understand mercy, justice, and truth. In this lesson, you'll explore both the historical events and the spiritual meaning behind them.

As you read, remember the theme of this course: **Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God**. This is more than just knowledge – it is about recognising who Jesus is and responding to Him with a heart full of faith.

B) Informational Story – "The Carpenter Who Changed the World"

In a quiet Galilean village over two thousand years ago, a child was born into a humble household. His name was Jesus. Though He would grow up in an ordinary home, helping His carpenter father, Joseph, and learning the trade of woodwork, His life would alter the course of human history forever.

Jesus' arrival fulfilled ancient prophecies. For centuries, Jewish prophets had spoken of a coming Messiah, a Deliverer who would bring salvation not just to Israel, but to all people. The prophet Isaiah had foretold, "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." That prophecy came true when Mary, a young virgin engaged to Joseph, was visited by an angel and told that she would bear the Son of God.

Born in Bethlehem during the reign of Caesar Augustus, Jesus entered the world under harsh conditions. A Roman census had forced His parents to travel far from home, and when they arrived, there was no room at the inn. They found shelter in a stable, where Mary gave birth and laid the baby in a manger. That same night, shepherds in nearby fields were visited by a host of angels proclaiming the birth of the Saviour. They hurried to the stable to see the newborn. Later, magi from the East arrived, guided by a star, and brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Jesus' birth also stirred fear in political powers. King Herod, feeling threatened by news of a "king of the Jews," ordered a massacre of all boys under two in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph, warned in a dream, fled with the child to Egypt until it was safe to return. This early flight already showed the conflict between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom Jesus would proclaim.

Jesus' childhood is mostly hidden, but we know He grew strong in wisdom and favour with God and man. At age twelve, He stayed behind in the temple during a family trip to Jerusalem. When His parents found Him, He said, "Did you not know I must be in My Father's house?" Already, He was aware of His divine identity.

For the next eighteen years, Jesus lived quietly in Nazareth, working as a carpenter. Then, at age thirty, He was baptised by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. As He emerged from the water, the heavens opened, a dove descended, and a voice from heaven declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This moment marked the beginning of His public ministry.

Jesus began to teach and preach throughout Galilee, calling people to repent and believe the good news. He proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom of God – a spiritual reign marked by justice, mercy, humility, and faith. His words were powerful, and He often taught in parables – short stories that revealed deep spiritual truths.

He also performed signs and wonders: turning water into wine, healing the sick, casting out demons, calming storms, feeding multitudes with a few loaves and fish, and even raising the dead. These miracles revealed His compassion and confirmed His divine authority. Crowds gathered wherever He went. But so did opposition.

Religious leaders, especially the Pharisees and Sadducees, became increasingly hostile. Jesus exposed their hypocrisy, saying they honoured God with their lips but their hearts were far from Him. He welcomed sinners, tax collectors, and the outcast, challenging social and religious boundaries. He declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Jesus' teachings were revolutionary. He said the greatest commandments were to love God and love your neighbour. He spoke of forgiveness, humility, and servanthood. He said, "Blessed are the meek," and "Love your enemies." Many found hope in His words, but others were offended.

As the time of Passover approached, Jesus travelled to Jerusalem, fully aware that He would soon be crucified. He entered the city riding a donkey, fulfilling a prophecy from Zechariah. People laid palm branches before Him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Yet within days, the crowd would turn against Him.

Jesus cleansed the temple, driving out moneychangers who exploited worshippers. He wept over Jerusalem, grieving its spiritual blindness. He continued teaching in the temple, warning of coming judgment and urging people to be ready for His return.

On the night before His arrest, Jesus gathered His disciples for the Last Supper. He washed their feet – an act of humble service – and broke bread, saying, "This is My body." He passed the cup, saying, "This is My blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Then He led them to the Garden of Gethsemane.

There, in deep anguish, Jesus prayed, “Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.” Judas, one of the twelve, arrived with soldiers and betrayed Him with a kiss. Jesus was arrested, tried by the Jewish council, and taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.

Though Pilate found no basis for a charge, he caved to the pressure of the crowd. Jesus was flogged, mocked with a crown of thorns, and sentenced to death by crucifixion. He carried His cross through the streets to Golgotha. There, nails were driven through His hands and feet. He hung between two criminals.

As He suffered, He prayed, “Father, forgive them.” Darkness covered the land for three hours. He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” With His final breath, He said, “It is finished.”

A soldier pierced His side. Blood and water flowed. Jesus was taken down and placed in a borrowed tomb. A stone was rolled across the entrance, and Roman guards stood watch.

But early Sunday morning, everything changed. Women went to the tomb and found it empty. Angels announced, “He is not here. He has risen!” Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, then to the disciples, and later to more than 500 people. He ate with them, spoke to them, and allowed them to touch His wounds. For forty days, He taught them and promised the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Then, from the Mount of Olives, Jesus ascended into heaven. His followers, once fearful, were transformed. They began preaching boldly, declaring, “Jesus is Lord!” Many were imprisoned, beaten, or killed, but they would not stop. Their testimony launched the Christian Church.

What made Jesus different from other historical figures was not just His teachings or His miracles – it was His claim to be God in human form. He did not simply point people to God; He said, “Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.” He did not only preach the truth; He said, “I am the truth.” He didn’t just speak about eternal life; He declared, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Throughout His ministry, Jesus forgave sins – something only God could do. When a paralysed man was lowered through a roof to see Him, Jesus first said, “Your sins are forgiven,” before healing the man’s body. The religious leaders were outraged, asking, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Jesus’ actions repeatedly demonstrated that He saw Himself as more than a prophet or teacher. He was claiming divine authority.

He also predicted His own death and resurrection multiple times. He told His disciples, “The Son of Man must suffer many things... be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” Though they didn’t understand it at the time, these words became central to their faith after the resurrection.

Even small details of Jesus’ final days fulfilled ancient prophecies. Zechariah had foretold that He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. Isaiah wrote that He would be “pierced for our transgressions.” The Psalms described soldiers casting lots for His clothing. None of these events were coincidental. They confirmed Jesus as the promised Messiah.

After Jesus rose, the transformation in His followers was undeniable. Peter, who had denied Jesus three times out of fear, became a fearless preacher. Just weeks later, on the day of Pentecost, he stood before a crowd and boldly proclaimed that Jesus was the risen Lord. Three thousand people believed and were baptised that day.

The resurrection was not a private event or secret belief. It was declared openly in the city where Jesus was crucified. The empty tomb was public knowledge. If Jesus’ body had still been in the tomb, Christianity would never have survived. But no one could produce a body. Instead, the disciples pointed to the many who had seen Him alive.

The early church spread rapidly – first in Jerusalem, then across Judea, Samaria, and into the Roman Empire. The apostles travelled to far-off lands. Thomas went as far as India. Paul, a former persecutor of Christians, became their greatest missionary. He wrote letters explaining that Jesus' death was a sacrifice for sin, and His resurrection was proof that God accepted it.

The message of the Gospel – Jesus crucified and risen – became the heartbeat of Christian preaching. It brought hope to the poor, freedom to slaves, dignity to the outcast, and purpose to the lost. Despite fierce persecution, believers endured with joy, convinced that Jesus had conquered death.

Over the centuries, Jesus' life continued to shape culture and history. Hospitals were built in His name. Universities began as places to study Scripture. Laws were influenced by His teachings. Great works of art, music, and literature were inspired by His story. Even the calendar marks His birth – dividing history into "before Christ" and "in the year of our Lord."

Yet the most remarkable part of Jesus' story is not only what He did in the past, but what He still does in people's lives today. Millions around the world testify that Jesus has forgiven their sins, changed their hearts, and given them eternal hope. From ancient catacombs to modern churches, from African villages to Asian cities, from prisons to palaces – His name is worshipped and His words are treasured.

In the end, Jesus' call remains simple yet profound: "Follow Me." He invites everyone – not just the religious or the righteous, but the broken and burdened – to come to Him. He offers rest for the weary, forgiveness for the guilty, and life for the dying.

This is the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Not just a man of history, but the risen Lord. The Carpenter who changed the world – and is still changing it today.

C) Reflection Questions

For Years 7–8

1. What made Jesus' life different from other historical leaders or prophets?
2. How did Jesus' actions and teachings challenge the religious leaders of His time?
3. What evidence do the Gospels and other sources give for Jesus' resurrection?

For Years 9–10

1. How would you evaluate the Gospels as historical sources? What strengths and limitations do they have?
2. Why was Jesus' claim to be the Son of God so controversial, both then and now?
3. How does the resurrection of Jesus shape Christian identity and worldview today?

D) Activity Options

Choose ONE of the following activities to complete:

Option 1 – Illustrated Timeline Scroll

Create a long scroll (or poster) showing 10–12 major events from Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Instructions:

- Use brown paper, poster board, or several pages taped together.
- Include events such as: Jesus' birth, baptism, first miracle, parables, healing miracles, Last Supper, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.
- Add dates (approximate), symbols, Scripture references, and colourful illustrations.
- Decorate with a border or aged-paper effect to give it a historical look.

Ideas to include:

- Birth in Bethlehem
- Baptism
- Temptation
- Sermon on the Mount
- Feeding 5,000
- Transfiguration
- Triumphal Entry
- Last Supper
- Crucifixion
- Resurrection

Option 2 – Historical Sources Scrapbook

Design a mini-booklet, poster, or digital presentation showcasing at least three sources that provide historical information about Jesus (outside the Gospels).

Instructions:

- Research and include sources like Tacitus, Josephus, and the "Pilate Stone".
- For each source, include:
    - A quote or summary
    - A description of its significance
    - A simple evaluation of how it supports the historical reality of Jesus.
- Use images, hand-drawn sketches, or printouts to enhance your presentation.

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Jesus' life is not just a historical fact – it is the most profoundly important event of all time. Jesus' life shows us what perfect obedience and love look like. His death shows the seriousness of sin and the depth of God's mercy. His resurrection shows God's power over death.

Christians are called to respond with **honour** – living lives that reflect the truth of Jesus. We are called to **piety** – walking closely with God. And we are called to **reverence** – recognising Jesus not just as a teacher, but as the risen Lord.

Romans 10:9 says:

"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

F) Narration Activity

If your parent or tutor is available, ask them to listen as you retell the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in your own words.

If they are not available right now, tell your story to a family member or friend during lunch or dinner today.

Lesson 1.2: What It Means to Be Born Again

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

- **AC9HG8K01** – The role of religion and spirituality in the development of personal identity.
- **AC9HH8K01** – How historians investigate history, including sources and methods.
- **AC9HC9K01** – The influences that shape identities and sense of belonging.
- **AC9HH9S03 / AC9HH10S03** – Develop and present evidence-based arguments using relevant historical sources.

A) Introduction

What does it really mean to be a Christian? Is it simply following rules, going to church, or being kind to others? In this lesson, you'll explore the powerful and personal answer that Jesus gave: **you must be born again**.

This isn't just a figure of speech. It's a life-changing reality – one that brings a person into a new identity, a new family, and a new destiny. In a world that often tells us to find ourselves by looking inward, Jesus calls us to look upward – to be transformed by God's Spirit.

As you read this lesson, remember the underlying theme of our course: **Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God**. Jesus' invitation to be born again is an invitation to honour God by surrendering our lives, to walk in piety through a new relationship with Him, and to live in reverence for His holiness and grace.

B) Informational Story – "Born Again: The Night that Changed a Teacher"

In the ancient city of Jerusalem, under the cover of night, a Pharisee named Nicodemus made his way through the winding streets toward a modest home. He was a respected teacher, a man of the Law, and a member of the Sanhedrin – the ruling council of the Jews. Yet something about Jesus of Nazareth stirred his heart and unsettled his certainties. Unlike the other teachers, Jesus spoke with authority, performed undeniable miracles, and proclaimed truths that pierced the soul.

Nicodemus had waited until dark to avoid being seen. The religious leaders were already suspicious of Jesus. Some called Him a prophet; others called Him a blasphemer. But Nicodemus had to know the truth for himself.

He found Jesus and greeted Him with a mix of respect and curiosity: "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him."

Jesus looked at him and responded not with thanks, but with a surprising statement: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus blinked, confused. Born again? What did that even mean?

"How can a man be born when he is old?" he asked. "Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus explained, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

It was a new idea for Nicodemus. He had spent his life studying Scripture, keeping the Law, observing holy days, fasting, and praying. Yet here was Jesus telling him that none of that was enough. Entering God’s kingdom required a new birth – one not of the body, but of the spirit.

Jesus continued, speaking of the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit. “The wind blows where it wishes,” He said. “You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus was overwhelmed. This wasn’t just another teaching – it was a call to transformation. It meant surrendering his efforts, his status, his pride, and beginning anew. Jesus then uttered words that would become the most famous verse in the Bible: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

That conversation marked a turning point. Though Nicodemus returned quietly to his duties, something had changed. Later, he would defend Jesus before the council. And after Jesus’ crucifixion, Nicodemus would boldly bring spices to help prepare His body for burial – no longer a secret follower, but a disciple who had been born again.

But what does it mean to be born again today?

In simple terms, to be born again means to receive new spiritual life from God. It’s not about being religious or doing good deeds. It’s about acknowledging our sin, believing in Jesus, and receiving the Holy Spirit. It’s a miracle of grace – a moment when God makes us new from the inside out.

People who are born again often describe it as a moment of awakening. Suddenly, the Bible becomes alive. Prayer becomes real. Sin becomes bitter, and Jesus becomes precious. They don’t just believe in God – they know Him personally.

Being born again doesn’t mean perfection. Christians still struggle, stumble, and grow. But their direction has changed. Their hearts beat with new desires. Their lives reflect the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

This new birth is available to everyone – young or old, rich or poor, religious or rebellious. No one is too far gone. As Jesus said, “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

This is the heart of the Gospel. Not that we make ourselves good enough for God, but that He gives us a new heart. Through faith in Christ, we are made new. We are born again.

And like Nicodemus, every person must decide: Will I cling to what I know, or will I come to Jesus and be made new?

The phrase “born again” may sound strange to modern ears, yet it remains one of the most profound and hopeful truths in Christianity. Jesus wasn’t talking about physical rebirth, but about a deep spiritual transformation that touches every part of a person’s life.

In the centuries since Nicodemus met with Jesus, the concept of being born again has echoed through the lives of millions. It has taken hold of criminals and kings, scholars and shepherds. A hardened slave trader named John Newton was born again and later wrote the hymn “Amazing Grace.” A young man named Augustine, trapped in a life of sin and despair, was born again and became one of the greatest Christian thinkers in history. In every generation, people from every nation and background have encountered...

The Apostle Paul describes this transformation in his letters. To the Corinthians, he wrote, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come.” To the Romans, he said, “We were buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that... we too may live a new life.” This isn’t symbolic language; Paul meant it literally. Being born again changes a person’s desires, identity, and destiny.

But how does it happen? The process often begins with conviction – a sense that something is missing, that life as we know it is not enough. It may come through a sermon, a conversation, a crisis, or a quiet moment of reflection. The Holy Spirit begins to work in the heart, opening our eyes to the truth: that we are sinners in need of grace, and that Jesus is the Saviour we need.

Repentance follows – turning away from sin and self-reliance and turning toward God. Then comes faith – a wholehearted trust in Jesus’ death and resurrection as the only means of salvation. At that moment, the miracle occurs: the old heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh, and the person is born again.

This experience is personal, but never private. People who are born again become part of a new family – the family of God. They are adopted as sons and daughters of the Most High. They receive the Holy Spirit, who teaches them, convicts them, comforts them, and empowers them to live for God.

Jesus said, “You must be born again.” It wasn’t a suggestion. It was a requirement. He wasn’t condemning Nicodemus; He was offering him life. Eternal life doesn’t begin when we die – it begins the moment we are born again.

In today’s world, people search for meaning through achievement, relationships, pleasure, or possessions. Yet none of these satisfy the deep hunger of the soul. Being born again isn’t about escaping the world, but about being renewed in it – living with a new purpose, a new heart, and a new relationship with God.

There’s also a future dimension. Jesus promised that those who are born again will enter the kingdom of God. They are not only forgiven – they are destined for glory. The new birth is the beginning of a journey that leads to eternal life in the presence of God.

So what about you? Have you been born again? Have you recognised your need, repented of your sin, and placed your trust in Christ? If not, the invitation is open. God desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

And if you have been born again, rejoice! You have passed from death to life. You are a child of God. Your past is forgiven, your present is secure, and your future is bright. Walk in that truth, share it with others, and never forget the night when Nicodemus heard those words that changed everything: “You must be born again.”

Perhaps the most beautiful thing about the new birth is that it can happen anywhere – on a mountainside, in a prison cell, in a church pew, or in the quiet of a bedroom. The God who made the universe bends down to breathe new life into human hearts.

There are many who say, “But I’ve made too many mistakes. God would never want me.” But Jesus came precisely for the broken. “It is not the healthy who need a doctor,” He said, “but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

The new birth is not a reward for good people. It’s a miracle for those humble enough to say, “I need a Saviour.” And the promise is as true today as it was two thousand years ago: “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Many churches today help people understand the meaning of the new birth through baptism. While baptism does not cause the new birth, it symbolises it powerfully. Going under the water represents dying to the old

self, and rising again symbolises being raised to new life in Christ. It is a public declaration of what God has already done inside a person's heart.

Discipleship begins the moment someone is born again. This includes growing in prayer, reading the Bible, meeting with other believers, and learning to obey Jesus' commands. Just like a newborn baby needs to grow and be nurtured, so a newly born-again Christian needs spiritual care and guidance. The Christian life is a journey – full of challenges, but also full of joy.

Being born again also brings a new sense of identity. We are no longer defined by our past mistakes, our achievements, or the opinions of others. We are defined by our relationship with God. The Bible calls us "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession." This new identity gives us confidence to live boldly and humbly at the same time.

In the end, to be born again is to begin a relationship that lasts forever – a relationship with the living God who created you, loves you, forgives you, and transforms you. It is the greatest gift anyone could ever receive.

C) Reflection Questions

For Years 7–8

1. Who was Nicodemus, and why did he come to speak with Jesus at night?
2. What does Jesus mean when He says a person must be "born again"?
3. How does being born again change someone's identity and relationship with God?

For Years 9–10

1. How is the idea of being "born again" different from simply following religious traditions?
2. What role does the Holy Spirit play in the new birth, according to Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus?
3. In what ways does the concept of being born again challenge modern views of identity and self-fulfilment?

D) Activity Options

Choose ONE of the following activities to complete:

Option 1 – Testimony Timeline

Create a visual timeline of a fictional or real person's journey toward being born again (e.g. Nicodemus, Augustine, John Newton, or a character you create). Include at least five stages of spiritual change.

Instructions:

- Use headings like: "Before," "Conviction," "Encounter with Christ," "New Birth," "Walking with God."
- Include quotes, Bible verses, illustrations, or symbols.
- Present as a poster, comic strip, or digital slideshow.

Option 2 – Gospel Tract Design

Design a one-page gospel message explaining what it means to be born again, suitable to share with someone who has never heard it.

Instructions:

- Include: (1) Our need for a Saviour, (2) Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, (3) How to respond in faith.
- Use clear language, Scripture references (e.g. John 3:3, 3:16, Romans 10:9), and a visual or symbolic image.
- Make it visually appealing and respectful in tone.

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Jesus' message to Nicodemus reminds us that the path to God is not through effort or status – but through spiritual rebirth. This is not something we can achieve, but something we must receive through faith.

Being born again brings us into a relationship with God, transforms our character, and sets our lives on a new path. To respond with **honour** means to live in a way that reflects this gift with gratitude. To walk in **piety** is to stay close to God, daily seeking His Word and Spirit. To live with **reverence** is to treat the new life we've been given as holy and sacred.

As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says:

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."

F) Narration Activity

If your parent or tutor is available, ask them to listen while you retell the story of Nicodemus and explain what it means to be born again.

If they're not available right now, tell it to a sibling, friend, or family member at lunch or dinner today.

Lesson 1.3: Pentecost & the Coming of the Holy Spirit

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

- **AC9HH7K02** – The historical significance of people, ideas and events.
- **AC9HH8K01** – How historians investigate history, including sources and methods.
- **AC9HG10K01** – The influence of religion and belief systems on people's identity and values.
- **AC9HH9S03 / AC9HH10S03** – Develop and present evidence-based arguments using relevant historical sources.

A) Introduction

What happened after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven? Did His followers scatter in fear, or was there more?

This lesson explores the incredible day of **Pentecost**, when God sent the Holy Spirit just as Jesus had promised. That day changed the course of history. The Church was born – not as a building or institution, but as a movement of Spirit-filled people, sent to spread the good news of Jesus to every nation.

As you read this story, remember the lesson theme: **Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God**. The Spirit is holy, and to receive Him is a gift beyond measure. Respond with awe, obedience, and a heart that says, "Here I am, Lord – fill me."

B) Informational Story – "Fire from Heaven: The Day the Church Was Born"

The city of Jerusalem buzzed with noise and colour. It was the Feast of Weeks – Pentecost – a time when Jewish pilgrims from every corner of the Roman Empire gathered to celebrate the harvest and remember the Law given to Moses at Mount Sinai. The streets were crowded with people speaking a dozen different languages, wearing the clothes of many nations, and bringing offerings to the temple.

But hidden away in an upper room, a much smaller group waited in silence.

These were the followers of Jesus – the same Jesus who had been crucified just weeks earlier and who had miraculously risen from the dead. For forty days after His resurrection, Jesus had appeared to them, teaching about the kingdom of God and promising that something even greater was coming: the Holy Spirit.

"Do not leave Jerusalem," He had told them, "but wait for the gift My Father promised. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit."

And so they waited.

There were about 120 of them – men and women, young and old, fishermen, former tax collectors, and faithful friends. They prayed together daily. They shared meals. They remembered Jesus' words. But they didn't fully understand what was coming.

Then it happened.

Suddenly, on the morning of Pentecost, the sound of a mighty rushing wind filled the house where they were sitting. It wasn't a breeze or a gust – it was like a roar from heaven. Flames of fire appeared and settled above each person's head, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Immediately, they began speaking in other tongues – languages they had never learned. They spilled out into the streets, declaring the wonders of God in Greek, Aramaic, Egyptian, Latin, Parthian, and more. Pilgrims were amazed. "How is it that we each hear them in our own native language?" they asked.

Some were astonished. Others mocked. "They've had too much wine," someone scoffed.

Then Peter, the same disciple who had denied Jesus three times, stood up. But he was no longer timid or afraid. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter raised his voice and addressed the crowd.

"These men are not drunk," he said. "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people…'"

Peter boldly declared that Jesus was the Messiah, that He had been crucified by wicked men, but raised to life by God. "We are witnesses of these things," he said, "and now He has poured out what you now see and hear."

The crowd was cut to the heart. "What shall we do?" they cried.

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

That day, about three thousand people believed and were baptised. The Church was born.

From that moment on, the followers of Jesus were never the same. They met daily in homes and courtyards, devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to prayer, shared everything they had, and saw miracles and signs. The Holy Spirit gave them boldness, wisdom, unity, and power.

To understand the full weight of Pentecost, we must go back further in history – to Mount Sinai, centuries before. It was on that mountain that God gave the Law to Moses, fifty days after the Exodus from Egypt. Pentecost became a day of remembering that moment, celebrating the covenant between God and His people.

But now, on this Pentecost, something even greater was happening. Instead of the Law written on stone tablets, God was writing His law, His ways on human hearts through the Holy Spirit. The old covenant had been about obedience from the outside; the new covenant would bring transformation from within.

Peter's sermon, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wasn't rehearsed or crafted by human wisdom. It flowed from a man transformed – bold, clear, passionate. The same Peter who had once trembled before a servant girl was now proclaiming the truth of Jesus before thousands.

His words pierced the hearts of the crowd. Many of those listening had been in Jerusalem during the crucifixion. Some may have shouted, "Crucify Him!" Others had watched in silence. Now they were confronted with the truth that Jesus was not a fraud, but the risen Son of God.

They asked, "What must we do?" It was the right question. Peter's answer revealed the doorway to salvation: repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The number – three thousand – was not just impressive; it was symbolic. When Moses came down from Sinai and found the Israelites worshipping the golden calf, three thousand men died by the sword. But on this new Pentecost, three thousand were brought to life. Grace replaced judgment. The Spirit replaced stone.

The early Church was marked by devotion, community and courage. They shared their possessions freely so no one was in need. They broke bread and ate together daily. They listened to the apostles' teachings. They prayed with power. The presence of the Spirit was not a theory – it was a reality they lived every day.

The Holy Spirit gave gifts – spiritual abilities used to serve and build up the Church. Some were given the ability to teach or lead. Others could heal the sick, speak in other tongues, interpret languages, or discern spirits. But above all, the Spirit produced fruit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

As persecution increased, the Spirit continued to lead. When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned to death, he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. When Philip was sent to the Ethiopian official, the Spirit directed him precisely. When Paul travelled on missionary journeys, the Spirit guided his every step – even closing doors to certain regions.

The Spirit wasn't only for apostles or special leaders. He came upon men and women, slaves and free, Jews and Gentiles. Pentecost fulfilled the prophecy from Joel: "I will pour out My Spirit on all people."

Among those watching in the streets of Jerusalem on Pentecost were Jews who had travelled from distant regions – places like Mesopotamia, Libya, Cappadocia, and Crete. Many had grown up far from Jerusalem, speaking different languages and living among different cultures. Yet on that day, they all heard the message of Jesus in their own language. It was a reversal of the Tower of Babel – where language divided people – now God used language to unite them in the truth of the Gospel.

This miracle wasn't just about understanding – it was a sign that the Gospel was for all nations. No longer confined to a single land or culture, the message of salvation was now moving outward. Pentecost was the first wave of a spiritual awakening that would cross mountains, oceans, empires, and centuries.

As the apostles began their work, they faced many challenges. They were often arrested, beaten, and threatened. But filled with the Holy Spirit, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Jesus' name. Their boldness was contagious. Even when scattered by persecution, they boldly preached wherever they went.

The Spirit continued to work in unexpected ways. Gentiles – non-Jews – began to believe. In the town of Caesarea, a Roman centurion named Cornelius received a vision from God. At the same time, Peter was led by the Spirit to visit him. When Peter preached in Cornelius' house, the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles just as He had at Pentecost. Peter exclaimed, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptised?" It was a turning point – the Spirit was clearly for all who believed, not just Jews.

Years later, Paul would write, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The Spirit had broken down every dividing wall.

Churches began to form in Antioch, Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, and Rome. Some met in synagogues, others in homes. Leaders were appointed – elders, pastors, teachers. But it was the Holy Spirit who led the Church. In Acts 13, the Spirit called Paul and Barnabas to missionary work. The Church fasted, prayed, laid hands on them, and sent them out.

This Spirit-led mission continues today. Missionaries translate the Bible into new languages. Pastors preach in remote villages and bustling cities. Families open their homes for worship. Young people speak boldly in schools. In all of this, it is the Holy Spirit who empowers, convicts, and gives wisdom.

For individual believers, the Holy Spirit brings intimacy with God. Paul wrote, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." He also called the Spirit a "deposit guaranteeing our inheritance." This means that God's Spirit living in us is proof that we belong to Him, and a promise that one day we will be with Him forever.

When you feel weak, the Spirit strengthens you. When you are unsure, He guides you. When you sin, He convicts you – not to condemn, but to bring you back to grace. When you feel alone, He reminds you that you are never abandoned.

In worship, the Spirit stirs our hearts. In suffering, He gives peace that surpasses understanding. In temptation, He gives us power to resist. In every season of life, the Spirit is our constant companion and helper.

So how can you walk with the Holy Spirit today? The Bible says, "Keep in step with the Spirit." That means listening for His voice, obeying His leading, and staying close to God's Word. It means allowing Him to shape your thoughts, your words, and your choices.

Pentecost was not just about a past event. It is a present reality. The fire that fell in Jerusalem still burns in the hearts of believers around the world. The wind that rushed through the upper room still moves across the nations. The Spirit that empowered Peter can still empower you.

You are part of the same Church – the same movement – that began that day. Whether you're young or old, whether you live in the city or the countryside, the Spirit of God lives in you if you belong to Christ. All you need to do to make this a reality is to humbly realise your need for God to live in you and change you, and ask Him to do so, to become Lord and Master of your life; and then ask Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit.

If you have sincerely asked Jesus come into your life and for the Holy Spirit to fill you; then you can be assured that He has done what you have asked. This is just the beginning of a life-long relationship journey with God. He will guide you, grow you, use you – and one day, raise you.

This is the power of Pentecost. This is the promise of the Spirit.

C) Reflection Questions

For Years 7–8

1. What signs accompanied the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost?
2. How did the Holy Spirit transform Peter and the other disciples?
3. Why was it important that people from many nations heard the Gospel in their own language?

For Years 9–10

1. How does Pentecost reflect a fulfilment of both Old Testament prophecy and Jesus' New Covenant promises?
2. Why is the reversal of the Tower of Babel significant in the context of Pentecost?
3. What roles does the Holy Spirit continue to play in the life of believers and the Church today?

D) Activity Options

Choose ONE of the following activities to complete:

Option 1 – Illustrated Pentecost Map & Journal

Create a combination of artwork and journaling to reflect the international impact of Pentecost.

Instructions:

- Draw or print a map of the Roman Empire.
- Mark regions listed in Acts 2 (e.g. Parthia, Media, Egypt, Libya, Rome).
- Around the map, illustrate flames or doves showing the spread of the Spirit.
- In a journal section (or back of your poster), write a personal reflection:
  "If I had been in Jerusalem on Pentecost, how would I have responded?"

Option 2 – Role-Play Skit: The Crowd Responds

Write and perform a short skit (or record an audio play) from the perspective of three people in the crowd at Pentecost.

Include:

- Someone amazed by the miracle
- Someone sceptical or mocking
- Someone deeply convicted and ready to follow Jesus

End your skit with a creative representation of how each person's life changes in the weeks that follow.

Option 3 – The Spirit Then and Now Timeline

Create a dual-column timeline showing:

- In Column 1: Key events from Acts 1–4 (Jesus' promise, Pentecost, Peter's sermon, miracles, persecution).
- In Column 2: Modern-day examples of how the Spirit is still at work (e.g. missions, revival, personal transformation, acts of courage and unity).

Use Scripture, world events, or your own observations to draw connections between the early Church and today.

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

The coming of the Holy Spirit shows that God does not remain distant. He draws near. He comes to live in His people and empower them to live holy and courageous lives.

To receive the Spirit is not just a spiritual experience – it is a call to **honour God** with your whole life, to walk in **devotion** through prayer, worship, and obedience, and to live with deep **reverence** for God's presence within you.

As 2 Timothy 1:7 says:

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

The Spirit helps us love when it's hard, speak when it's scary, and stand firm when it's costly. That is honour. That is reverence. That is Pentecost.

The same power that raised Jesus now empowers you to live for God.

F) Narration Activity

If your parent or tutor is available, ask them to listen while you retell the story of Pentecost in your own words. Try to include:

- What the believers were doing before the Spirit came
- What signs happened when the Spirit arrived
- How Peter responded to the mocking
- What the crowd did and how the Church began

If they aren't available right now, tell the story later today at the dinner table or during devotions.

TOPIC 2	ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson 2.1: Early Church Life

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

History – Years 7–10

- **AC9HH7K02** – The historical significance of people, ideas and events.
- **AC9HH8K03** – The role of groups and individuals and their perspectives.
- **AC9HH9S03 / AC9HH10S03** – Develop and present evidence-based arguments using relevant historical sources.

Civics & Citizenship – Years 7–10

- **AC9HC7K04** – How religious, cultural and historical factors influence identity.
- **AC9HC8K01** – The roles of individuals and groups in shaping society and community values.

A) Introduction

Welcome to today's lesson on **Early Church Life**. After Pentecost, the followers of Jesus didn't form a government or a political party – they formed a community. That community, filled with the Holy Spirit, would change history forever.

This lesson will help you understand what life was like for the earliest Christians. You'll see how they lived with **honour, devotion, and reverence for God**, and how that shaped the way they treated one another. Their courage and love for truth still echo across the world today.

B) Informational Story – "The Church Begins: Honouring God, Loving People"

In the weeks following Pentecost, the city of Jerusalem was filled with rumours, wonder, and whispers. Something new was happening – something powerful. The streets that had once echoed with the cries "Crucify Him!" now echoed with preaching about a risen Messiah. The Temple courts were alive with crowds listening to fishermen speak boldly about repentance, grace, and the Holy Spirit.

These were not wealthy men, or trained scribes. These were ordinary people who had walked with Jesus – and something in their eyes, their voices, and their lives told the world they had been changed forever.

Among them was a man named Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus, who was one of the first to give generously to help the poor among the believers. There was also a woman named Mary whose home became a meeting place for the early church. Each day, more people joined their number – drawn not by force, but by joy, love, and truth.

This was the birth of the early Church.

They met daily – not in great buildings or palaces, but in homes, courtyards, and temple steps. They shared meals, prayed together, listened to the teaching of the apostles, and praised God. Many sold their possessions to help others in need. They called each other "brothers" and "sisters," not because of blood, but because of faith.

The believers lived with honour and reverence for God. They kept the memory of Jesus alive – not as a martyr, but as the risen Lord. His words were their rule. His love was their bond. And His Spirit was their strength.

But the joy was not without cost. Tensions rose as the number of believers increased. The religious leaders grew worried. They saw the crowds, heard the testimonies, and feared they were losing control. Some disciples were arrested and warned not to preach again in Jesus' name.

But Peter replied, "We must obey God rather than men."

The Church did not fight with swords or protest with violence. They kept preaching. They kept praying. They kept serving.

One day, a man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold some land and brought part of the money to the apostles – claiming it was the full amount. But Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, knew they were lying. "You have not lied to men but to God," he said. Both Ananias and Sapphira died that day, and a great fear fell upon the Church.

Yet even this sobering moment served as a reminder: this was not a game. This was not a club. This was a holy movement, guided by the Spirit of the living God. And with reverence, the Church grew.

Among the earliest believers was a group of widows who relied on the church for food. As their numbers grew, some were overlooked. The apostles, wanting to keep their focus on preaching and prayer, appointed seven men to serve as deacons. One of these was Stephen, a man full of faith and power.

Stephen performed signs and wonders, but his preaching stirred up opposition. He was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. There, he spoke boldly of God's faithfulness and Israel's history. His face shone like an angel, and when the crowd rushed to stone him, he cried, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

Stephen became the first Christian martyr – and his death scattered the Church.

But scattering did not stop the message. It spread it.

Believers fled Jerusalem and went to Judea, Samaria, and beyond. Wherever they went, they preached the Gospel. Philip went to Samaria and saw many believe. Peter healed the sick in Lydda and Joppa. The Church began to take root not just in one city, but across the world.

One of the most surprising converts was a man named Saul, a zealous Pharisee who once hunted Christians. On the road to Damascus, Saul was struck blind by a light from heaven. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" a voice said. It was Jesus.

Saul's life was changed forever. He became Paul – the great apostle to the Gentiles.

In Antioch, the disciples were first called "Christians." There, the Church was marked by generosity. When a prophet warned of a coming famine, the believers gathered resources to send to those in Judea. They did not hoard. They gave.

They did not isolate. They encouraged.

They did not live in fear. They lived in honour, devotion, and reverence for God.

Among the believers was a young couple named Eli and Damaris. They had heard Peter speak at the Temple after Pentecost and were moved to tears. Though they had always attended synagogue and followed the traditions of their fathers, something in Peter's words pierced their hearts. "This Jesus, whom you crucified," Peter had said, "God has made both Lord and Messiah." Eli and Damaris were among the three thousand who were baptised that day.

They had a small home on the southern side of Jerusalem. It wasn't grand, but it had a flat rooftop that caught the evening breeze. Soon, it became one of many house-churches where believers gathered at dawn or sunset to break bread, share stories of Jesus, and sing psalms. Damaris would often prepare lentil stew for the widows, while Eli helped copy scrolls of the Psalms and portions of Jesus' teachings as remembered by the apostles.

One night, while gathered with ten others, they listened to an elderly woman speak. Her name was Miriam, and she had followed Jesus from Galilee. Her voice trembled as she recalled, "He touched a man with leprosy... and did not draw back." The group sat in silence. No one interrupted. No one doubted. The presence of the Holy Spirit was there, gentle and unmistakable.

These moments of reverent fellowship weren't loud or showy. They were quiet, honouring, and full of awe.

But fear was always close.

Roman soldiers walked the streets. Religious leaders watched from temple courtyards. Whispers of arrests passed through the community like smoke. When James the brother of John was killed by the sword, the church mourned deeply. Yet they didn't give up. Instead, they prayed harder. They fasted. They sang the Psalms of David with fresh understanding:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?"

Young disciples began memorising entire sermons and retelling them in villages too poor for scrolls. A girl named Keziah recited the Beatitudes from memory at a gathering in Bethany. A blind man in Jericho shared how Peter had touched his eyes in the name of Jesus – and he could see again.

In Caesarea, a Roman centurion named Cornelius received a vision of an angel. "Send for a man named Peter," he was told. Meanwhile, Peter himself had a vision of clean and unclean animals and heard God say, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." When the two men met, a new chapter began – the Gospel would go to the Gentiles.

Peter preached in Cornelius' house. The Holy Spirit came upon everyone there, just as at Pentecost. It stunned the Jewish believers. But Peter declared, "God does not show favouritism." From that moment, the Church knew it was not just for Jerusalem, but for the world.

As news spread, more Gentiles joined the Church. But so did the questions: Should they keep the Law of Moses? Must they be circumcised? Must they follow Jewish customs?

These questions would one day be answered at the Council of Jerusalem. But in the meantime, the Church continued to grow – carried forward by faith, bound together by love, and lit by the flame of honour, devotion, and reverence for God.

At the heart of it all was worship.

They sang with hearts full of gratitude. They prayed with boldness and tears. They ate bread and drank wine, remembering Jesus' words: "Do this in remembrance of Me." And through it all, they believed – not in power, but in peace; not in gold, but in grace; not in empire, but in eternity.

When Eli and Damaris grew old, their rooftop gatherings were still filled with young voices. Some who had been orphans were now teachers. Some who had been outcasts were now deacons. Their children sang the same songs and broke the same bread. They still told the stories of Jesus – not because they had to, but because they loved to.

And as the world around them changed, the Church remained – a light in dark places, a voice of truth in the silence, a living temple not made with hands but built by faith.

In the outer villages of Galilee and beyond, the story of the Church unfolded in quieter, humbler ways. There was Lydia, a merchant woman who opened her home in Philippi to Paul and Silas, not knowing that one day her living room would be remembered as the site of the first European house church. Her devotion was practical: she washed feet, cooked meals, and hosted the apostles with honour.

In a dusty town in Syria, a young shepherd boy named Malach saw his father imprisoned for refusing to sacrifice to Roman gods. Yet instead of hiding in fear, Malach began gathering the other children in the market square. He repeated the parables of Jesus and told how Peter had walked on water. They listened with wide eyes, their hearts stirred by faith that was stronger than fear.

One night, Malach saw his father return home bruised but smiling. "They can take away our sheep," his father said, "but not our Saviour." That night, by candlelight, they sang together Psalm 91, their voices trembling with honour for the God who protected their souls even if their bodies suffered.

This was the kind of honour the early Church lived by. Not pride. Not revenge. But reverence – shown in silence, sacrifice, obedience, and joy.

In Rome, some believers were forced into the catacombs – underground tunnels – where they worshipped quietly by torchlight. The walls were carved with fish symbols, crosses, and prayers in Latin and Greek. They prayed for boldness, not escape. They remembered that Jesus had said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness."

And so they sang.

They sang when they had bread. They sang when they had nothing. They sang when a brother was taken. They sang when an elder was beaten. They sang because they knew this life was not the end – and because their worship was a form of warfare.

They were the Church – honouring Christ, devoted to each other, and reverent before the presence of the Holy Spirit.

And because they lived this way, the Gospel did not die.
It spread.
It thrived.
It endures still – in you.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. What did early Christians do daily as part of their life together?
2. Why were the early believers respected by some and feared by others?
3. What does it mean to live with reverence for God?

Years 9–10

1. How did the early Church model a different kind of society from the Roman world?
2. What role did honour and devotion to God play in how they treated each other?
3. In what ways did persecution actually help the Church grow?

D) Activity Options

Choose ONE of the following practical, creative or dramatic activities to complete:

Option 1: House Church Diorama or Drawing

Create a small model or drawing of an early Christian house church gathering.
Include:

- Simple food (bread, oil, lentils)
- Candles or lamps
- Scrolls or Scripture portions
- Men, women, and children praying or singing

Label the elements and include a short paragraph describing how early Christians showed honour, devotion and reverence in this setting.

Option 2: First-Person Testimony (Writing or Acting)

Write a **first-person letter, monologue or drama script** from the point of view of:

- A young believer fleeing persecution
- A widow cared for by the Church
- A Roman who attends a Christian meeting in secret

In your piece, describe:

- What you've seen and heard
- Why you follow Jesus despite danger
- How the Church's way of living has changed your view of life

---

Option 3: Acts of the Apostles Timeline Scroll

Make a long timeline scroll (paper roll or taped pages) to visually retell the early chapters of Acts (Ch. 2–11).
Include major events such as:

- Pentecost
- Sharing of possessions
- Ananias & Sapphira
- Stephen's martyrdom
- Saul's conversion
- Cornelius' conversion

Add short reflections beneath each moment about what it teaches you about honouring God.

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

The early Church didn't grow through force or wealth – it grew through **honour, devotion, and reverence for God**. They honoured Christ by obeying His commands. They were devoted to one another in love. They treated the presence of God with reverence – never taking their calling lightly.

They remind us that following Jesus is not about being comfortable. It's about being committed. In a world that often celebrates pride and self, the early Christians lived with humility, courage, and worship. Their faith shaped their culture. So can yours.

📖 **Bible Verse for Reflection**:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."
– Acts 2:42

F) Narration Prompt

If someone asked you what life was like for the early Church, could you tell them the story?
Take a moment now to:

- Close your eyes and picture it.
- Retell the story in your own words.
- Focus on how the Church lived, how they treated each other, and how they honoured God.

You can share your narration aloud with a parent/tutor or record it in your notebook.

Lesson 2.2: Establishing the Church with Letters & Visits

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

History – Years 7–10

- **AC9HH7K02** – The historical significance of people, ideas, and events.
- **AC9HH8K04** – The relationship between beliefs and values and significant developments in the ancient to early modern world.
- **AC9HH9S03 / AC9HH10S03** – Develop and present evidence-based arguments using historical sources.

Civics & Citizenship – Years 7–10

- **AC9HC7K04** – How religious and cultural factors influence identity and civic responsibility.
- **AC9HC9K02** – The role of civic institutions and individuals in a democratic society.

A) Introduction

In the early days of the Church, believers faced many questions: What did it mean to follow Jesus in a world full of idols, empire, and conflict? How should they live? Who would teach them? The apostles could not be everywhere at once – so God raised up Paul, a man who would visit, write, guide, and suffer for the Church he once persecuted.

In this lesson, you'll walk with Paul through his journeys and letters, discovering how he helped build the Church across the world. You'll also explore how his example continues to shape us today in our understanding of **honour, devotion, and reverence for God**.

B) Informational Story – Informational Story: Establishing the Church – Paul's Letters and Visits

The Church was growing, but it was scattered. Believers had fled from Jerusalem, carrying the Gospel to distant cities – Antioch, Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, and Rome. Some travelled by foot, others by sea. They were not missionaries by profession; they were ordinary men and women who could not keep quiet about what they had seen and heard.

But a growing Church needed leadership, encouragement, and correction. And so God raised up a man who would write more letters than any other person in the New Testament – a man named Paul.

Paul, once Saul of Tarsus, had been the Church's enemy. He had dragged believers from their homes and approved the death of Stephen. But Jesus had met him on the road to Damascus, and from that moment, Paul's life was turned upside down. He would spend the rest of his days preaching Christ, planting churches, and writing letters to guide them.

His letters were not dull essays. They were alive – filled with passion, deep theology, practical advice, personal greetings, and bold truth. They reminded the churches of who they were in Christ and how they were to live in the world.

One of Paul's first letters was written to the believers in Thessalonica, a city where he had preached briefly before being chased out by angry mobs. Though he could not return, his heart remained with them. He wrote, "We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers."

Paul's letters taught the Church how to stand firm in trials, how to deal with sin, how to use spiritual gifts, and how to live in holiness. He wrote about marriage, work, generosity, leadership, worship, and the return of Christ. His letters were like ropes tying scattered communities together.

And he didn't just write. He visited – when he could. He travelled across land and sea, walking mile after mile, preaching in synagogues, talking in marketplaces, reasoning in homes. In some towns he stayed only a few days. In others, like Ephesus and Corinth, he stayed for over a year.

Paul's companions included Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus, and Luke. They helped strengthen the churches and carry letters from one place to another. Sometimes they delivered money collected for the poor in Jerusalem. Other times, they stayed behind to teach and encourage.

As the Church expanded, so did its struggles. In Galatia, false teachers tried to mix the Gospel with Jewish law. In Corinth, believers were dividing over personalities and tolerating sin. In Colossae, strange philosophies threatened to twist the truth. Paul answered each situation with truth and grace.

His letter to the Romans was the most detailed, explaining how all have sinned, how salvation is by faith, and how nothing can separate us from the love of God. To the Philippians, he wrote with joy even while imprisoned. "Rejoice in the Lord always," he said. "I will say it again: Rejoice!"

Paul's devotion to the Church was not a job. It was a calling. He endured beatings, shipwrecks, imprisonments, hunger, sleepless nights – and still he wrote, prayed, and pressed on.

And in every letter, in every visit, Paul showed honour – to God, to the saints, and to the truth of the Gospel.

One of Paul's most difficult journeys was to Corinth. It was a wealthy trade city, filled with temples, theatre, and immorality. When Paul arrived, he found a city obsessed with status, knowledge, and pleasure. But among the noise, he saw a hunger for truth.

Paul began by working as a tentmaker. He spent his days stitching canvas beside Aquila and Priscilla, a married couple who had fled Rome due to persecution. In the evenings, they opened their home for prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and discussion. Slowly, hearts began to soften.

But the Corinthian church had growing pains. Some believers claimed to follow Paul, others Apollos, others Peter. There were arguments over spiritual gifts, communion, and marriage. Paul wrote letters and sent trusted friends like Timothy and Titus to help. He reminded them that the Church was one body with many parts. "Love is patient, love is kind," he wrote. "It does not boast, it is not proud... Love never fails."

Meanwhile, in Ephesus, Paul faced both success and opposition. Many people were set free from evil spirits, and new believers burned their scrolls of sorcery. But others saw Paul as a threat to their idols and trade. A riot broke out in the theatre, shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Paul wanted to enter and speak, but his friends stopped him. He left the city quietly but with joy, knowing the Gospel had taken root.

Between his travels, Paul often returned to Jerusalem. He knew that the church there, mostly Jewish believers, faced poverty and hardship. From his Gentile churches, he gathered offerings – not as payment, but as a gift of love and unity. He carried those coins with reverence, as holy worship to God.

Not all welcomed him.

In Jerusalem, some still viewed Paul with suspicion. "He teaches Jews to abandon the Law!" they said. Paul tried to show respect by participating in temple purification rituals. But a mob accused him of defiling the holy place, and he was arrested.

Bound in chains, Paul stood before governors, kings, and finally appealed to Caesar himself.

For two years he was kept under guard in Caesarea. Then he was sent by ship to Rome. On the way, a violent storm struck. The sailors threw cargo overboard. For days, they saw no sun or stars. All hope seemed lost. But Paul, praying and fasting, encouraged them.

"Take heart," he said. "Not one of you will be lost. Only the ship will be destroyed."

They shipwrecked on Malta. Cold and wet, Paul was bitten by a viper – but suffered no harm. The locals watched and listened as he preached the Gospel. Even there, on a forgotten island, God's Word took root.

When Paul finally arrived in Rome, he was placed under house arrest. He could not travel – but he could write. And write he did.

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon – all written from prison. These letters, called the Prison Epistles, were filled with deep devotion, honour for Christ, and hope for the Church.

He urged the believers to walk worthy of their calling, to be rooted in love, to put on the armour of God. And to the slave owner Philemon, he gently asked for forgiveness and restoration of Onesimus, a runaway slave who had become a Christian under Paul's care.

Even in chains, Paul called himself "an ambassador for Christ."

As the years passed, Paul's letters became more personal. He wrote to Timothy, his "true son in the faith," encouraging him to be bold and not ashamed of the Gospel. "Preach the Word," Paul said. "Be ready in season and out of season."

Eventually, Paul sensed his time was near. He wrote to Timothy again:

"I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith…"

Paul was executed in Rome. He died without riches, applause, or comfort – but he died with honour.

His letters live on.
His faithfulness endures.
And his devotion still inspires us today.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. Why did Paul write letters to the early churches?
2. What are some topics Paul wrote about in his letters?
3. How did Paul show devotion and reverence to God?

Years 9–10

1. How did Paul balance correcting the churches with showing love?
2. In what ways did Paul's suffering make him a stronger leader?
3. Why are Paul's letters still important for Christians today?

D) Activity Options

Option 1: Letter from Prison Roleplay

Write a creative letter as if you were Paul, writing from prison to encourage a young church.

- Include a greeting, encouragement, warning, and prayer.
- Use phrases Paul often used: "Grace and peace," "Rejoice," "Walk worthy."
- Optional: Read it aloud to a parent or record an audio message.

Option 2: Paul's Travels Illustrated Map

Create an illustrated map showing Paul's missionary journeys.

- Include key cities: Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, Jerusalem, Rome.
- Mark major events (e.g. shipwreck, prison, teaching).
- Use symbols and Scripture quotes.

Option 3: Church Care Drama

In pairs or groups, act out a scene where Paul or one of his helpers visits a new church.

- Include new believers asking questions, Paul answering with Scripture and encouragement.
- Use drama to show honour, truth, and love.

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Paul's life was shaped by **honour, devotion, and reverence for God**. He honoured Christ in word and action. He was devoted to teaching the truth, no matter the cost. And he lived in reverence – knowing that his strength came from the Spirit of God, not his own wisdom.

We too are called to live this way – building up the Church, defending the truth, and loving one another with courage and humility.

Bible Verse for Reflection:

"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord." – 1 Corinthians 15:58

Lesson 2.3: The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15)

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

History – Years 7–10

- **AC9HH7K02** – The historical significance of people, ideas, and events.
- **AC9HH8K04** – The relationship between beliefs and values and developments in society.
- **AC9HH9S03 / AC9HH10S03** – Develop and present evidence-based historical arguments.

Civics & Citizenship – Years 7–10

- **AC9HC7K04** – How religious and cultural perspectives shape identities and communities.
- **AC9HC8K02** – How different groups participate and influence civic decision-making.

A) Introduction

In this lesson, we will explore one of the most important decisions in Church history – **the Council of Jerusalem**, recorded in Acts 15. The early Christians faced a serious question: Do Gentile (non-Jewish) believers have to follow Jewish laws to be saved?

Their decision would affect every believer after them – including you. In this lesson, you'll walk through the events, hear the voices of those involved, and understand how the Church made a decision rooted in **honour, devotion, and reverence for God**.

B) Informational Story – **"The Council of Jerusalem: United in Christ"**

It was the year 49 AD. The Church had grown rapidly – far beyond Jerusalem, Judea, and even Samaria. Gentiles – non-Jewish people – were now placing their faith in Jesus in cities like Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, and beyond. They were receiving the Holy Spirit, being baptised, and forming local churches. But not everyone agreed on how this should work.

Some Jewish believers, still deeply rooted in the traditions of Moses, insisted that Gentile Christians must obey the law – especially circumcision. "Unless they are circumcised," some said, "they cannot be saved." This teaching caused division, confusion, and distress among the Gentile believers.

In the city of Antioch, the issue became urgent. Paul and Barnabas, both of whom had preached among Gentiles and seen the Spirit move powerfully, strongly disagreed with those who were adding extra requirements to the Gospel. A sharp debate arose. The unity of the Church was at stake.

So the church in Antioch sent Paul, Barnabas, and others to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders. This was no small trip – it was over 400 kilometres of travel through rugged terrain. But they made the journey out of devotion to the truth and reverence for the unity of God's people.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas shared what God had done among the Gentiles. They told of conversions, healings, and lives transformed by the Spirit. Yet some believers, particularly from the Pharisee background, stood and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

The leaders gathered for a council – the first of its kind in Church history.

The room was likely tense. These were godly men, but they came with different histories, assumptions, and fears. Could the Gentiles truly belong without becoming culturally Jewish? Was faith in Christ enough?

Peter stood first. He reminded them of how God had called him to preach to the Gentile Cornelius, and how the Spirit had come upon Cornelius and his household even before they were circumcised or knew the Law. "God, who knows the heart," Peter said, "showed that He accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as He did to us... Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?"

Then Barnabas and Paul spoke again. They described the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles – not because of the Law, but because of faith.

Finally, James, the brother of Jesus and a respected leader in the Jerusalem church, addressed the council. He quoted the prophet Amos, who foretold that God would rebuild David's fallen tent so that the rest of mankind might seek the Lord – including the Gentiles.

James said, "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."

The apostles and elders, with the whole church, agreed.

They decided to write a letter.

It would be a letter not of rules, but of peace – a message sent with love to the Gentile believers who were unsure whether they truly belonged. The apostles and elders, with wisdom and honour, crafted their words carefully.

"To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia," it began. "Greetings. We have heard that some went out from us without our authorisation and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said..."

They clarified: the Gentiles were not required to be circumcised or to obey the whole Mosaic Law. Instead, the council suggested a few simple instructions – to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. These were not laws for salvation but for unity and reverence.

Paul and Barnabas were chosen to deliver the letter. With them went two respected leaders from Jerusalem – Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas – so the letter would come not just with paper, but with living witnesses. When they arrived back in Antioch and read the letter aloud, the Gentile believers rejoiced.

They had been affirmed. They belonged. Not because they looked Jewish, but because they believed in Jesus.

This moment – the Council of Jerusalem – was monumental. It preserved the Gospel of grace and protected the Church from division. It taught that salvation is not earned by rituals but received by faith. It showed that honouring God meant protecting His people from burdens He never placed on them.

But the implications went beyond doctrine. They touched the lives of real people.

There was Lydia, the purple cloth dealer in Philippi, who opened her home to Paul and his companions. She wasn't raised under the Law of Moses – but her heart had been opened by God.

There was the jailer in Philippi, who cried out, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul had answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved – you and your household.”

There was Titus, a young Gentile leader and companion of Paul. Paul refused to circumcise him, insisting that his faith alone made him a brother.

Without the Council’s decision, these lives – and millions more – might have faced barriers to belonging. Instead, the Church stood firm: Christ was enough.

Even so, the journey wasn’t over. Some still clung to the old ways. Paul would write to the Galatians with urgency, “I am astonished that you are so quickly turning to a different gospel.” He warned that if righteousness could be gained through the Law, then Christ died for nothing.

Yet through it all, the Spirit led.

Years later, Paul would look back on that moment in Jerusalem with gratitude. Not because it had been easy – but because it had upheld the truth of the Gospel and displayed reverence for God’s mercy.

He often travelled with a copy of the decision from the council. In new cities, where Gentiles and Jews sat together at the Lord’s table, it was a reminder that they were one body. He would read the words aloud and watch as older Jewish men wept and younger Gentile women smiled with relief.

One of Paul’s companions, Timothy, had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Paul had him circumcised – not to earn salvation, but to prevent offence when preaching in Jewish synagogues. Paul was never careless. He understood that devotion to God sometimes meant going further for the sake of peace, even when you were already free.

But when others tried to force rituals as requirements for salvation, Paul stood firm. His honour was not to men, but to God.

Among the Gentile churches, the message bore fruit. Believers grew in maturity. They welcomed Jewish travellers with respect, and shared their homes, their meals, and their lives. In churches like Ephesus and Colossae, the wall of division came down.

In those places, they sang a new song:

“Here there is no Gentile or Jew,
Circumcised or uncircumcised,
Barbarian, Scythian, slave or free,
But Christ is all, and is in all.”

Silas, who had travelled with the letter, later joined Paul on his second missionary journey. He saw first-hand the peace that truth brings. In places like Berea, where people eagerly searched the Scriptures, he witnessed communities built not on law, but on grace.

Peter, too, remembered the council when he later wrote his letters. He urged the Church to “live such good lives among the pagans that... they may see your good deeds and glorify God.” He reminded them to submit to authority and to honour everyone – including those outside the faith.

James, the leader who had helped guide the council, continued to teach wisdom. “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless,” he wrote, “is this: to look after orphans and widows... and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

The Council of Jerusalem had not ended all debates – but it had set a foundation: Jesus is enough. Faith is the door. Grace is the key. And the family of God is wide.

Today, when Christians gather around the world – in villages, cathedrals, living rooms, and fields – they follow the same pattern. They eat bread and drink wine, not as people divided by law, but as people united by love. They read Paul's letters and Peter's exhortations. They sing with joy, pray with hope, and live with honour.

In Antioch, a young Gentile believer named Theophilus heard the letter read aloud. He had been following Jesus for months, but still felt uncertain. His father, a merchant, had taught him Roman philosophy. His mother had once offered sacrifices at a pagan temple. He knew he was an outsider.

But when the letter said, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you," tears welled in his eyes. He realised for the first time: he was fully included – not by ritual, but by grace. He didn't need to become someone else to be accepted. Jesus had already done enough.

That day, Theophilus took his turn breaking the bread and passing the cup. He bowed his head in awe, whispering a prayer of thanks.

From that day forward, he lived not as one trying to earn approval, but as one already beloved – devoted, honourable, and filled with reverence for the God who welcomed him in.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. Why were some early Christians unsure about Gentile believers?
2. What was the final decision made at the Council of Jerusalem?
3. How did the Council show devotion and reverence for God?

Years 9–10

1. How did the apostles balance tradition with the truth of the Gospel?
2. Why was it important that the council acted as a group, rather than individually?
3. What can today's Church learn from the way the early leaders handled disagreement?

D) Activity Options

Choose one of the following to complete:

Option 1: Roleplay – The Council Gathers

Act out a simple skit featuring key voices in the Council:

- A Pharisee believer insisting on circumcision
- Peter reminding of his vision with Cornelius
- Paul describing Gentile conversions
- James quoting the prophet Amos

End the scene with a decision read aloud. Afterwards, discuss how honour and reverence guided the final choice.

Option 2: Council Letter Recreation

Recreate the letter sent from the Council to the Gentile churches (Acts 15:23–29). You may:

- Write it in calligraphy or elegant script on scroll-like paper
- Illustrate the page with early Church symbols (fish, cross, olive branch)
- Add a reflection paragraph: "How would I have felt receiving this letter?"

Option 3: Gospel Barrier-Free Map

Create a map or diagram showing:

- Major cities with Gentile believers (Antioch, Corinth, Philippi, etc.)
- The journey from Antioch to Jerusalem
- A "wall" being torn down (representing the removal of legal barriers)
  Label it with phrases like "Grace Alone," "Faith Not Ritual," and "One Body in Christ."

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

The Council of Jerusalem is a clear example of how God's people should handle conflict – with prayer, humility, and reverence for God's truth.

Rather than clinging to culture or control, the apostles honoured Christ by affirming that salvation is by grace through faith – not by works or ritual. They respected the Holy Spirit's work in Gentile believers and rejoiced in their inclusion.

Their decision helped unify the Church and showed that **God's family is open to all who come in faith** – regardless of background.

📖 **Bible Verse for Reflection**:

"It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you…"
– Acts 15:28

F) Narration Prompt

Close your eyes and retell the story of the Council of Jerusalem in your own words.

- Who were the main people involved?
- What was the problem?

- What decision did the Church make, and why?
- How did they show honour, devotion, and reverence for God?

Share your retelling aloud or write it in your notebook.

TOPIC 3	LOYAL TO THE END

Lesson 3.1: Martyrs – Stephen & James

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

History – Years 7–10

- **AC9HH7K02** – The historical significance of people, ideas, and events.
- **AC9HH8K04** – The influence of beliefs and values on societal development.
- **AC9HH9S03 / AC9HH10S03** – Develop and present reasoned arguments using historical sources.

Civics & Citizenship – Years 7–10

- **AC9HC8K02** – The influence of values and principles on civic decision-making.
- **AC9HC9K02** – How individuals and groups shape civic life through sacrifice and service.

A) Introduction

In this lesson, you'll learn about the first two Christian martyrs – Stephen and James. Their deaths were not just historical events; they were acts of **honour, devotion, and reverence for God**. They remind us that the early Church was built on truth, courage, and sacrifice – not comfort.

Stephen died with a vision of Christ. James died with quiet faith. Both chose to stand firm for the Gospel, even unto death. Their stories continue to inspire Christians around the world today.

B) Informational Story – "Stephen & James: First Martyrs of the Church"

It was a dangerous time to be a Christian.

The message of Jesus – the crucified and risen Messiah – was spreading like wildfire through Jerusalem. Thousands had believed. But not everyone rejoiced. The same leaders who had condemned Jesus now turned their anger toward His followers.

Stephen was one of the first deacons appointed by the apostles. Chosen for his wisdom, his integrity, and his full heart of faith, Stephen was more than just a servant distributing food to widows. He preached with boldness, performed signs and wonders, and spoke with a Spirit-filled clarity that no one could argue against.

But when some members of a powerful synagogue debated with him and failed to silence him, they took a darker path. They stirred up lies. They accused him of blasphemy against Moses and God. Stephen was seized and dragged before the Sanhedrin – the highest Jewish court.

As he stood before the council, Stephen's face shone like that of an angel. Yet his words were fierce with truth.

He recounted the history of Israel – how God had called Abraham, how Moses had led the people out of Egypt, how the prophets had been rejected. Then, with sorrow and courage, he spoke directly to the leaders:

"You stiff-necked people! You always resist the Holy Spirit... Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? And now you have betrayed and murdered the Righteous One!"

The council was enraged. But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up and said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

That was too much. With a shout, they covered their ears, dragged him outside the city, and began to stone him.

Stephen fell to his knees.

"Lord Jesus," he cried, "receive my spirit!"

And then, with his final breath, he echoed the heart of his Master:

"Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

He died honouring Christ, devoted to truth, and reverent even toward his murderers.

A young man named Saul watched and approved. He held the coats of those who threw the stones.

And the Church began to scatter.

But Stephen's death was not the end. It was a spark.

After Stephen's death, the persecution in Jerusalem intensified. Followers of Jesus fled to surrounding regions – Samaria, Phoenicia, and as far as Antioch. But the message did not stop. Everywhere they went, they preached.

Saul of Tarsus became the most feared man in Jerusalem. He ravaged the Church, dragging men and women from their homes and imprisoning them. But even this persecution would be used by God. Saul would one day become Paul – the Church's boldest apostle – but that was still to come.

In the years that followed, the apostles continued to preach in Jerusalem, risking their lives daily. Among them was James, the brother of John – the sons of Zebedee, once fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, called by Jesus to become "fishers of men." James had walked with Jesus, seen His glory, and heard His prayers.

He had stood at the foot of the cross, watched the empty tomb, and seen the risen Lord.

Now, he stood in the streets of Jerusalem, proclaiming that same Lord with unshakable courage.

King Herod Agrippa, seeking favour with the Jewish leaders, decided to strike. He had James arrested. There was no long trial. No public hearing. The sword was drawn quickly.

James became the first of the twelve apostles to die.

He did not die in a riot or on a battlefield. He died in silence. A loyal follower. A faithful witness. A man of honour.

According to early tradition, the soldier who guarded James was so moved by his courage that he confessed Christ and was executed alongside him. Their blood mingled in the dust.

The Church mourned deeply. One by one, their leaders were being taken. Yet the flame of the Gospel grew brighter.

They remembered Stephen's words. They remembered James' devotion. And they prayed, not for safety, but for boldness.

In homes and in caves, by candlelight and whispered prayer, they repeated the Scriptures:

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His faithful servants."
– Psalm 116:15

The honour of the early martyrs was not in how they died, but in how they lived – in reverence, in courage, and in truth.

Years later, in distant cities like Antioch and Ephesus, the stories of Stephen and James were still told.

Young believers whispered them to each other before baptisms. "Stephen saw heaven open," they would say. "He forgave those who killed him." Others would nod. "And James didn't beg. He stood tall. Like his Master."

In a small house church in Corinth, a boy named Marcus heard the stories for the first time. He had been raised among idols and taught to fear the gods. But when he heard of a man who had forgiven his killers and of another who died without denying Christ, something in his heart burned.

"Why would anyone do that?" he asked.

An elder answered, "Because they believed Jesus is alive. And they feared God more than man."

The boy said nothing more that night. But months later, he was baptised.

The death of Stephen and James did not stop the Church – it strengthened it.

Their honour, devotion, and reverence became a standard. They showed that Christianity was not a movement of comfort but of courage. It was not a political rebellion but a spiritual revolution – built on truth, grounded in love, and fearless in the face of death.

Luke, the physician who travelled with Paul, made sure their stories were remembered. In the book of Acts, he recorded every detail of Stephen's speech and martyrdom – not as a eulogy, but as a testimony. He wanted future generations to know that from the beginning, the Church had been built on sacrifice.

Even in Rome, where Christians would later face lions and fire, the names of Stephen and James gave strength. In the catacombs beneath the city, their names were scratched into the walls alongside prayers: "Stephen, pray for us." "O Lord, give me the faith of James."

Their stories were not legends. They were lives – real, lived, and laid down for Christ.

But they were not alone.

Every generation since has had its own Stephens and Jameses. Men and women who refuse to bow to falsehood. Children who choose honesty over safety. Preachers who keep speaking, even when threatened.

And each time we stand for truth, we walk in their footsteps.

Stephen and James remind us that to follow Jesus is to carry a cross. Not always a literal one – but always a real one. It means choosing integrity when lies are easier. Choosing reverence when mockery is popular. Choosing devotion when comfort calls.

Stephen died with a vision of Christ in glory.

James died with quiet dignity and a crown awaiting him.

Their reward was not in this world – but in the one to come.

"Be faithful unto death," Jesus had said, "and I will give you the crown of life."

And they were.

So let us be too.

In the hills of Judea, long after the noise of Jerusalem had faded, an old woman named Ruth remembered the day James died.

She had once sold fish in the marketplace where James and John would walk with Jesus. She hadn't followed Jesus then – she had only watched. But after the resurrection, and after Pentecost, Ruth had believed.

She had listened to James speak in the temple courts – firm, yet kind. He didn't shout. He didn't boast. He spoke with quiet conviction that pierced hearts.

"He never looked afraid," she whispered to her granddaughter one night. "He spoke like someone who had seen the Lord."

The child asked, "Did he die like Jesus?"

Ruth nodded. "He died for Him."

Stories like Ruth's were passed along like sacred treasures. People didn't speak of Stephen or James with sadness, but with reverence. Their lives were signs that the Gospel was worth dying for – because it was first worth living for.

A century later, when a church was planted in North Africa, the elder opened its dedication with a reading from Acts. He paused at the words: "Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven…" and wept. He reminded the congregation that they stood not on sand, but on stone – the stone of witness.

In Greek, the word for witness is *martys* – from which we get the word *martyr*.

Stephen and James were the first to wear that title. But they would not be the last.

Today, we wear their legacy – not by dying, but by living as they did:

- Bold in faith
- Gentle in truth
- Unwavering in reverence for God

Their lives call to us still. Will we honour Christ with our words? Will we show devotion in hard places? Will we live with holy courage?

The first martyrs didn't seek death. They sought Christ – and found Him worthy of everything.

So when we tell their stories, let us do so with honour. Let us remember not just how they died, but why they lived. They were faithful not because it was easy, but because they believed that Jesus was worth everything – even their final breath.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. Who was Stephen, and why was he arrested?
2. What did Stephen say and do as he was being stoned?
3. How did James show reverence and honour to God in his life and death?

Years 9–10

1. What does the story of Stephen and James teach us about the cost of Christian witness?
2. How did their martyrdoms strengthen, not weaken, the early Church?
3. In what ways can you live with the same devotion and courage in your everyday life?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following to complete:

Option 1: Martyr's Monologue (Writing or Drama)

Write or perform a first-person monologue from the perspective of:

- Stephen, as he sees the vision of Jesus
- James, as he awaits execution
- A young Christian inspired by their courage

Use direct Scripture quotes and include inner thoughts about fear, faith, and honour.

Option 2: Timeline Poster – The Legacy of Martyrs

Create a visual timeline showing:

- Stephen's speech and martyrdom (Acts 6–7)
- James's execution (Acts 12)
- Later martyrs in Church history (e.g., Polycarp, Perpetua, early Roman Christians)

Include symbols of devotion and note how each stood firm in their faith.

Option 3: Forgiveness and Honour Reflection Art

Stephen forgave his killers. Create an artistic piece (drawing, poem, digital image, or sculpture) themed around:

- Forgiving enemies
- Honouring God in suffering
- Living with reverence and courage

Include a written reflection: *What does it mean to forgive like Stephen and be faithful like James?*

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Stephen and James didn't die for religion. They died for a Person – Jesus. They remind us that following Christ is not always safe or popular. But it is always right.

Stephen honoured Jesus by speaking truth. James showed devotion by not backing down. Both revered God more than they feared death.

Their lives – and deaths – remind us of Jesus' own words:

📖 **Bible Verse for Reflection**

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."
– Revelation 2:10

F) Narration Prompt

Close your eyes and picture the story.
Now retell, in your own words, what happened to Stephen and James:

- What did they say?
- What did they see?
- How did they live and die with honour, devotion, and reverence?

Tell it aloud, or write it in your notebook. You may wish to end your narration with a prayer.

Lesson 3.2: Martyrs – Peter & Paul

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

History – Years 7–10

- **AC9HH7K02** – The historical significance of people, ideas, and events.
- **AC9HH8K04** – The relationship between beliefs and values and significant developments.
- **AC9HH9S03 / AC9HH10S03** – Develop and present reasoned arguments using sources.

Civics & Citizenship – Years 7–10

- **AC9HC9K02** – The contribution of individuals to civic life and enduring principles of liberty, sacrifice, and service.
- **AC9HC10K03** – The impact of values, beliefs and institutions on community and democratic life.

A) Introduction

In this lesson, you'll discover the final chapters of **Peter** and **Paul** – two of the most influential leaders in the early Church. Though very different in background, both men lived – and died – for Christ.

Their martyrdoms were not the end of their influence. Their lives were examples of **honour, devotion, and reverence for God**, and their writings continue to shape Christian thought to this day.

B) Informational Story – "Peter & Paul: Brothers in Christ, Martyrs in Rome"

They had once stood side by side in the Church at Antioch – Peter the fisherman, and Paul the scholar. One had walked with Jesus on Galilean shores. The other had met Him in a blinding flash on the road to Damascus. One knew Him in flesh; the other, in glory.

But both gave everything for Him.

Peter and Paul are remembered as giants of the early Church. They were apostles, preachers, miracle-workers, and authors. They shaped doctrine. They planted churches. They stood before kings. And in the end, they died as martyrs – devoted, courageous, and reverent to the very last breath.

Peter's journey began on the Sea of Galilee. He had been a simple fisherman, casting nets with his brother Andrew, when Jesus called out, "Follow Me." Peter followed – sometimes boldly, sometimes rashly. He stepped out on water. He confessed Christ as the Son of God. He also denied Him three times.

But after the resurrection, Jesus restored him. "Feed My sheep," Jesus said. And Peter did.

Paul, once called Saul, had persecuted the Church. He watched Stephen die. He had dragged believers from their homes. But on the road to Damascus, a light from heaven blinded him. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Jesus said.

From that moment, Paul was never the same.

He became the apostle to the Gentiles, travelling thousands of miles to preach Christ crucified and risen.

In their later years, Peter and Paul both arrived in Rome – the heart of the empire, the seat of Caesar, and the place where their earthly journeys would end.

The Church in Rome was growing, but danger lurked. Emperor Nero, mad with power, had begun to blame Christians for a great fire that swept through the city. He arrested them by the hundreds – beating, burning, crucifying.

And yet, Peter and Paul stayed.

They knew the cost. But they would not flee.

Peter was arrested first. He was held in the Mamertine Prison, a dark, underground cell near the Roman Forum. Cold stone walls. No windows. Just a hole in the ceiling for food and light. He could hear the groans of other prisoners – thieves, traitors, and rebels.

But Peter was not afraid. He had once run from danger, but not anymore.

Tradition says that during his imprisonment, Peter encouraged fellow prisoners, sang psalms, and spoke of the risen Christ. Some believe he even baptised his jailers.

When the time came for his execution, Peter asked for one final request: that he not be crucified the same way as Jesus. “I am not worthy,” he said. And so they crucified him upside down.

His blood was spilled on Roman soil, but his soul was raised to glory.

Paul’s imprisonment came shortly after. He had already been arrested many times before – beaten, flogged, shipwrecked, stoned. But this time felt different. The charges were serious. The mood in Rome was shifting. Nero’s hatred of Christians was growing more violent.

Paul was not kept in a dungeon like Peter – at first. As a Roman citizen, he was placed under house arrest. He wrote letters, welcomed visitors, and encouraged the Church. These were the days of 2 Timothy, his final epistle.

“The time has come for my departure,” he wrote. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

When the final sentence was handed down, Paul walked to his death with peace. He was beheaded with a sword – quick and brutal.

He had once said, “To live is Christ, to die is gain.” Now he proved it.

They died within months of each other – brothers in Christ, martyrs in Rome, saints in eternity.

Centuries later, the names of Peter and Paul would be carved into stone and whispered in catacombs. The Church in Rome remembered them not as victims, but as founders. Their faith shaped generations.

In a village outside Corinth, a young girl named Damaris grew up hearing their stories. Her father had once heard Paul preach. “He spoke like a man who had been with God,” he told her. “He loved even his enemies.” Damaris would memorise passages from Peter’s letters: “Be holy as He is holy,” and “Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in you.”

She didn’t meet them – but she knew them. Through their words. Through their lives.

Peter's letters had been copied and shared across provinces. They reminded scattered believers to rejoice in suffering and to honour all people, even unjust rulers. He called the Church "a royal priesthood," and reminded them to live with reverence.

Paul's writings reached even farther. His letters to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians taught that salvation was by grace, not law. That the Church was one body. That nothing could separate us from the love of God.

These weren't abstract ideas. They were truths proven by blood.

In Ephesus, in Alexandria, in Britannia – wherever Christians gathered, they remembered Peter's courage and Paul's zeal. They painted fish symbols and carved crosses into walls. They sang hymns in the dark. They refused to bow to Caesar, not out of rebellion, but out of devotion to a higher King.

And when persecution came again, they stood firm.

Because Peter had stood.
Because Paul had endured.
Because Christ had overcome.

In modern times, their stories still echo. Missionaries crossing oceans. Pastors preaching in secret. Teenagers praying in hostile schools. Families forgiving their enemies. Each act of devotion is a link in the same chain of courage.

Peter was impulsive, yet transformed.
Paul was proud, yet humbled.

Both were flawed men redeemed by grace. And both gave their final breath to honour the one who had saved them.

"I know whom I have believed," Paul wrote, "and am persuaded that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."

When the early Church faced uncertainty, they turned to Peter's exhortations.

When new believers wondered if they were truly free, they read Paul's assurance.

When courage ran low, their deaths reminded the Church: faith is worth the cost.

And so we tell their stories again – not as myths, but as monuments. Not with statues, but with lives shaped by the same reverence they showed.

To live with honour is to follow in their footsteps.
To live with devotion is to echo their prayers.
To live with reverence is to see Jesus as they did – not as a distant idea, but as the risen Lord who walks with us through fire.

We may never be asked to die for Christ. But we are all called to live for Him.

And when we do, we join the company of the faithful.

Peter, the rock.
Paul, the runner.

Both martyrs. Both brothers.
Both now crowned in glory.

In the quiet hills near Rome, long after the executions, a small group of believers gathered in a cave to break bread. Among them was a boy named Lucius, the son of a baker and one of the first to be born into a Christian household.

His parents told him stories not of war or wealth, but of men who loved Christ more than life – Peter and Paul.

Lucius often asked, “Did it hurt when they died?”

His mother would hold his hand and say, “Yes. But they didn’t look back. They looked up.”

One evening, Lucius sat with an elder who had once heard Paul preach as a young man. The elder leaned in and whispered, “Paul’s eyes glowed with joy when he spoke of Jesus. He said nothing we suffer now compares to the glory ahead.”

That night, Lucius wrote his first letter – to no one in particular. Just a reflection on courage. He ended it with these words: “If I am ever tested, may I stand like they did. May I honour Jesus. May I die well, if I must.”

He never became famous. He never wrote Scripture. But he lived a faithful life.

And that, Peter and Paul would say, is enough.

For the Kingdom of God is not measured by applause but by allegiance. Not by reputation, but by reverence. It is built not by the mighty, but by the willing.

Their tombs lie beneath cathedrals now. But their true legacy is in hearts like Lucius’s – and perhaps your own.

So rise each day with courage.
Speak the truth with love.
Walk with honour, serve with devotion, and worship with reverence.

Then, like them, you too will have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith.

To Christ be the glory – now and forever.

And if ever you wonder whether your small acts of faith matter – remember this: God used a fisherman and a persecutor to change the world. He can use you too.

This is the legacy of the martyrs: not just how they died, but how they lived – with honour, devotion, and reverence for God.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. How did Peter and Paul first meet Jesus?
2. What were the circumstances of their deaths in Rome?
3. How did they show honour and devotion to God through their lives and deaths?

Years 9–10

1. How were Peter's and Paul's personalities different – and how did God use both?
2. Why do you think both men chose to stay in Rome despite the danger?
3. What do their martyrdoms teach us about reverence, courage, and spiritual legacy?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following three activities to complete:

Option 1: Letter to a Persecuted Believer (Creative Writing)

Write a fictional letter from a modern-day Christian to Peter or Paul, or from Peter or Paul to a believer facing hardship today.

- Include themes of endurance, hope, and the eternal reward
- Use respectful language and Scripture-based encouragement
- Optional: read aloud with a friend or family member

Option 2: Paul & Peter Comparison Chart

Create a double-column comparison between Peter and Paul showing:

- Their early life
- Their calling by Jesus
- Their major contributions to the Church
- Their struggles and strengths
- How each died as a martyr

Decorate your chart with Christian symbols (cross, fish, scroll, sword, crown) and title it: *Brothers in Christ: Devoted to the End*.

Option 3: Mini Drama or Presentation – "The Last Words"

Act out or record a short dramatization of Peter's and Paul's final moments:

- Peter in Mamertine Prison, encouraging others
- Paul writing to Timothy before execution
- Include Scripture quotes and a final prayer of faith

- Focus on expressing reverence and peace, not fear

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Peter and Paul were not perfect men. Peter was impulsive. Paul was prideful. But both were transformed by Christ. Their lives show us that **true honour comes from surrender**, not strength. **Devotion means obedience** even when it's costly. And **reverence for God fuels courage** when facing danger.

Their letters are filled with humility and truth. Their deaths were not a defeat – but a testimony. They remind us that following Jesus may lead to suffering, but it always leads to glory.

Bible Verse for Reflection:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness…"
– 2 Timothy 4:7–8

F) Narration Prompt

Close your eyes and picture Peter in prison. Picture Paul writing by lamplight. Then retell the story of their final days in your own words.

- What did they say?
- How did they show devotion to God?
- What legacy did they leave behind?

Speak it aloud to someone or write it as a one-page narration in your journal.

Lesson 3.3: Widespread Persecution, the Revolt & the Destruction of the Temple

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

History – Years 7–10

- **AC9HH7K02** – The historical significance of people, ideas, and events.
- **AC9HH8K04** – The influence of religious beliefs and values on the development of societies.
- **AC9HH9K01 / AC9HH10K01** – The causes and effects of major conflict or revolution.

Civics & Citizenship – Years 7–10

- **AC9HC9K02** – The role of individuals and communities in shaping civic life, especially through suffering and perseverance.
- **AC9HC10K03** – How religious values can shape a sense of national and cultural identity.

A) Introduction

In this lesson, you will explore one of the most pivotal and tragic events in ancient history: the **destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD**.

You will see how this moment, surrounded by persecution, war, and suffering, was not the end of God's work – but the beginning of something new. Christians remembered the words of Jesus and responded with **honour, devotion, and reverence for God**, even in exile and fire.

B) Informational Story – "The Temple Fell, but the Church Stood"

The storm had been building for years.

Ever since the resurrection of Jesus, tension simmered in Jerusalem. The Jewish authorities had hoped that Jesus' death would silence the movement. But instead, it had ignited a fire. The followers of "The Way" preached with courage. They healed in His name. They proclaimed that the temple was no longer the only place where God could dwell.

Some rejoiced. Many resisted. And Rome watched – wary and suspicious.

By the mid-60s AD, persecution had begun to spread like wildfire across the empire. In Rome, Emperor Nero blamed Christians for a devastating fire and unleashed horrific brutality – burning them alive, throwing them to beasts, crucifying them in public.

In Jerusalem, the pressure from both Rome and religious leaders increased. Christians were seen as traitors to the Law. Synagogues expelled them. Families disowned them. Some were imprisoned. Others fled to nearby regions, carrying the Gospel wherever they went.

But persecution wasn't the only threat. Something even bigger was coming – a full-scale Jewish revolt against Rome.

In 66 AD, the zealots struck. These Jewish nationalists, tired of Roman taxes, pagan idols, and brutal treatment, rose up. They overran the Roman garrison in Jerusalem and declared independence.

For a moment, it seemed they might succeed.

But Rome responded with overwhelming force.

Vespasian, a seasoned general, marched from the north, crushing resistance town by town. Christians, remembering Jesus' warning that Jerusalem would one day be surrounded and destroyed, fled the city. Many took refuge in Pella, beyond the Jordan.

Those who remained – Jewish rebels and others – prepared for war. They fortified the city. They stocked the temple. And they waited.

By 70 AD, Rome's fury reached Jerusalem. Titus, Vespasian's son, laid siege to the city. No one came in. No one went out. Starvation spread. Infighting among the rebels turned deadly.

And still, the temple stood.

For now.

Inside the city walls, life became unbearable. Mothers searched for food among the dead. The streets stank of rot and smoke. Priests still offered sacrifices, but the sound of worship was drowned by cries of hunger and fear.

The Christians who had fled remembered Jesus' words:

"When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation is near... Let those in Judea flee to the mountains." (Luke 21:20–21)

And they had obeyed.

One young believer named Elias, who had fled to Pella with his family, sat by the fire and wept for his cousin, still in Jerusalem. He asked his father, "Why would God allow the temple to fall?"

His father answered slowly, "Because the true temple is now Jesus. He is our high priest. His sacrifice was enough."

Meanwhile, Titus's army battered the city walls. Finally, they breached them. Roman soldiers flooded in – burning, looting, killing. The temple, once covered in gold and towering with pride, became the focus of battle.

Despite orders to preserve it, the temple caught fire – whether by accident or rebellion remains debated. Flames reached the inner courts. Gold melted and ran into the cracks of the stones. Soldiers pried the stones apart to retrieve it.

Not one stone was left on another.

Just as Jesus had said.

More than a million people died in the siege, according to Josephus, a Jewish historian who witnessed it. The survivors were taken captive, enslaved, or crucified.

And still, the Church endured.

In the ashes of the temple, a new understanding grew. No longer would worship be tied to a building or location. The veil had already been torn. God's Spirit now lived in His people.

From Pella and Antioch, from Ephesus to Alexandria, Christians shared this truth: the kingdom of God is not built with bricks – but with hearts devoted to Christ.

In the aftermath, the Church entered a time of scattering, sorrow – and deep reflection.

Some asked: Was God punishing Israel? Others said no – it was a turning point. The Law had been fulfilled. The temple, which once foreshadowed Christ, was now replaced by the living body of believers.

John, the last surviving apostle, was living in Ephesus during these events. He had seen the temple in its glory. He had worshipped there with Jesus. And he had also seen his Lord walk away from it in silence.

Now, he wrote letters to scattered Christians. "Do not love the world," he urged, "nor the things in the world." He reminded them that God's presence did not dwell in buildings – but in love, obedience, and truth.

In Galilee, a young scribe named Miriam copied fragments of Matthew's Gospel by hand. Her family had once journeyed to the temple for Passover. Now, she read aloud to her children:

"Truly, I tell you, not one stone will be left on another... Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away."

Those words became her anchor.

Years passed. The ruins of the temple remained – blackened stones, scorched gates, broken walls. A Roman triumph paraded stolen treasures through the streets – golden trumpets, lampstands, censers. And a great arch in Rome was carved with scenes of conquest.

But among the believers, there was no triumph in the temple's fall – only reverence.

They wept for the city Jesus had wept over. They prayed for those who had not yet believed. They longed not for revenge, but for resurrection.

And slowly, the Church grew. Through persecution and poverty, the Gospel spread from city to city, home to home.

The fall of Jerusalem did not destroy the Church. It defined it.

From that moment on, Christians understood that honouring God meant more than rituals. It meant suffering well. It meant devotion even in exile. It meant reverence that could not be crushed by empire or flame.

It meant following the Lamb wherever He goes – even through fire.

In Antioch, one of the oldest Christian cities, a teacher named Simeon shared the story of the temple's fall with new believers.

He did not speak with pride. He spoke with tears.

"The temple was beautiful," he said. "But it was only a shadow. Now the Spirit of God dwells in us. You – you are His temple."

Among his listeners was a Roman named Marcus. Once a soldier, Marcus had watched the destruction of Jerusalem with his own eyes. He had seen the fear, the fire, the fury. He had followed orders. But he had never forgotten a young Christian woman who had stood calmly as her home was burned.

She had sung – sung! – as flames licked the walls.

It was that memory that had led him to Christ.

Now he wept with the others. And when he was baptised, he whispered a prayer:

"Let me be a living stone in Your temple, O God."

Elsewhere, stories like his multiplied. Across the empire, Christians were persecuted. They were blamed for disasters, mocked by philosophers, feared by officials. And yet, their lives were marked by peace, joy, and honour.

They refused to bow to idols – not in temples, nor in courts, nor in homes.

They gathered in secret, read the words of Jesus, broke bread, and sang.

And always, they remembered the destruction of Jerusalem – not as a curse, but as a call.

A call to devotion.

A call to reverence.

A call to live not for the temporary, but for the eternal.

By the time the next century dawned, the temple was still in ruins. Jerusalem was now a Roman colony. But the Church had spread to Spain, North Africa, India – and beyond.

Wherever believers went, they carried the memory of fire – and the hope of glory.

They knew that no empire, no army, no stone temple could hold God.

They knew that persecution could not destroy faith.

They knew that Christ was building a better temple – with His people as living stones.

And they were willing to be shaped, chiseled, and placed – even in suffering.

So when the fires come, when persecution rises, when the world shakes – remember this:

God is not absent.

He is building something eternal.

And through honour, devotion, and reverence, you too can take your place in that holy house.

And this is the story we inherit – not just of destruction, but of renewal. Not just of buildings falling, but of hearts rising. The temple fell, but the Church stood. And it still stands – whenever a believer chooses to honour Christ above comfort, to walk in devotion, and to worship with reverence that no sword can silence.

Today, when we gather in homes, halls, or churches, we do so as heirs of that moment. We do not need stone walls or golden lamps. We need only faith, courage, and the Spirit of God among us. The temple was glorious – but the Church, alive and eternal, is far more.

Let us then worship in spirit and in truth, honouring the God who dwells not in temples made by hands, but in the hearts of His devoted people.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. Why did early Christians flee Jerusalem before the city was destroyed?
2. What did Jesus say would happen to the Temple?
3. How did Christians show honour and devotion even during suffering?

Years 9–10

1. What were the causes and outcomes of the Jewish revolt against Rome?
2. How did Christians interpret the destruction of the Temple in light of their faith in Jesus?
3. In what ways did this event reshape the identity of the Church?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following creative or practical activities:

Option 1: Dramatic Reenactment – "Fleeing to Pella"

Write or perform a short drama or audio scene featuring:

- A Christian family deciding to flee Jerusalem after hearing Jesus' warning
- A neighbour who refuses to leave
- The family's reflections as they reach safety
  Use tone, dialogue, and emotion to capture reverence and courage.

Option 2: Temple Before & After Diagram

Create two illustrated panels:

- Panel 1: The Second Temple in its glory (priests, worshippers, golden lampstands)
- Panel 2: The destroyed temple (ruins, Roman soldiers, Christian exiles)
  Include captions explaining what each scene represents spiritually.

Option 3: Personal Journal – Worship Without Walls

Write a journal entry from the perspective of a young Christian in 71 AD:

- How do they feel now that the Temple is gone?
- What does it mean to worship God without a building?
- How are they showing honour and reverence during hard times?

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Jesus Himself predicted the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple – not to cause fear, but to prepare His followers.

"Not one stone will be left on another..." – Matthew 24:2
"The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... but in spirit and in truth." – John 4:21–23

When the temple fell, Christians were not left hopeless. They knew that God was building a new temple – **a living one**, made up of people devoted to Christ. They understood that true worship was not tied to location, but to the **heart**.

The persecution they endured tested their faith. But their devotion and reverence for God allowed the Church to rise stronger than before.

F) Narration Prompt

Close your eyes and imagine the streets of Jerusalem before the temple fell... and the silence after.

Now retell the story in your own words:

- Why did the temple fall?
- What did Christians do?
- What did they believe God was building in its place?

You may write your narration in a journal or tell it aloud to a parent, tutor, or friend.

TOPIC 4	ATTRIBUTES OF GOD & OF CHRISTIANS

Lesson 4.1: Attributes of God

(Theme: Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God)

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

History and Civics (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HH7K02** – The historical significance of religious beliefs and how they influenced people's lives.
- **AC9HC9K02** – The influence of spiritual and moral beliefs on civic responsibility and ethical decision-making.
- **AC9HH8K04** – The connection between religious identity and cultural expression in historical societies.
- **AC9HH9S03 / AC9HH10S03** – Develop and communicate historical knowledge and understanding using sources.

A) Introduction

In this lesson, we explore what Christians believe about **the attributes of God** – His essential nature and character. These are not abstract ideas. They are truths that shape how we live, think, and relate to God.

Through a story passed from one generation to the next, you'll hear how early Christians described God as holy, just, eternal, merciful, and loving. You'll see how they responded with **honour, devotion, and reverence**, even in a culture filled with false gods.

B) Informational Story – "By the River: Knowing the True God"

It began with a conversation by the riverside.

In a bustling Greek city filled with idols and philosophies, a group of Christian believers met to pray beside a river outside the city gates. Among them was a thoughtful young man named Theophilus, a recent convert raised in a pagan household. He had heard about Jesus from a travelling missionary, and what captivated him most was the idea that this God – unlike the gods of marble and myth – was personal, holy, just, and good.

But Theophilus still had questions.

That afternoon, as they sat under olive trees near the water's edge, he turned to an older man named Stephanas. "Can you tell me what God is like?" he asked. "Not just what He's done – but what He truly is."

Stephanas smiled. "That's a good question. And we only know because God has shown us – through His Word, and through His Son."

As the river flowed gently past them, Stephanas began to tell Theophilus what Christians believed about the nature of God – not just in theory, but in the deepest truths that shaped how they lived, worshipped, and died.

He began where the Scriptures begin.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth..." (Genesis 1:1)

"This God," Stephanas said, "was before all things. He is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. He is uncreated, yet He created everything. And He is not part of the world like the Greek myths say. He is above it, sovereign and holy."

Theophilus was silent. Then he asked, "Is He like a king?"

"Yes," said Stephanas, "but more. He's not only powerful – He's righteous. He is wise, patient, merciful, just, and jealous – not in a petty way, but in pure love."

Stephanas continued, "He is not like the gods of stone, who change their minds or fight among themselves. Our God never changes. He is immutable. What He promises, He will do. What He begins, He finishes."

Theophilus nodded slowly. "But... how can a God so great care for someone like me?"

"That," said Stephanas, "is one of His greatest attributes – His love. He is not only majestic and mighty. He is near. The same God who holds the stars in place also knit you together in your mother's womb. He knows your thoughts. He knows your doubts. And He sent His Son, Jesus, not just to show His power – but to prove His love."

Theophilus looked down at the water. "So He is Father?"

"Yes," said Stephanas. "Father to the fatherless. Defender of the weak. Shepherd of His people. Jesus taught us to pray to Him as 'Our Father in heaven.' That means He is both intimate and majestic. He is not a distant force. He is a Person. Not made of matter – but of Spirit. Invisible, but real. Unseen, but everywhere present."

As the sun dipped lower on the horizon, Stephanas opened a scroll. "Here," he said, unrolling a portion of the Psalms. "Listen to how the Scriptures speak of Him."

"The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love..."
"Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; His greatness is unsearchable."

"He is holy," Stephanas added. "That means there is no sin in Him. He is pure in thought, in motive, and in action. He is just – He always does what is right. He is wise – He never makes a mistake."

Theophilus sat silently, absorbing each word. "But if God is so good," he asked, "why does He allow evil?"

Stephanas did not flinch. "That's the oldest question of all," he said. "And yet God does not avoid it. He allows evil for a time, but He promises to judge it. His justice may seem delayed, but it is never denied."

He turned to another scroll, this time from the prophets.

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne; mercy and truth go before Him.”

“He is patient,” Stephanas said. “That’s another attribute – He waits, not because He’s weak, but because He’s merciful. He gives time for people to turn back to Him.”

Theophilus looked around at the city skyline behind them – temples to Artemis, Apollo, and Caesar. “And what makes Him different from all of them?”

“Everything,” Stephanas replied. “Those gods demand offerings. Our God became the offering. They demand loyalty. Our God gives grace. He is self-sufficient – He needs nothing – but still, He invites us to know Him. That is His kindness.”

Stephanas leaned forward. “The more we learn about Him, the more we worship. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom – not terror, but awe. Reverence. Honour.”

Theophilus was quiet for a long moment.

“What should I do with this knowledge?” he finally asked.

Stephanas smiled. “Live it. Worship in spirit and truth. Serve others with compassion. Trust Him when life is uncertain. Obey Him, not just in public, but in secret. Honour Him with your mind, your voice, and your choices. Let His character shape yours.”

He handed Theophilus a worn scroll. “Start with this – Psalm 103. Read it every day this week. Learn who God is, and you will learn who you were made to be.”

Years later, Theophilus would sit by the same river with his own son, Isaac.

By then, the city had changed. Some idols had fallen. A church now met openly in a house not far away. And Theophilus had become one of its elders.

His beard was grey now, and his scrolls more worn than ever. But his eyes still lit up when he spoke of God.

“Father,” young Isaac asked one evening, “why do you always call Him holy?”

Theophilus chuckled. “Because I’ve learned that holiness is His most beautiful attribute. Holiness means set apart – other – pure. Everything else about Him flows from that. His love is holy. His justice is holy. His mercy is holy.”

Isaac leaned against him. “Did you always believe that?”

“No,” Theophilus said. “But when I was your age, I met a man named Stephanas. He told me who God really is. And once you see that, you cannot turn back.”

Together, they recited from memory:

“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love... He does not treat us as our sins deserve, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”

Theophilus closed his eyes.

“I used to think God was like the old statues – cold, silent, angry. But now I know: He is glorious. He is faithful. He is slow to anger, rich in love, unshakable in righteousness.”

Isaac asked, “Do you think I’ll ever love Him like that?”

Theophilus smiled, “Yes. If you seek Him with all your heart, you will find Him.”

That night, Theophilus prayed over his son, as Stephanas had once prayed over him.

And far above them, the stars gleamed over the river – reminders of the God who counts them all, yet calls His children by name.

In the days that followed, Isaac began to ask his own questions. He asked about God’s power, and Theophilus pointed him to creation. He asked about God’s nearness, and Theophilus reminded him of the incarnation – how Jesus, the Son of God, took on flesh to dwell among us.

They read together from the Gospel of John:

“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is Himself God... has made Him known.”

And as they studied, they marvelled.

Their neighbours still clung to wooden idols and marble altars. But Isaac saw the difference. Those gods were silent. Their temples were empty. They demanded fear, but gave no peace.

Yet the God of Israel – the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and now Theophilus – was alive. He was not made by human hands. He was not limited by time or place. He could not be bribed or manipulated.

And most of all, He was good.

“Why do we bow our heads when we pray?” Isaac asked one morning.

“Because He is holy,” Theophilus said. “And because He is worthy.”

As the years passed, Isaac would come to teach others, just as his father and Stephanas had done. He would stand in the gathering of believers and declare:

“The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.”
“Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods?”

And long after Theophilus had gone to be with the Lord, his words lived on – not just in scrolls, but in hearts.

For the attributes of God are not just truths to be memorised. They are treasures to be lived.

To know God is to revere Him. To love Him is to honour Him. And to follow Him is to reflect His nature – holy, faithful, just, and true.

And so, from one riverside to another, from one generation to the next, the knowledge of God's attributes flowed like living water – shaping minds, stirring hearts, and calling each soul to honour, devotion, and reverence for the One who is, and was, and is to come.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. What are some of the key attributes of God mentioned in the story?
2. How is the God of the Bible different from the false gods worshipped by others in the story?
3. Why is it important to understand God's character before trying to serve or worship Him?

Years 9–10

1. How did Stephanas explain the concepts of holiness, justice, and love to Theophilus?
2. In what ways does knowing the attributes of God shape how Christians live and make decisions?
3. How did the legacy of Theophilus affect future generations in the story – and what does this teach us?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following to complete:

Option 1: Attribute Scroll Poster

Create a scroll-style poster that includes:

- Ten attributes of God (e.g. holy, eternal, just, merciful, faithful...)
- A matching Bible verse for each
- One sentence on how each attribute influences how Christians live

Decorate the border with symbols of reverence (e.g. fire, crown, scrolls, stars).

Option 2: "God Is..." Spoken Word or Reflection Poem

Write a creative spoken word piece or poem that begins with the phrase **"God is…"**

- Include at least five attributes of God
- Reflect on how each one makes you feel or how it changes your view of the world
- Perform it aloud or record it (optional)

Option 3: Teaching Video or Lesson for Younger Kids

Design a 3–5 minute mini-lesson teaching younger students about the attributes of God.
Include:

- A simple definition of 3 attributes
- An example of each from the Bible

- A short memory verse
  Present it live, record it, or write a lesson plan/script.

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Christians don't worship an idea or force. They worship the living God – **who reveals Himself through His Word, His Son, and His Spirit**.

Understanding God's attributes helps us know how to honour Him:

- His **holiness** inspires awe and reverence
- His **justice** calls us to live righteously
- His **mercy** teaches us to forgive
- His **faithfulness** strengthens our hope
- His **love** changes how we treat others

Key Scripture:

"Know that the Lord, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His."
– Psalm 100:3

When we worship God, we do it in spirit and in truth – not out of habit, but out of deep love and honour for who He is.

F) Narration Prompt

Close your eyes and imagine sitting beside Theophilus at the river.

Now retell the story aloud or write it in your own words:

- What did Theophilus learn about God?
- How did that change his life?
- What legacy did he pass on?

Reflect on what it means to live with **honour, devotion, and reverence** for a holy God.

Lesson 4.2: Fruit of the Spirit

Theme: Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

Civics & Citizenship (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HC8K03** – The values and beliefs of different groups in society.
- **AC9HC9K02** – How values influence individual and collective behaviour in civic life.
- **AC9HC10S01** – Reflect on and evaluate different perspectives, and develop informed conclusions.

History (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HH8K04** – The influence of religious and ethical beliefs on historical and personal identity.
- **AC9HH10S03** – Develop and communicate historical knowledge, understanding and ideas, using sources.

A) Introduction

This lesson explores how a believer grows in **spiritual maturity** through the **Fruit of the Spirit**, described in Galatians 5:22–23. This isn't fruit we produce by trying harder, but fruit the Holy Spirit grows in us when we walk in step with Him.

These qualities – **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control** – are not just inner traits. They are outward signs of a life lived in **honour, devotion, and reverence to God**.

Let's explore this through a story that spans generations.

B) Informational Story – "The Fruit That Lasts"

It was harvesting season in the Judean hills.

Under the hot sun, a group of believers gathered at a vineyard outside Jerusalem. Among them was an elderly man named Barnabas, one of the oldest members of the community, known for his wisdom and kindness. His name meant "son of encouragement," and he had lived up to it for decades.

This afternoon, he had brought with him a basket filled with ripe figs, pomegranates, and grapes from his small farm. Around him sat younger believers – new in the faith – who looked up to him as a spiritual father.

One of them, a young woman named Miriam, asked a question. "You've walked with the Lord for many years, Barnabas. How do we know if we're growing? What does true spiritual maturity look like?"

Barnabas smiled, lifting a cluster of grapes. "Let me tell you about fruit," he said.

He looked around the vineyard. “Do you see these vines? They don’t grow fruit overnight. It takes sunshine, water, pruning, and time. It’s the same with the life of a believer.”

He held up the grapes. “These are sweet because they’ve stayed connected to the vine. And the Spirit of God works the same way in us. When we abide in Christ, He produces fruit in us – not figs or grapes, but something even better.”

He reached for a scroll and unrolled a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the Galatians.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...” (Galatians 5:22–23)

Barnabas paused. “This fruit shows what kind of tree we really are. It shows whether we walk by the flesh or by the Spirit.”

Miriam leaned forward. “I thought the fruit was something we tried really hard to do.”

Barnabas shook his head gently. “It’s not about trying harder – it’s about walking with the Spirit. You see, fruit doesn’t grow because the tree works harder. It grows because the tree is healthy and rooted.”

He pointed to a nearby vine that had withered. “That one has no fruit. Why? It’s disconnected from the root. The soil is dry. No matter how much it reaches for the sun, it’s cut off from its source.”

The others nodded as Barnabas continued. “Let me tell you what each fruit looks like.”

“Love,” he said, “isn’t a feeling. It’s sacrifice. It’s choosing to serve, forgive, and care – like Jesus washing His disciples’ feet.”

“Joy,” he said, “isn’t the same as happiness. Joy stays even when life hurts. Paul had joy in prison. Stephen had joy as he died. Joy comes from knowing God is with us.”

“Peace,” he explained, “isn’t just the absence of fighting. It’s the calm inside when storms rage outside. It’s trusting God when everything seems uncertain.”

“Patience,” he said slowly, “is waiting without complaining. Like a farmer waiting for rain. Or a mother waiting for her child to come home.”

“Kindness and goodness – they’re actions. Helping someone carry a burden. Sharing food. Speaking gently when others shout.”

“Faithfulness is loyalty – staying true to God, even when tempted.”

“Gentleness is strength under control – like a lion who chooses not to bite.”

“And self-control,” he finished, “is choosing what’s right, even when your feelings say otherwise.”

He looked at Miriam. “These don’t come all at once. But they come. If you walk with the Spirit.”

The group was silent for a moment, then a boy named Ezra spoke up. “But what if I don’t see those things in myself yet?”

Barnabas smiled and placed a hand on Ezra’s shoulder. “You’re not alone. Sometimes, we don’t see the fruit right away. But others might. That’s why we live in community – to encourage, challenge, and pray for one another.”

He paused, then added, “Let me tell you how I learned these lessons.”

“When I was young, I wasn’t always gentle. I was passionate – sometimes too much so. There was a man named Saul who had once persecuted the Church. When he became a believer, many were afraid. But God told me to welcome him.”

“I chose to show kindness when others were cautious. That man – Saul – became Paul, the great apostle. And he taught me much about grace.”

The group’s eyes widened.

Barnabas chuckled. “Yes. The fruit takes time. But it grows.”

He pointed to another young man, Matthias. “I’ve seen love in you, when you stayed up three nights in a row caring for your sick sister. That’s fruit.”

He turned to a woman named Naomi. “I saw patience in you when your shop was robbed, and you chose to forgive rather than take revenge. That’s fruit.”

He looked around the circle. “You are all vineyards in the making. The Spirit will prune you. It may hurt at times. He’ll water you with His Word. He’ll shine light on dark places. But you will bear fruit.”

“And do you know why this matters?” he asked.

They nodded slowly, listening.

“Because the world knows what tree we belong to by the fruit we bear.”

Years passed. Barnabas grew older and slower, but his wisdom deepened. He became known throughout the region as a man full of grace and truth – firm in conviction, but soft in spirit.

When persecution rose again, many believers fled to smaller towns and villages. Miriam, now a teacher herself, remembered the lessons by the vineyard. She gathered young believers in her home and repeated Barnabas’s words: “The fruit of the Spirit is not something you force. It’s something you cultivate.”

She told them of Paul and Barnabas, of joy in hardship, of peace in chaos. And she added stories of her own – how the Spirit had helped her forgive, wait, and hope.

One night, many years later, Miriam returned to that vineyard. The vines were still there. The fruit was sweet. And though Barnabas had long gone to be with the Lord, his legacy remained.

She sat under the olive tree and opened the scroll of Galatians once more.

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

She closed her eyes and whispered, “Lord, may my life bear the fruit that honours You.”

And God heard.

For this is what it means to live by the Spirit – not just to believe, but to become.

To become people of love in a world of hate.
People of joy in sorrow.
People of peace in turmoil.
People of patience in frustration.
People of kindness in cruelty.
People of goodness in compromise.
People of faithfulness in trial.
People of gentleness in power.
People of self-control in temptation.

This is fruit that does not rot. This is the fruit that lasts.

And it all begins with reverence – with a heart devoted fully to the God who makes such fruit grow.

In her final years, Miriam would be asked many times, "How do you remain so peaceful, even when life is hard?"

She would smile and reply, "Peace isn't mine – it's His. I just carry it."

She would speak gently to the discouraged, saying, "Let the Spirit work. He does not rush the process. He doesn't crush the bruised. He gently shapes."

She taught that true spiritual maturity was not loud or showy. It was steady. Faithful. It showed up in the small things – how you speak to your family, how you respond when wronged, how you worship when no one sees.

When the church gathered, Miriam would stand and read again the fruit of the Spirit. "Don't try to impress people," she'd say. "Try to reflect Jesus."

She would look at the young women and men around her and remind them, "The fruit you grow today will feed the faith of tomorrow."

And so it did.

One of her students became a missionary. Another became a writer. Another stayed and led the local church with compassion and joy. They did not all go far, but they went deep. And that was enough.

Even now, centuries later, the fruit of the Spirit still grows – wherever hearts are tender, and lives are yielded. The fruit doesn't grow in perfect people. It grows in surrendered people.

People who walk with honour.
Who love with devotion.
Who worship with reverence.

This is the fruit the Spirit grows.

And it is beautiful.

So, ask Him daily – "Lord, grow Your fruit in me." Then wait, trust, and walk. For the Spirit never fails to bring fruit from a life surrendered to God.

This is what it means to live a life of honour, devotion, and reverence: not to strive in our own strength, but to bear the quiet fruit of a Spirit-filled heart.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. What is the difference between "trying harder" and "walking in the Spirit"?
2. What did Barnabas say each fruit of the Spirit looked like in everyday life?
3. Why is it important for spiritual fruit to be grown in community?

Years 9–10

1. How did the character traits of Barnabas and Miriam demonstrate reverence and honour toward God?
2. How do the Fruit of the Spirit reflect the nature of Jesus?
3. In your own words, what does it mean to bear "fruit that lasts"?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following activities to complete:

Option 1: Fruit of the Spirit Garden Display

Create a visual display showing the **9 Fruit of the Spirit** as a flourishing garden.

- Draw or paint each fruit growing from a vine labelled **"Holy Spirit"**
- Add Bible verses and practical examples beneath each fruit
- Title your garden: **"The Fruit That Lasts"**

Option 2: Legacy Letters (Creative Writing)

Write two short letters:

- **Letter 1**: From Barnabas to Miriam, encouraging her to grow in the Spirit
- **Letter 2**: From Miriam to a new believer, years later, passing on the same wisdom
  Use warm, instructive, honourable language reflecting a spiritual mentor's voice.

Option 3: Personal Fruit Tracker (Reflective Journal)

Create a weekly journal chart with these columns:

- Fruit of the Spirit
- How I saw this fruit in my life this week
- How I struggled with it

- A prayer asking God to help it grow

Continue for 7 days, reflecting honestly and reverently.

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

The **Fruit of the Spirit** is not about doing more – it's about becoming more like Christ. God calls us to live in **honour, devotion, and reverence** not just through actions, but through attitudes that reflect His nature.

"Remain in Me, and I in you... apart from Me you can do nothing." – John 15:4
"By their fruit you will recognise them." – Matthew 7:16

These spiritual fruits grow when we yield to the Spirit, walk in humility, and worship with pure hearts.

F) Narration Prompt

Close your eyes and picture the vineyard where Barnabas taught. Picture Miriam returning years later with the scroll in her hand.

Now retell the story in your own words:

- What is the Fruit of the Spirit?
- How did it grow in Barnabas? In Miriam?
- What does it mean for you today?

Speak your narration aloud to a parent or tutor, or write it as a one-page reflection.

Lesson 4.3: Our Dual Nature

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

Civics & Citizenship (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HC8K03** – The values and beliefs of different groups in society.
- **AC9HC9K02** – How values influence individual and collective behaviour in civic life.
- **AC9HC10S01** – Reflect on and evaluate different perspectives, and develop informed conclusions.

History (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HH8K04** – The influence of religious and ethical beliefs on historical and personal identity.
- **AC9HH10S03** – Develop and communicate historical knowledge, understanding and ideas, using sources.

A) Introduction

All Christians experience an internal battle between the **old nature** (the flesh) and the **new nature** (the Spirit). This lesson explores that struggle through the story of Lucius, a fictional believer in Corinth, who learns what it means to fight the daily war within. His story reminds us that spiritual struggle is not failure – it is evidence of life.

Through **honour, devotion, and reverence for God**, we learn to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh.

B) Informational Story – "The War Within: Flesh and Spirit"

Lucius had been a follower of Jesus for three years, but inside he still felt torn.

He lived in Corinth – a city full of noise, wealth, temples, and temptation. The Church there was growing, but so were the pressures. Lucius worked as a tentmaker during the day, and at night he gathered with other believers to worship, read letters from the apostles, and share meals.

But he felt like two people.

There were days he felt close to God – filled with peace and joy, eager to serve and forgive. But there were other days when old habits crept back in. Envy. Pride. Anger. Lust. And after each failure, he would kneel in prayer and ask, "Lord, why am I still like this?"

He wasn't the only one who felt it.

One evening, an elder named Demetrius spoke during the gathering. "Do not be surprised by the battle inside you," he said. "Even Paul – yes, the apostle – struggled. He wrote in his letter to the Romans:

'For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.' (Romans 7:19)

Lucius listened intently.

“You are not two people,” Demetrius continued. “You are one person with two natures – the old self, and the new. The flesh, and the Spirit. And this is the fight of faith. It is not a failure to struggle. It is honourable to resist. It is an act of devotion to crucify the flesh daily, and to walk in reverence toward God.”

Lucius felt tears rise in his eyes.

Maybe he wasn’t lost. Maybe he was still in the fight – and that, in itself, was a sign of life.

After the meeting ended, Lucius approached Demetrius. “How do I fight?” he asked. “Sometimes it feels like I take one step forward and two steps back.”

Demetrius placed a hand on his shoulder. “Let’s take a walk.”

They walked through the quiet streets of Corinth. The sun had set, and oil lamps flickered on doorposts. As they passed the marketplace, Demetrius spoke.

“There are two voices inside every believer,” he said. “One says, ‘Please yourself.’ The other says, ‘Please God.’ One lives in the flesh – what you were before Christ. The other lives in the Spirit – what you are becoming through Christ.”

He paused and looked Lucius in the eye. “The voice you feed is the one that grows stronger.”

Lucius thought for a moment. “How do I feed the Spirit?”

“Through the Word,” said Demetrius. “Through prayer. Through obedience – even when it’s hard. When you say no to sin and yes to God, even in small things, you are training your soul.”

He picked up a fig from a vendor’s basket. “Like a soldier training his body, or a farmer training a vine. The old nature does not leave quietly. But the Spirit is stronger.”

Lucius took a deep breath. “I want to walk in the Spirit. But some days... I fall.”

Demetrius smiled. “Falling isn’t the end. Staying down is. When you fall, confess. Repent. Get up. That is honour. That is reverence.”

Lucius nodded slowly. He was starting to see the fight not as a shameful weakness, but as a sacred war – one worth fighting every day.

Weeks turned into months.

Lucius continued to struggle – but he also began to grow. Each morning, he rose early to pray before work. Each evening, he read from the scrolls Demetrius had lent him. He memorised Paul’s words to the Galatians:

“The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh… They are in conflict with each other.” (Galatians 5:17)

At first, Lucius thought victory would mean never being tempted again. But slowly, he realised victory meant not giving in – even when tempted. There was honour in resistance. There was reverence in saying, “Not my will, but Yours, Lord.”

One evening, a younger believer named Julian approached him after the gathering. “You always seem so steady,” Julian said. “I still wrestle with envy and bitterness. I thought that would end after baptism.”

Lucius laughed gently. “So did I.”

They sat on a stone bench under a fig tree. Lucius shared how he used to flare up in anger at small things. How guilt nearly crushed him. How shame had whispered lies.

“But God didn’t give up on me,” Lucius said. “And I won’t give up either.”

He reached for a smooth stone in his pocket. “Each time I resist sin, I carry one of these. By the end of the day, my robe is heavy with them. And when I pray at night, I lay them at Jesus’ feet and say, ‘Here is my offering today.’”

Julian smiled. “I think I’ll try that.”

Lucius nodded. “The struggle is not a sign of defeat. It’s the mark of a disciple.”

Years later, Lucius stood at the front of the small Corinthian church. His hair had greyed. His shoulders had stooped. But his voice was clear and steady.

He held in his hands a worn scroll – Paul’s letter to the Romans.

“This letter,” he said, “helped me survive my own war within.”

He read aloud:

“So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin… Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:25)

He looked into the eyes of the younger believers gathered there. Some were eager. Others were weary. A few were quietly weeping.

“We all have a war inside us,” Lucius said. “But we do not fight alone. And we do not fight to earn God’s love – we fight because we’ve already been loved.”

He spoke of Julian, now a missionary in Achaia. He spoke of Demetrius, who had died in peace. He spoke of days when the fight was hard – when he failed, when he wept, when he nearly walked away.

“But I kept coming back,” he said. “Not because I was strong, but because Christ held on.”

After the meeting, Lucius walked back to his small home. On the way, he passed an idol market. He remembered when he had once lingered there too long. But now, he walked past with peace.

He lit his lamp, knelt by his bed, and prayed:

“Lord, thank You that I am no longer who I was. Help me to become who You’ve called me to be. Until the fight is done, and I see You face to face.”

That night, he slept in perfect peace.

In the months that followed, Lucius mentored two new believers – Timaeus and Lydia. Timaeus was a fiery speaker, eager to rebuke sin in others. Lydia was quiet, always helping behind the scenes, but doubting her worth.

Lucius taught them both the same truth: "The flesh does not always look evil. Sometimes it looks proud, impatient, or self-reliant. But the Spirit teaches us humility, dependence, and grace."

He brought them to the vineyard outside the city.

"Look at the vines," he said. "Some branches grow fast. Others are slow. But all must be pruned. The gardener doesn't curse the branch – he cuts it so it can bear more fruit."

Lydia asked, "What if I'm afraid to be cut?"

Lucius replied gently, "So was Jesus in Gethsemane. But He said, 'Not my will, but Yours be done.' That is honour. That is reverence."

They knelt among the rows and prayed together.

Over the years, Timaeus learned gentleness. Lydia learned boldness. And Lucius – he learned peace.

When Lucius was close to death, the church gathered around him. He whispered, "The war within does not mean God is far. It means He is still working."

He reached for the hand of a child nearby and said, "Walk in the Spirit. Walk in honour. And when you fall – rise again. That is the life of a saint."

And then he was gone – his war over, his reward secure.

But in the hearts of those he had taught, the battle continued – not in despair, but in **devotion**.

And every time they said no to sin and yes to Christ, they remembered him – and the God who makes victory possible.

And so, the fight within became a path of transformation. Not through shame or fear, but through daily decisions to walk in honour, devotion, and reverence for God – trusting that the Spirit who began the work would be faithful to complete it.

This is the honourable life of a believer – never perfect, always persevering, shaped daily by the Spirit through a holy war fought with devotion and won by grace.

And when their own children asked, "Why do you resist the things everyone else chases?", they would say, "Because we belong to the One who rescued us – and we live to honour Him with all we are, even when it costs us everything."

This is how the Church endures – not through strength of the flesh, but through lives surrendered daily to the Spirit, walking step by step in reverent obedience.

And still today, in cities and villages, homes and churches, the same war continues – and the same Spirit strengthens every heart that chooses honour over ease, devotion over drift, and reverence over rebellion. In this, the battle is not only endured – it is transformed into worship.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. What does it mean to have "two natures" as a Christian?
2. How did Lucius learn to resist the flesh and walk in the Spirit?
3. What daily choices help you feed the Spirit rather than the flesh?

Years 9–10

1. How did Lucius' journey demonstrate honour, devotion, and reverence for God?
2. Why is the battle between flesh and Spirit not a sign of spiritual failure?
3. Reflecting on your own life, what are some ways you can train your soul to walk in step with the Spirit?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following activities to complete:

Option 1: Two Natures Chart – The Daily Battle

Create a two-column chart titled **"The Flesh vs. The Spirit"**.
In each column:

- List behaviours, attitudes, or thoughts that belong to each nature
- Add matching Scriptures (e.g., Galatians 5:16–24, Romans 7)
- Write a prayer of commitment to walk in the Spirit

Option 2: Resistance Stones – A Symbol of Victory

Inspired by Lucius' story:

- Collect small stones or draw stone symbols
- Each time you resist temptation this week, mark or collect one
- At the end of the week, lay them out and pray:

"Lord, here is my offering of honour this week. Thank You for helping me stand."

Optional: Keep the stones in a jar as a symbol of spiritual growth.

Option 3: Legacy Letter – My Battle, My Witness

Write a reflective letter addressed to a future believer (real or imagined):

- Share your struggles with sin and the hope you've found in the Spirit
- Encourage them to persevere in the fight

- Include Bible verses and words of honour, devotion, and reverence

Title it: **"To the One Still Fighting"**

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Christians are not perfect – but they are being perfected.
The struggle between flesh and Spirit is part of the journey of sanctification.

Jesus Himself wrestled in Gethsemane, praying:

"Not My will, but Yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

To walk in the Spirit means to:

- Die daily to the old self
- Honour God even in the unseen choices
- Devote your life to what pleases Him
- Revere His holiness with every thought and decision

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."
– Galatians 5:24

This is not legalism – it is **worship**.

F) Narration Prompt

Retell the story of Lucius in your own words:

- Who was Lucius, and what did he struggle with?
- What did he learn from Demetrius and others?
- How did he demonstrate reverence for God?
- What legacy did he leave?

Say it aloud, record it, or write it down. Include one way you want to grow this week in walking by the Spirit.

TOPIC 5	GROWING AS A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

Lesson 5.1: Prayer, Worship, Hymns

Theme: Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

Civics & Citizenship (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HC8K03** – The values and beliefs of different groups in society.
- **AC9HC9K02** – How values influence individual and collective behaviour in civic life.
- **AC9HC10S02** – Examine ways people express their beliefs and identities and the impacts on society.

History (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HH8K04** – The influence of religious and ethical beliefs on historical and personal identity.
- **AC9HH10S03** – Develop and communicate historical knowledge, understanding and ideas using evidence.

A) Introduction

In this lesson, we explore the powerful role that **prayer, worship, and hymns** played in the early Church – and continue to play in Christian life today. We see how worship is not just about music or tradition, but a **soul-level response of honour, devotion, and reverence to God**.

As you read the story of Silas and the church in Ephesus, reflect on how these practices shaped their faith – and how they can shape yours.

B) Informational Story – "The Songs of the Secret Church"

It was still dark when the church in Ephesus gathered.

By torchlight and in hushed tones, a small group of believers made their way to the house of Lydia, a widow who had opened her courtyard for worship. The Roman authorities had grown suspicious of the Christians again, and gatherings were often moved or hidden. But this did not stop them. They came because they needed to pray. They came because worship strengthened them. And they came because songs lifted their souls when words failed.

Among the group was a teenage boy named Silas, newly baptised. He had heard of Jesus months ago, but only recently had his heart been pierced. Now, he was hungry to know God more deeply. But he didn't yet know how.

"Why do we sing?" Silas whispered to his father that morning.

His father, Marcus, smiled and said, "Because God deserves more than silence. Because joy must find a voice. Because worship teaches us who He is."

As they entered Lydia's home, Silas noticed a scroll resting on a stone table. A psalm was written there in Hebrew:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name…"

The elder leading that morning was named Abijah. As the people sat on cushions and the doors were barred, Abijah stood with quiet authority. "We have come," he said, "not to perform rituals, but to seek the living God."

He lifted his hands and prayed, "Lord, receive our words, our silence, our songs – receive us."

Then, a soft voice began to sing. And one by one, voices joined until the entire room filled with music.

Silas sat quietly, unsure of the melody, but feeling its power. The words were simple: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord."

As the song ended, Abijah spoke again. "Brothers and sisters, worship is not just singing. It is surrender. It is laying ourselves before the One who is worthy."

He opened a scroll of Paul's letter to the Ephesians and read:

"Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:18–19)

"Prayer," he continued, "is not merely asking. It is adoration. Confession. Thanksgiving. And intercession. It is communion with our Maker."

A woman in the back began to weep. Her husband had been arrested the week before. Another woman placed an arm around her and quietly began to sing:

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want…"

Abijah knelt. "Let us bring our pain to the One who sees," he said.

And so the room fell into deep, reverent prayer. Some prayed in whispers. Some in tears. Others simply bowed in silence.

Silas had never experienced anything like it. He had heard temple chants before – loud and ornate. But this was different. It was holy. Honest. Real.

After the prayer, Abijah rose again. “We sing not to escape suffering, but to meet God within it. We pray not to change Him, but to be changed. We worship not for what we receive – but for who He is.”

Silas now understood: this was no ritual. This was relationship.

After the gathering, Silas approached Abijah outside. The sun was now rising, casting golden light across the rooftops.

“Sir,” Silas said, “why does singing make me feel both joy and sorrow?”

Abijah chuckled. “Because worship speaks to your spirit. It reminds you of God’s holiness – and your need for Him. It stretches your soul with both longing and hope.”

Silas thought for a moment. “And the hymns – where do they come from?”

“Some,” said Abijah, “are from the Psalms. Others were written in prison. Some were sung by Jesus Himself.”

He opened a scroll to Matthew and pointed. “On the night He was betrayed, Jesus sang a hymn with His disciples. Imagine that. In the shadow of the cross – He sang.”

Silas was silent.

Abijah looked at him kindly. “You are young, Silas. But already, you worship with honour. That matters.”

Silas blushed. “But I don’t know the words yet.”

“Then worship with your heart,” Abijah said. “Your voice will follow.”

That evening, Silas returned home and tried writing his own prayer. He wasn’t a poet, but his words were honest:

“Lord, I don’t know much, but I want to know You.
Teach me to pray. Teach me to sing.
Let my life be a hymn that pleases You.”

The next Sabbath, he brought it to the gathering and shyly shared it aloud.

No one laughed. In fact, several nodded with tears in their eyes.

From that day on, Silas began to keep a scroll of his own – filled with hymns and prayers. His journey of worship had begun.

A few months later, persecution intensified. Roman soldiers raided several homes, including Lydia's. Believers were scattered. Silas and his father fled to a nearby village in the hills.

There, the church met in caves and vineyards. The gatherings were smaller, quieter, but no less sacred.

Silas continued to write. One day, while watching a shepherd with his flock, he wrote:

"You lead me beside still waters, even when the world is not still.
You are my refuge, even when I must run."

He sang it softly that night during their secret meeting. Others joined in, and soon the melody was passed from village to village. It became one of their most loved hymns.

Years passed. Silas grew older. He became a teacher, then an elder. His scroll of hymns was now thick with prayers – some his, some collected from others. Each one bore a story. A trial. A moment of surrender.

When younger believers asked, "Why do we still sing when things are hard?" Silas would smile.

"Because worship is not about escape – it is about truth. And truth doesn't change in hardship. God is still worthy."

He taught them how to pray not just with words, but with posture – with bowed heads, with lifted hands, with open hearts.

He taught them to sing not just in joy, but in lament. "David did," he'd say. "Jesus did. We can too."

When he was very old, Silas gave his hymn scroll to a young girl named Phoebe.

"Add to it," he told her. "Let your life be a new verse."

She did. And others did too.

The scroll became a treasured inheritance – evidence that worship never dies.

One evening, after a gathering beneath the stars, Phoebe asked Silas a final question.

"Do you ever regret all the losses? The dangers? The hiding?"

Silas looked up at the sky. "Sometimes I wish life had been easier," he said. "But never once have I wished for less of God."

He turned to her and added, "Worship was how I survived. It reminded me who I was – and whose I was. It reminded me of eternity."

He spoke slowly now. "Prayer is the breath of faith. Hymns are its song. And worship – worship is the soul bowing low before the One who sits high."

Phoebe later wrote those words into the scroll, adding a new hymn of her own:

"Even if the stars fall,
Even if the world burns,
I will lift my hands.

I will lift my voice.
For You remain."

As the years went on, the scroll passed through many hands. Each added something – a prayer of sorrow, a hymn of joy, a thanksgiving after deliverance. By the time the Empire changed and Christianity became more accepted, the scroll was known as *The Songs of the Secret Church*.

And yet, even with safety, the spirit of reverence remained.

They taught their children: "Do not worship with boredom. Worship with awe. For the God we sing to is not small."

When buildings replaced caves, when choirs replaced whispers, they reminded the church:

"It is not the sound that makes it worship. It is the heart."

And still today, across nations and generations, voices rise not out of obligation, but out of devotion.

This is worship in spirit and truth.

So let every believer, young and old, lift up their voice with honour. Let every house of prayer echo with reverence. Let every hymn, even whispered in weakness, rise like incense to the throne of God. For He is worthy – not only of words, but of hearts fully bowed in devotion.

And when the songs are passed on – through families, through churches, through quiet morning prayers and bold evening choirs – they carry more than melody. They carry faith. They carry memory. They carry the sacred echo of saints who once gathered in secret and now worship in glory. This is the legacy of prayer, worship, and hymns – an unbroken anthem of honour to the God who never changes.

And so, with every note sung and every prayer whispered, the church continues to honour God – not just with voices, but with lives surrendered in holy reverence.

Would you like me to now display the **complete lesson**, including activities, reflection questions, and narration?

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. Why did the early Christians in the story value worship, even when it was dangerous?
2. What does Silas learn about God through prayer and singing?
3. What do you think it means to worship with reverence and not just routine?

Years 9–10

1. How did the hymns in the story become more than music for the believers?
2. What does it mean that "worship is the soul bowing low before the One who sits high"?

3. How do prayer and worship shape your personal sense of devotion to God?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following to complete:

Option 1: Hymn Scroll of Devotion

Create your own scroll or journal entry titled **"Songs of My Soul."**
Include:

- A short prayer of adoration
- A worship song lyric or Bible verse that speaks to your heart
- A paragraph explaining how this expresses reverence for God

Decorate with simple illustrations or patterns like vines, candles, or music symbols.

Option 2: Sacred Space Mini-Model

Design a model or drawing of a sacred worship space used by the early Church (e.g., home courtyard, cave church, vineyard).
Include:

- Places for singing, Scripture reading, prayer
- A short written explanation of how this space reflects honour and reverence
- Optional: Add a fictional hymn title or verse sung in that space

---

Option 3: Family Hymn & Reflection Night

Choose a hymn or worship song with your family. Together:

- Sing or listen to it
- Read a Scripture passage that connects to the lyrics
- Share with each other what part of the hymn or Scripture touches your heart
- Close with prayer and each person writing down one line that could become part of your "family hymn"

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Worship is central to the Christian life – not because God needs our praise, but because we are made to glorify Him.

Jesus said,

"The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth..." – John 4:23

The Bible shows us:

- **David** worshipped with psalms
- **Paul and Silas** worshipped in prison
- **Jesus** worshipped before going to the cross

True worship flows from a heart of reverence. Whether we sing in secret gatherings or loud assemblies, God looks at the posture of the soul.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly… singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." – Colossians 3:16

F) Narration Prompt

Retell the story of Silas and the secret church in your own words:

- Why did they keep gathering to pray and worship, even under pressure?
- What role did prayer and hymns play in their lives?
- How did honour and reverence shape Silas's journey?

Tell your parent or tutor, or write a 1-page narration to include in your personal devotion journal.

Lesson 5.2: Bible Study

Theme: Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

Civics & Citizenship (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HC8K03** – The values and beliefs of different groups in society.
- **AC9HC9K02** – How values influence individual and collective behaviour in civic life.
- **AC9HC10S02** – Examine ways people express their beliefs and identities and the impacts on society.

History (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HH8K04** – The influence of religious and ethical beliefs on historical and personal identity.
- **AC9HH10S03** – Develop and communicate historical knowledge, understanding and ideas using evidence.

A) Introduction

Bible study is more than reading – it is the act of drawing near to the living voice of God through His written Word. In this lesson, we walk alongside Reuben, a young believer in Antioch, who learns how to approach the Scriptures with **honour, devotion, and reverence**.

As you read his story, reflect on your own relationship with the Bible. How do you read it? What posture do you bring to its pages?

B) Informational Story – "The Scroll and the Voice"

The old man's hands shook slightly as he unrolled the scroll.

In a shaded courtyard tucked behind a humble home in Antioch, a small group of believers sat in quiet anticipation. They had gathered to study the Scriptures – a habit that had become both lifeline and compass for them. The world outside was uncertain, but within these walls, truth was firm beneath their feet.

The elder's name was Matthias. Once a scribe in Jerusalem, he had fled persecution years ago. Now, with faded ink stains on his fingers and worn sandals on his feet, he taught younger disciples what it meant to seek God through His Word.

Among them sat Reuben, a sharp-minded but impatient young man who had only recently confessed Christ. His questions were many. His heart was hungry. But he didn't yet understand the discipline of study – why it mattered, or why it must be pursued with reverence.

"Why must we read it so slowly?" Reuben asked that morning.

Matthias smiled gently. “Because these are not just words. These are the very breath of God.”

He paused and lifted the scroll of Isaiah. “This was written 700 years before Christ – and yet it speaks of Him clearly. When we study the Scriptures, we are not just reading history. We are stepping into God’s eternal conversation.”

Reuben leaned forward.

Matthias began reading aloud, slowly, word by word. And as he did, something shifted in Reuben’s heart. He was no longer just listening to text. He was listening for the voice of the One who spoke it.

The study that day focused on Isaiah 53.

As Matthias read the prophecy, Reuben felt goosebumps rise on his arms.

“He was pierced for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him…”

“How could Isaiah have known?” Reuben whispered.

“Because the Spirit spoke through him,” Matthias replied. “Scripture is not man's invention. It is God-breathed. Inspired. Preserved. And when we study it, we are placing our ears next to the mouth of God.”

The group sat in reverent silence.

Matthias leaned in. “But be warned. This is not a casual pursuit. The Word must not be twisted to suit us. We must be shaped by it. This is not a scroll to conquer – but a truth to surrender to.”

Reuben nodded slowly.

Over the coming weeks, Reuben began to change. He copied verses onto scraps of parchment. He asked fewer showy questions and more honest ones. He began to sit in silence after each reading, meditating on what he heard.

One day, Matthias handed him a different scroll – one of the gospels.

“Read this slowly,” he said. “Mark every time Jesus speaks. Write down every question you have. Ask the Spirit to teach you.”

Reuben obeyed. And before long, he began to teach others. He didn’t preach loudly. He shared gently. His words came not from pride – but from a growing awe.

The Word had become his delight. And Scripture became not just a tool – but a treasure.

Not long after, persecution came again.

Roman patrols passed through Antioch, questioning the loyalty of those who followed “the Way.” Matthias and Reuben met in secret, now joined by believers from other cities. Some had lost homes. Others had lost loved ones. All clung to the Scriptures like a rope in stormy waters.

One night, Reuben sat beside a grieving man named Eliab whose son had been taken. Eliab held a scroll but could not bring himself to read it. His hands trembled. His voice broke.

"I want to believe He is good," Eliab whispered. "But I don't see it."

Reuben did not argue. He opened the Psalms and read aloud:

"The Lord is close to the broken-hearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:18)

He then read from Romans:

"Nothing can separate us from the love of God…"

Eliab began to weep. "I've heard these before," he said. "But tonight, they feel new."

"Because God speaks fresh through old words," Reuben said gently. "And He does not forget His promises – even when we forget to believe them."

That night, Eliab slept for the first time in days – with a scroll under his head like a pillow.

Over time, Reuben became known as a scribe. Not only for his careful copies of Scripture, but for his ability to guide others through it with patience and reverence.

He taught that the Word must be read slowly, humbly, repeatedly.

"Return to it as you would a well," he'd say. "You do not drink once. You drink daily."

Years passed. Reuben grew older, his beard turning grey and his eyes lined with wisdom.

He no longer rushed through the Scriptures. He would sit by the fire and unroll a scroll with the care one might give to a sacred relic. Younger believers often joined him, eager to learn not just what was written – but how to read with reverence.

One evening, a girl named Tirzah asked him, "Why do you still read every day? Don't you know it all by now?"

Reuben smiled. "I read not because I have mastered it, but because it has mastered me."

He handed her the scroll of John's Gospel. "Start here," he said. "Underline every question Jesus asks. They are not just for the people back then – they are for us too."

Tirzah returned the next day, wide-eyed. "Why did Jesus ask so many questions?"

"Because He wanted the listener to search their heart," Reuben replied. "The Word is not for debate. It is for transformation."

That year, Reuben began compiling his notes – pages of insights, copied verses, and prayers. He called it his *scroll of understanding*, though he insisted it was not finished.

When his time drew near, he gathered his disciples and read from Psalm 119:

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path…”

He added softly, “This light has never failed me.”

And then, to the younger ones, he said:

“Treat these pages with honour. Do not rush. Do not twist. Do not forget. Let the Word shape your days, your choices, your character.”

His voice grew thin, but his words were strong:

“This is not just ink on parchment. This is the voice of God, waiting to be heard.”

He died with the scroll still in his hands.

Tirzah and the others wept. But they did not stop reading.

In fact, they read more. They copied his notes. They passed them on. And over the decades, new scrolls appeared, inspired by his love for Scripture – filled with stories, insights, and teachings rooted in reverence.

The believers became known not just as followers of Jesus, but as “people of the Word.”

And so it continued.

Some read at dawn. Others at night. Some sang the Psalms in the fields. Others studied the Law in crowded rooms.

But in every scroll, every verse, every gathering – the theme was the same:

Honour the Word. Devote your life. Revere the One who speaks.

And still today, the pattern remains.

Every believer who opens the Bible joins a tradition stretching across centuries – where the Word is not handled casually, but carefully. Where verses are not recited to impress, but received with trembling joy. Where study is not academic, but devotional. And where, in quiet corners and crowded rooms, the Spirit still whispers through the ink: “This is the way. Walk in it.”

Those who honour the Scriptures do not merely gain knowledge. They gain sight. They see God more clearly. Themselves more honestly. And life more eternally.

Bible study, at its best, is not a duty – it is a door. A door into the mind of God. A door into the heart of Christ. A door that opens when we approach with reverence, ready to be changed.

So open it again, and again, and again.

Not to master it – but to let it master you.

Years from now, when Tirzah had become a teacher herself, she would remember Reuben’s words. She would gather children and elders alike, open the scrolls, and say, “Do not skim these words. Drink them. Let

them search you. Let them undo you. Let them rebuild you." And as she read aloud – whether by lamplight or moonlight – hearts would be stirred once more. For the Word of God, when honoured and revered, does not grow old. It grows deeper. Stronger. And it leaves behind a legacy of those who lived not by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God.

And when future generations ask why we study these ancient pages, may we answer as Reuben once did:
"Because within them, we hear God's voice. And those who listen closely will never walk in darkness."

This is the legacy of Bible study – an enduring anthem of honour, devotion, and reverence for the God who speaks still.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. Why did Matthias teach the Scriptures so slowly and carefully?
2. What changed in Reuben as he began to study the Word more deeply?
3. What does it mean to let the Bible "master you" rather than just reading it?

Years 9–10

1. How does the story demonstrate that Bible study is both personal and communal?
2. What can we learn from the way Reuben read and shared the Scriptures?
3. How can regular Bible study help shape your identity and decisions?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following:

Option 1: Create a Scroll of Reflection

Using paper strips or rolled parchment, create your own mini scroll.
Write out:

- A Bible passage that speaks to you
- A short prayer responding to it
- One insight or question you have

Decorate it simply and keep it as a reminder to read the Bible with reverence.

Option 2: "God's Voice" Journal Prompt

Write a two-page journal entry reflecting on the following:

- A time when a Bible verse stood out to you
- How you knew it was "God speaking"

- How that moment changed you
  Close with a prayer asking God to help you read His Word with honour and devotion.

Option 3: Verse Mapping Exercise

Choose a single verse (e.g., Psalm 119:105 or 2 Timothy 3:16).
On a large sheet of paper:

- Write the verse in the centre
- Around it, note: definitions of key words, connections to other verses, applications for life
- End with a heading: **"This is the voice of God – how will I respond?"**

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Bible study is a **sacred discipline**. It is where the believer meets the eternal wisdom of God in written form.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness…" – 2 Timothy 3:16

Jesus Himself studied and quoted the Scriptures constantly. He said,

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." – Matthew 4:4

When we study the Bible with reverence, we are not gaining information – we are gaining **formation**. The Word is meant to shape our thinking, our speech, and our choices.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." – Psalm 119:105

F) Narration Prompt

Retell the story of Reuben in your own words:

- Who taught him the Scriptures, and what changed in him?
- How did Bible study help him through trials?
- What legacy did he leave?

Speak this aloud to a parent/tutor, or write a 1–2 paragraph retelling. End with a reflection:
"What do I want my own Bible study habits to look like from this day forward?"

Lesson 5.3: Sabbath and Fellowship

Theme: Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

Civics & Citizenship (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HC8K03** – The values and beliefs of different groups in society
- **AC9HC9K02** – How values influence individual and collective behaviour in civic life
- **AC9HC10S02** – Examine ways people express their beliefs and identities and the impacts on society

History (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HH8K04** – The influence of religious and ethical beliefs on historical and personal identity
- **AC9HH10S03** – Develop and communicate historical knowledge, understanding and ideas using evidence

---

A) Introduction

The Sabbath is more than a day off. Fellowship is more than being together. Both are sacred rhythms that help believers honour God, grow in devotion, and walk in reverence. This lesson follows Damaris, a first-century Christian woman, as she discovers how Sabbath rest and Christian fellowship become the very **heartbeat of worship** in her life.

B) Informational Story – "In Quietness and Honour"

In a quiet olive grove just outside Jerusalem, the sun filtered through silver-green leaves. It was the seventh day – the Sabbath – and a small gathering of believers had assembled to rest, worship, and share a meal. Among them was a woman named Damaris, who had once travelled to the city for trade but had remained after becoming a follower of the Way.

Damaris had seen many kinds of days – fast-paced markets, harsh Roman patrols, long nights of worry – but the Sabbath was different. It was a day of breathing. A day of remembering. A day of delight.

She knelt near the fire and placed a simple loaf of barley bread beside a pot of stew. Others were arriving: an elderly couple from Emmaus, a young mother with her son, two brothers who had carried their scrolls tucked beneath their robes.

The host, a man named Elias, greeted each one with a warm embrace. "You are welcome here," he said. "This is not just a meal. This is our offering of peace."

They sat in a circle. Damaris opened a song from the Psalms:

"Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

The Sabbath was more than a rule – it was a rhythm. And fellowship was more than community – it was communion. For Damaris, these weekly gatherings had become the very heartbeat of her faith. They reminded her who she was. They reminded her whose she was.

She had learned that to honour the Sabbath was not simply to stop working – it was to start worshipping.

After the psalm, Elias spoke. "Today, we remember God's rest. Not because He was tired – but because He wanted to delight in His creation. The Sabbath is not a pause for the sake of stopping – it is a return to what is good."

He looked around at the group. "Six days we labour. But on the seventh, we remember that we are not machines. We are not slaves. We are children of the Living God."

Damaris closed her eyes, letting the truth settle deep. She had once thought rest was laziness, that taking time off was weakness. But now, she saw that it was a form of reverence. By keeping the Sabbath, she was saying, "I trust You, Lord. The world does not depend on me. It depends on You."

The group then began to share what God had been doing in their lives. One spoke of a neighbour who had come to faith. Another gave thanks for provision during a dry season. A young boy recited part of Isaiah from memory. There was laughter, tears, and the passing of food.

When they broke bread, Elias lifted it high. "As Jesus did, we do. We remember His body broken, His blood shed, His rest in the tomb, and His rising again."

And with that, they ate – not as strangers, but as family. The meal was simple, but it tasted like joy.

Damaris lingered after the meal, speaking with the others, praying quietly under the trees. Her soul felt full. This – this was Sabbath. This was fellowship. And this was worship.

Later that month, the Roman prefect issued a new order forbidding all Christian gatherings larger than five. Fear rippled through the city. Many believers stayed indoors, whispering prayers instead of singing. Elias sent word that they would still meet – but in smaller groups, in scattered locations.

One Sabbath, Damaris hosted a group in her home – just four others. She swept her courtyard, laid out cushions, and prepared lentil soup. It was quiet. More fragile. But when they sang a psalm together, the same peace returned.

That night, after the others had gone, she knelt by her lamp and prayed, "Lord, even if it is just two or three, let us honour You in rest and in fellowship. Let Your Spirit dwell among us."

And He did.

The following weeks were hard. One believer was arrested. Another fled. Still, the remnant continued to gather. And Damaris found herself increasingly drawn to the role of encourager. She began visiting the elderly who couldn't walk to the meetings. She brought bread to widows and prayed with them. "The Sabbath doesn't need to be one day," she told a grieving woman. "It can be wherever you meet God with rest and honour."

Damaris began copying verses about rest and community onto scraps of parchment, leaving them tucked in clay jars for others to find:

“In returning and rest you shall be saved…”
“Let us not give up meeting together…”
“There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God…”

The Sabbath was no longer just a day for her. It was a way of being.

Years passed. Damaris grew older. Her hair turned silver, but her eyes remained bright. She continued to honour the Sabbath and nurture fellowship, even when her steps grew slower.

One day, a young woman named Miriam asked, “Why do you still do all this, Damaris? The prayers, the meals, the gathering?”

Damaris smiled. “Because it honours the Lord. Because it reminds us we are not alone. And because God delights when His children rest in Him and love one another.”

Miriam began to join her – first to cook, then to pray, then to lead. Damaris taught her to read the psalms aloud, to welcome with joy, to ask, “How is your soul?” with sincerity.

Together, they began meeting with other young women. Some had lost fathers. Others bore scars from a harsh world. But around bread and prayer, tears softened, and trust grew. These meetings, small and sacred, became the anchor of many lives.

When Damaris could no longer walk far, she gathered in her room. Her bed became the circle. Her voice, though quieter, still led the blessing:

“You are my resting place, O Lord. You are my peace.”

One Sabbath evening, she whispered her last prayer. Miriam held her hand. “Your rest is complete now,” she said.

The next Sabbath, the gathering was quiet. Then Miriam stood, held Damaris’ worn parchment scroll, and began:

“Come, let us worship and bow down…”

And they did.

In every generation since, there have been those who keep the Sabbath – not merely as a duty, but as a devotion. Who gather not just out of habit, but out of reverence.

And always, they find what Damaris did:

In God’s rest, we are restored. In fellowship, we are made whole.

And so it continues.

Across cities and centuries, through joy and trial, the Church still remembers the rhythm. On Sabbath days or Sundays, in quiet homes or sunlit halls, believers pause. They gather. They worship.

Not because they must – but because they may.

They rest to say: “God, You are enough.”
They fellowship to say: “We are one in You.”
They sing to say: “You are worthy of our time, our breath, our praise.”

To honour the Sabbath is to declare trust. To prioritise fellowship is to live with open hands. These are not rules to follow – they are gifts to treasure.

When Christians cease from striving and come together to break bread, lift prayers, share tears, and remember the resurrection – they are not doing something small. They are joining in something eternal.

Damaris may have passed, but her legacy lives in every table that becomes a sanctuary, in every meal shared in Jesus’ name, in every quiet pause that whispers, “This time belongs to the Lord.”

So take your place in the circle. Speak the psalms. Share the story. Pass the bread.

And let your life echo with reverent rest and devoted love.

This is Sabbath.
This is fellowship.
This is worship.

Years later, Miriam became a leader in the wider church. Her gatherings grew, but she never let them lose the intimacy of those early Sabbaths with Damaris. She taught new believers to slow down, to listen, to honour time as sacred. “We are not just filling hours,” she said. “We are entering holy space.”

When asked how to build a strong church, she would reply, “Start with a table. Start with prayer. Start with shared bread and open hearts.”

She carried with her the old parchment of psalms, now faded and patched. And each Sabbath, she unrolled it and read with trembling reverence – because these were not just words. They were reminders. Markers of the faithfulness of God through every season of rest and storm.

One evening, a child in her group asked, “Why do we keep coming here every week?”

She bent low, smiled, and said, “Because this is how we grow strong. Not by doing more – but by resting in the One who has done it all.”

And in the candlelight, the children sang, the elders smiled, and the presence of God drew near.

This was still the Sabbath. This was still fellowship. And this – always – was still worship.

In honour, in devotion, and in reverent stillness, they gathered – and in doing so, they touched eternity.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. What does Damaris learn about God through Sabbath rest and fellowship?
2. Why does she continue to meet with other believers even when it becomes risky?
3. How does Sabbath become more than just a rule for her?

Years 9–10

1. How is the Sabbath shown as a time of honour, devotion, and worship in Damaris's life?
2. What do you learn about the role of fellowship in sustaining the early Church?
3. In what ways does this story challenge your current habits of rest or gathering with others?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following:

Option 1: Create a Sabbath Plan

Design your own meaningful Sabbath rhythm for one day per week.
Include:

- A plan for spiritual rest (worship, Scripture, prayer)
- A plan for physical rest
- Ways to connect with family or friends through fellowship
- A memory verse to focus on that day

Decorate the page and hang it somewhere visible.

Option 2: "Fellowship Meal" Planning Activity

Plan a simple fellowship meal you could have with other Christians.

- What food would you prepare?
- What Scripture would you read aloud?
- What question would you ask the group to prompt discussion and spiritual reflection?
- What prayer would you pray together?

Write or sketch your plan in a notebook or on paper. If possible, try it out with your family or church group.

Option 3: Honour and Rest Journal

Write a journal entry titled **"This Time Belongs to the Lord."**
Reflect on:

- What kind of rest refreshes your soul
- What relationships bring you closer to God
- Why God commands His people to rest and fellowship
- What one small change you can make this week to honour God through rest and community

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Sabbath and fellowship are not just Old Testament traditions. Jesus **honoured** the Sabbath and **deepened** its meaning by reminding His followers that it was made **for man** (Mark 2:27) – to restore, to reconnect, and to reverently remember God's sufficiency.

"Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." – Matthew 11:28
"Let us not give up meeting together… but encourage one another." – Hebrews 10:25
"In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength." – Isaiah 30:15

God calls His people to honour Him by resting in Him and loving one another. Fellowship and Sabbath, when lived with **reverence**, train our hearts to trust, slow down, worship deeply, and love faithfully.

F) Narration Prompt

Retell the story of Damaris in your own words:

- Why did she value the Sabbath so much?
- How did she care for others through fellowship?
- What legacy did she leave behind?

Tell it aloud to a parent or tutor, or write a one-paragraph retelling. Finish with a response sentence:
"Here is one way I want to honour God through rest and fellowship this week..."

TOPIC 6	CONSTANTINE

Lesson 6.1: Constantine's Vision & the Edict of Milan

Theme: Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

Civics & Citizenship (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HC8K03** – The values and beliefs of different groups in society
- **AC9HC9K02** – How values influence individual and collective behaviour in civic life
- **AC9HC10K02** – The impact of religion on shaping personal and social identity

History (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HH8K04** – The influence of religious and ethical beliefs on historical and personal identity
- **AC9HH9K02** – Causes and effects of significant events in the ancient to early modern world
- **AC9HH10S03** – Develop and communicate historical knowledge using evidence

---

A) Introduction

In this lesson, you will explore one of the most important turning points in Christian history – the conversion of Emperor Constantine and the issuing of the **Edict of Milan**. This moment brought an end to centuries of persecution and opened the way for Christians to worship freely.

As you read this true story, reflect on how **honour, devotion, and reverence for God** played a role in Constantine's transformation – and how it still affects your own freedom to worship today.

B) Informational Story – "In This Sign, Conquer"

The sun hung low over the plains outside Rome, casting a golden haze over the camp of the Roman army. The air smelled of iron and leather. Soldiers moved briskly, sharpening swords, adjusting armour, preparing for a battle that would determine the future of the Empire.

Among them stood a tall, strong man in his early thirties – Constantine, son of Constantius, now a general poised for civil war against his rival, Maxentius. Constantine had already won admiration for his discipline

and leadership. But he had not yet embraced the Christian God. Like many Romans, he believed in the old gods of Jupiter, Mars, and Apollo.

But something was stirring. For months, Constantine had heard whispers of a strange sect – followers of a man called Christ. Their worship was quiet, their courage unshakable. They refused to worship the emperor, yet they did not rebel. He had seen them suffer – and die – with peace in their eyes.

On the eve of battle, as tension gripped the camp, Constantine stepped away alone. He climbed a ridge overlooking the field and looked out toward Rome. His empire was in chaos. The old gods had offered no peace. He needed something greater – something true.

And then it happened.

According to multiple accounts, including his own testimony later in life, Constantine looked to the sky and saw something astonishing: a bright cross of light, formed above the sun. And with it, words in Latin:

"In this sign, conquer."

He stood frozen. Was it a trick of light? A divine message?

That night, he dreamed. A figure appeared – clothed in radiant white, bearing the same sign – and told him to place it on his soldiers' shields.

The symbol was the Chi-Rho: the first two Greek letters of "Christ."

When Constantine awoke, the vision remained vivid in his mind. He ordered the symbol to be painted on the shields of his men. Many were confused – some even afraid – but they obeyed. They called it the "strange sign," yet they followed their commander into battle with it displayed.

On the 28th of October, 312 AD, Constantine's army marched toward the Milvian Bridge, where Maxentius had fortified his position along the Tiber River. Maxentius had twice the number of troops. His men were rested, well-equipped, and defending their own capital.

By all earthly wisdom, Constantine should have lost.

But the battle turned unexpectedly. Maxentius's forces became trapped between the river and their own defensive works. As they attempted to retreat over the bridge, it collapsed beneath the weight of retreating soldiers. Maxentius himself drowned in the Tiber.

Constantine's forces stood victorious.

The Christian symbol on their shields became a sign of wonder, fear, and curiosity throughout the empire. Constantine, awed and changed, entered Rome not only as emperor – but as a man humbled by the God who had delivered him.

He did not immediately become a Christian in doctrine, but from that day forward, his heart leaned toward Christ. He spoke with bishops. He protected churches. He asked questions about Scripture and the cross.

The following year, in 313 AD, Constantine met with Licinius – his fellow emperor in the East – and they drafted a new imperial policy:

The Edict of Milan.

For the first time in centuries, Christianity was declared a lawful religion. Persecution ended. Confiscated property was returned. Churches were allowed to gather freely. And faith was no longer a crime.

Constantine's relationship with the Christian God grew slowly but sincerely. Though he did not yet fully understand all Christian doctrine, he spoke often of Christ in public, referred to the "Supreme God," and began enacting reforms that shocked the Roman world.

He issued laws that protected children from abuse. He reduced the brutality of punishments. He outlawed the branding of slaves' faces, saying that the image of God should not be marred. He exempted Christian ministers from certain taxes and gave bishops legal power to act as judges in civil disputes.

But more than political favour, Constantine sought wisdom.

He frequently met with bishops like Ossius of Corduba and later Eusebius of Caesarea. He invited them to his palace, listened to sermons, and asked questions. At night, he would pace his gardens reading the Gospels aloud, often stopping to copy verses by hand.

"Why do you read it so often?" his son Crispus once asked.

Constantine replied, "Because in these words, I have found a King greater than Caesar."

But not all welcomed his reforms. Many Roman senators still clung to the old gods. Pagan temples still operated across the empire. Constantine's partial conversion disturbed them. Yet he did not flinch. He declared Sunday – the Lord's Day – a day of rest across the empire. He had crosses placed on his imperial standard. He donated imperial land to churches and ordered the construction of basilicas across the land.

Most famously, he began construction of a new capital – **Constantinople** – that would become a centre for Christian worship and learning for over a thousand years.

In the later years of his reign, Constantine continued to champion peace among Christian communities.

When disputes broke out between Eastern and Western bishops – especially about the nature of Christ – Constantine called for a council to promote unity. In 325 AD, he summoned over 300 bishops to meet at Nicaea. It was the first worldwide gathering of the Church.

There, the Nicene Creed was born – a declaration that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man, "begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father." Constantine funded the council, presided over the opening, and listened intently as doctrine was debated.

Though not a theologian, he loved the peace it brought.

In his final days, Constantine withdrew from public life and travelled to the East. He had delayed baptism – hoping, as many did then, to be cleansed of sins at the end of life. On his deathbed, he finally asked for baptism in the name of Christ.

"I have waited," he said, "not from doubt – but from desire to honour this moment. Let me be washed, as my soldiers were marked – under the sign of the cross."

He died in 337 AD with a cross over his chest and a prayer on his lips.

The impact of his life rippled across continents. Persecution was gone. Churches were thriving. The once-feared followers of Jesus were now free to preach, build, and serve.

Though history debates his politics and policies, one truth remains clear:

God used Constantine to open a door.

And through that door walked generations of worshippers – free at last to honour Christ without fear.

And so the Church remembered.

They remembered the young general who saw a cross of light in the sky and marched under it with courage. They remembered the emperor who knelt before a King higher than himself. They remembered how the empire that once hunted them now protected them.

But more than remembering Constantine, they remembered the God he turned to.

Generations later, in churches across Europe and the East, Christians told the story of Constantine's vision to children. Artists painted him with the Chi-Rho in gold. Scholars studied the Edict of Milan as a moment of providence.

Some criticised his imperfections. Others defended his reforms. But all agreed – something changed after Constantine.

Where once the faithful worshipped in catacombs, now they sang in basilicas. Where once crosses marked graves, now they marked banners and buildings.

Yet the true power of Constantine's legacy was not in bricks or crowns. It was in the hearts that turned to God because the doors had been opened. It was in the freedom to honour God in daylight. It was in the ripple of courage that came from one man's moment of reverence.

To honour God with power is rare. But Constantine tried. And the Church grew.

Today, when we gather freely to worship, when we meet in open spaces with Bibles in hand, we walk through the door that once opened in a vision – in the light of a cross.

And we remember: to rule is nothing. But to kneel before the true King – that is everything.

And even now, whenever a believer sees a cross atop a building, or reads the words of the Nicene Creed, or worships without fear of persecution, they stand in the light of that ancient promise:
"In this sign, conquer" – not by sword, but by surrender. Not with might, but with reverence. Not in power, but in honour of the One who reigns forever.

And so the cross that once shone in the sky still shines in hearts today – not as a political symbol, but as a holy invitation:
to honour Christ with every breath, every choice, and every crown laid at His feet.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. What did Constantine see in the sky before his battle with Maxentius?
2. What was the Edict of Milan, and why was it important?
3. How did Constantine begin to honour the Christian God even before he was baptised?

Years 9–10

1. What do Constantine's decisions show about his growing reverence for God?
2. How did his vision and his policies change the experience of Christians in the Roman Empire?
3. Do you think Constantine's example shows that political power can honour God? Why or why not?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following:

Option 1: Design the Edict Scroll

Create a parchment-style poster titled **"The Edict of Milan"**.
Include:

- A short summary of the edict (in your own words)
- A symbolic illustration (e.g. the Chi-Rho, a cross, or a basilica)
- A personal reflection on how the freedom to worship affects you today
  Decorate it with Roman-inspired borders or lettering.

Option 2: Shield of Faith Craft

Recreate Constantine's battle shield with the Chi-Rho symbol.
Use cardboard or paper to design a Roman shield that includes:

- The Christian Chi-Rho symbol
- A Bible verse about courage or honour (e.g., Romans 1:16 or Ephesians 6:10–11)
- A statement of what you will stand for in your own faith
  Present or hang it in your study space as a reminder to be bold in devotion.

Option 3: Dramatic Reenactment – Constantine's Choice

With a parent/tutor or group:

- Act out a short scene of Constantine the night before battle, wrestling with his fear and seeking truth
- Include a "vision" moment with the cross and a prayer of surrender
- Optionally, write a script or perform it for family
  End your scene with the famous phrase:
  "In this sign, conquer."

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

God often uses unexpected people to accomplish His plans. Constantine was a Roman emperor – a man of power and ambition – yet God revealed truth to him in a vision that changed history.

"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He directs it wherever He pleases." – Proverbs 21:1
"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." – Psalm 33:12
"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to all who believe…" – Romans 1:16

Today, many Christians around the world can gather freely because of what began in Constantine's time. We must **honour God with that freedom**, using it not for comfort – but for worship, courage, and truth.

F) Narration Prompt

Tell the story of Constantine in your own words:

- What did he see?
- What did he do next?
- How did he show honour and devotion to God?

Speak your narration aloud to your parent/tutor or write a short 1–2 paragraph summary.
Finish with this reflection sentence:
"I want to use my freedom to honour God by…"

Lesson 6.2: The Council of Nicaea

Theme: Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

Civics & Citizenship (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HC8K03** – The values and beliefs of different groups in society
- **AC9HC9K02** – How values influence individual and collective behaviour in civic life
- **AC9HC10K02** – The impact of religion on shaping personal and social identity

History (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HH8K04** – The influence of religious and ethical beliefs on historical and personal identity
- **AC9HH9K02** – Causes and effects of significant events in the ancient to early modern world
- **AC9HH10S03** – Develop and communicate historical knowledge using evidence

---

A) Introduction

What do we believe about Jesus Christ? Is He fully God, or only a great man?

This question shook the early Church, even after persecution had ended. In this lesson, you will explore the **Council of Nicaea** and meet courageous defenders of truth like **Athanasius**, who stood for honour, devotion, and reverence for God even when most turned against him.

B) Informational Story – "Very God of Very God"

The year was 325 AD. The Roman Empire stretched from Britain to the sands of Arabia, a vast collection of peoples, cultures, and beliefs. But in the heart of the Christian Church, something was deeply unsettled.

The emperor Constantine, newly converted and eager to bring unity to the realm, had just overcome a long civil war. He had legalised Christianity, built churches, and restored freedoms to the persecuted. Yet even with peace outside, there was division within.

Bishops from different regions were teaching different things. The main dispute centred on one question: **Who is Jesus?**

A priest named Arius, from Alexandria in Egypt, had begun to teach that Jesus was **created** by God and not fully divine. He said Jesus was the highest of all created beings, but not equal with God the Father. Some agreed. Others, including Bishop Alexander and his young deacon Athanasius, strongly opposed him. They argued that Jesus was eternal – **God in the flesh**, not just a messenger or a servant.

The controversy exploded. Churches were divided. Riots broke out in cities. Even families took sides.

Constantine feared that this internal conflict might tear the newly unified Church apart. He sent letters across the empire calling bishops to a council – something never done before. They would meet in the city of Nicaea, near the emperor's palace, and discuss the matter face to face.

Over 300 bishops responded. They came from East and West, some still bearing scars from persecution. Among them were famous leaders like Eusebius, Ossius, and Alexander. And at the heart of it all stood a bold, brilliant young man named Athanasius – ready to defend the truth.

The Council of Nicaea began in late spring.

Bishops arrived in robes and sandals, travelling from deserts, mountains, and distant cities. Some walked with limps, reminders of chains and beatings suffered under previous emperors. Now, under Constantine, they were honoured guests. For the first time, the Church was being treated not as an enemy – but as a voice of influence.

The emperor himself opened the meeting. He wore imperial purple and spoke through a translator, welcoming the bishops and urging them toward unity and truth. "Division in the Church," he said, "is more dangerous than any enemy outside."

The central question was clear: Was Jesus fully divine, equal with the Father from eternity? Or was He a created being, as Arius claimed?

Arius presented his case confidently. "There was a time," he said, "when the Son was not."

Some were swayed. His arguments were logical, and his songs had spread across the empire. But then Athanasius rose – young, fiery, and unshakable. He held nothing back.

"If the Son is not truly God," Athanasius said, "then He cannot save us. Only God can conquer sin and death. If Christ is less than God, our faith is in vain."

He read from the Gospels. He quoted Paul. He wept as he spoke of Christ crucified, risen, and reigning.

Debates lasted for weeks. At times, tempers flared. Some bishops stormed out. Others prayed through the night. One account even tells of a bishop slapping Arius in anger – shocked at what he called blasphemy.

Constantine urged peace but did not take sides – until a majority made their conviction known.

At last, after weeks of debate and prayer, a conclusion was reached.

With the support of Athanasius and other defenders of the full divinity of Christ, the council issued a declaration that would shape Christian belief for centuries: **The Nicene Creed**.

It stated clearly and without hesitation:

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth…
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of the Father before all worlds,
Light of Light, very God of very God,
begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father…"

The phrase "of one substance" – **homoousios** in Greek – was the cornerstone. It meant that Jesus was not a lesser being or a created angel, but the eternal Son, equal with the Father, sharing the same divine nature.

Out of over 300 bishops present, all but two signed the creed. Arius was condemned as a heretic. His teachings were banned, and his writings ordered to be burned. The Church had spoken – not just with logic, but with reverence. Jesus was not a mere servant of God – He was God, the Saviour, worthy of worship and eternal praise.

Constantine was pleased. He hosted a banquet for the bishops. Many had never tasted royal food, but now they sat in peace, talking not of war – but of Christ.

For Athanasius, the battle was only beginning. Though the creed was signed, Arian ideas would rise again. Athanasius would be exiled five times for his defence of the truth. But he stood firm. History would remember him with the phrase:

"Athanasius contra mundum" – Athanasius against the world.

In the years that followed, the Nicene Creed was copied onto scrolls and sent across the empire. Churches began reciting it aloud in worship. New believers learned it by heart before baptism. It became a declaration of truth – a line in the sand separating light from confusion.

In Antioch and Carthage, bishops read it in candle-lit gatherings. In Gaul and Armenia, it was taught to children and debated in schools. Wherever Christians gathered, the words echoed:

"Very God of very God… begotten, not made…"

But not everyone accepted it. Some emperors after Constantine tried to bring back Arianism. Churches were pressured to change. Bishops were threatened. And again, the Church was tested – not with swords from the outside, but with doctrines from within.

And Athanasius? He did not bend.

He wrote letters defending the creed, trained young pastors, and endured slander and exile. At one point, he hid in a tomb. At another, he lived among desert monks. Yet his faith never failed. When asked how he could stand when the empire opposed him, he replied:

"The world is against me. Then I am against the world – so long as I stand with Christ."

He died in 373 AD, an old man whose life had been spent for a single sentence of truth: **Jesus is God.**

Centuries later, in great cathedrals and hidden house churches, Christians still speak the creed. They do not always know its history – but they feel its power. It reminds them who Christ is. It reminds them what the Church is built upon.

And it calls every generation to the same honour, the same reverence, the same devotion that stirred the hearts of Nicaea.

Today, the Nicene Creed continues to shape Christianity. It is recited in cathedrals in Europe, whispered in underground churches in Asia, sung in African fields, and printed in textbooks around the world. It remains a bold confession:

That Jesus Christ is not a teacher alone, not a prophet alone, not even a miracle-worker alone – but **God Himself**, come to rescue His people.

For this truth, Athanasius suffered. For this truth, the Church gathered. For this truth, generations of believers stood firm in the face of kings, mobs, and tyrants.

But the creed is not just history – it is worship.

To say "of one substance with the Father" is to fall on our knees. It is to see Christ as more than a saviour of circumstance. It is to see Him as the Holy One, eternal, uncreated, almighty. It is to honour Him – not merely with words – but with surrendered hearts.

And it raises a question for every believer today:

Will we speak truth even when it's hard? Will we defend what is holy? Will we, like Athanasius, stand for Christ – against the world if necessary?

To honour God means more than reciting a creed. It means living it.

So take up the ancient confession. Hold it close. Say it not only with your mouth – but with your life.

And remember – your faith is not new. It is old, tested, refined, and beautiful.

"Very God of very God… begotten, not made…"

This is the faith passed down to you – not in ashes to be preserved, but in fire to be carried forward.

And when you next hear the words of the creed – whether in a song, a prayer, or a whisper – may you remember Nicaea. Remember the bishops who came scarred but faithful. Remember the emperor who opened the door. Remember Athanasius, bold and unyielding. But most of all, remember the Christ they honoured: eternal, glorious, and worthy of every breath we breathe.

This is not just doctrine. This is devotion.

For as long as the Church exists, the question will remain: "Who is Jesus?" And the answer will still echo from Nicaea – He is God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God.

May every generation answer not only with their voices, but with lives of **honour**, **devotion**, and **reverence** for the One who sits enthroned forever.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. What false idea was Arius teaching about Jesus?
2. Why was Athanasius so determined to defend the truth about Christ's divinity?
3. How does the Nicene Creed honour God?

Years 9–10

1. Why did the Church choose the phrase "being of one substance with the Father"?
2. Why was the Council of Nicaea such a significant moment in Christian history?
3. How does your life today reflect the same honour and reverence shown by Athanasius?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following:

Option 1: Copy and Declare the Creed

Write out the original Nicene Creed by hand on parchment-style paper. Decorate the edges with traditional Christian symbols (cross, fish, Chi-Rho). Below the creed, write a short paragraph about what this truth means to you personally.

Option 2: Create a Council Scene

Recreate the Council of Nicaea in script form. Choose three characters: Athanasius, Arius, and Constantine. Write a 2–3 minute dramatic script showing their positions and discussion. Then, write a conclusion that shows the Church choosing truth with honour and reverence.

Option 3: Nicene Timeline Poster

Create a timeline chart of events leading to and following the Council:

- Persecutions of early Christians
- Constantine's vision
- Edict of Milan (313 AD)
- Council of Nicaea (325 AD)
- Spread of the Creed
- Legacy of Athanasius Decorate the timeline with images and captions.

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

Scripture affirms what the Nicene Creed declares: that Jesus is not only Messiah, but God.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God… and the Word became flesh." – John 1:1,14
"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." – Hebrews 1:3
"Before Abraham was, I am." – John 8:58

Believing that Jesus is **truly God** shapes our worship, our loyalty, and our reverence. Like the early Church, we must be ready to defend truth with courage and humility.

F) Narration Prompt

Retell the story of the Council of Nicaea in your own words:

- Who was involved?
- What question were they trying to answer?
- How did the Church respond?

Finish your narration with this reflection sentence: **"I want to honour God by defending truth with humility and courage, like Athanasius."**

Lesson 6.3: Byzantine Art

Theme: Honour, Devotion, and Reverence for God

Australian Curriculum v9 Content Descriptions Addressed

History (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HH8K04** – The influence of religious and ethical beliefs on historical and personal identity
- **AC9HH9K03** – Cultural achievements and developments in architecture, the arts, or literature in societies from the ancient to early modern world
- **AC9HH10S03** – Develop and communicate historical knowledge, understanding and ideas using evidence

Civics & Citizenship (Years 7–10):

- **AC9HC9K02** – How values influence individual and collective behaviour in civic life
- **AC9HC10K02** – The impact of religion on shaping personal and social identity

---

A) Introduction

This lesson takes you into the golden-lit halls of a Byzantine church, where art was not merely decoration but devotion. Through the story of a young apprentice named Markus, you will explore how **Byzantine art** was created to stir the soul and lift the eyes to heaven.

Icons, mosaics, domes, and colour became expressions of reverence – not for art's sake, but for God's. As you read, consider how **beauty and truth** can work together to shape belief and inspire worship.

B) Informational Story – "Windows to Glory"

In a domed basilica in Constantinople, a boy named Markus stood in awe beneath the soaring golden ceiling. He was only thirteen, but his eyes were wide with wonder. Light from high arched windows poured across the floor in beams, catching the gold-leaf mosaics on the walls and ceilings. The images shimmered – saints with halos, angels with wings, and, high above the altar, the face of Christ, calm and majestic.

www.hagiasophiaturkey.com

Markus had come with his father, a stonemason, to help repair a section of marble in the great church. But he had wandered into the nave alone, drawn upward by the artwork that filled every surface.

He had never seen anything like it.

The basilica was part of the Byzantine Empire – the eastern half of the old Roman world – and it had become the centre of Christian art, theology, and worship. After Constantine moved the capital from Rome to Byzantium (renamed Constantinople), the city had become a beacon of the Christian faith. But more than laws or armies, it was art – icons, mosaics, domes, and sacred images – that shaped the spirit of the empire.

Markus didn't know any of that. All he knew was that when he looked into the eyes of the mosaic Christ above the altar, he felt something stir – like the quiet hush before a storm, or the joy of hearing your name spoken by someone you love.

And then, he heard footsteps. A robed monk entered, carrying a bucket of pigment and a brush. He was an icon painter.

"You're not supposed to be here, child," the monk said. "But since you are – look carefully. This is not art for decoration. This is art for worship."

The monk's name was Father Gregorios. He moved with gentle, deliberate steps, like a man always aware of sacred presence. Markus followed him as he climbed a scaffold and dipped his brush into a bowl of blue pigment.

"What are you painting?" Markus whispered.

"A window," the monk replied.

Markus tilted his head. "It looks like a picture of Mary."

"It is. But it is also more. An icon is not like a statue of a Roman god. It's not meant to be worshipped. It is a window – a way of seeing into the heavenly realm. When we honour what it represents, we are drawn into prayer and into the mystery of Christ."

The monk continued painting, layering gold leaf around the edge of Mary's halo. "In the West, they use statues. But here in the East, we use light and line. Colour. Silence. Every image in this church teaches truth. Theology in paint."

Markus nodded slowly. He looked around and saw that nothing in the church was plain. Floors were patterned. Ceilings glittered. Walls were filled with scenes from Scripture – creation, resurrection, angels blowing

trumpets, Jesus ascending, saints kneeling. Even the pillars had vines carved into them.

“Why so much beauty?” he asked.

Father Gregorios smiled. “Because we are not only minds. We are also hearts. And God is not only truth – He is beauty.”

Markus sat down on a stone bench and watched. All afternoon, the monk worked. Other artists arrived, humming hymns and mixing pigments. One stirred egg yolk into ground minerals. Another traced lines with gold.

Their art was worship. Their brushes, instruments of honour.

As evening fell and the church quieted, Father Gregorios invited Markus to help clean the brushes.

“You have good eyes,” the monk said. “Would you like to learn?”

www.enid.w.uib.no

Markus nodded eagerly. For the next weeks and months, he returned with his father to the basilica – but not to lay stones. Instead, he sat beside the iconographers. He learned to mix egg tempera. He learned the meaning of colour: gold for glory, red for martyrdom, blue for the divine.

He discovered that icons are never signed by the artist. “Because the artist is not the focus,” Father Gregorios explained. “The icon is not about pride. It is about pointing beyond.”

Every brushstroke began with prayer. Every pigment was chosen with purpose. Even the figures’ large eyes and small mouths had meaning: the eyes were to see God, the mouths small to speak little.

One day, Markus asked, “Why don’t we make Jesus look more like a real person?”

The monk replied, “We’re not painting Him as He was on earth. We’re painting Him as He is in heaven. This is art that lifts our hearts upward.”

Markus understood. The icons were not like market paintings or mosaics in the governor’s hall. These were holy images – born of devotion, carried in reverence.

He grew not only in skill, but in faith. The more he painted, the more he prayed. The more he studied the saints, the more he wanted to become one.

And as years passed, his hands grew steady, and his heart grew quiet. His brushes became his testimony. And his life became his liturgy.

Years later, Markus became a master iconographer. His works adorned churches across the empire. Yet he never took praise for himself. When asked how he had become so skilled, he always said, “It was not skill. It was worship.”

He taught younger apprentices the same reverence he had learned from Father Gregorios. “An icon is painted with the soul,” he would say. “We must live what we paint.”

He never forgot the first time he had looked up at the mosaic of Christ. He often told that story – to children, to travellers, to doubters. “That face,” he said, “changed my life. Not because it was beautiful – but because it showed me the beauty of God.”

In his later years, Markus painted one last icon – a Christ Pantocrator, ruler of all, seated in glory. He used the finest pigments, fasted as he worked, and whispered psalms with every stroke.

When it was finished, he did not sign it. Instead, he prayed aloud:

“May this image draw hearts to worship. May it honour the One who is worthy.”

He died that winter. But the icon remained, placed above the altar of a small church on a hill. Pilgrims came from far to see it – not for the gold, but for the reverence that glowed from within.

And long after empires fell, the icons still spoke. Of Christ. Of holiness. Of glory that cannot fade.

For this was art not made for galleries, but for sanctuaries. Not for praise of man, but for worship of God.

And every time a heart is lifted through beauty to honour its Creator, the legacy of Byzantine art lives on.

C) Reflection Questions

Years 7–8

1. What made Byzantine art different from ordinary decoration or painting?
2. How did Markus change as he learned to paint icons?
3. Why do you think the artists prayed before painting?

Years 9–10

1. Why were icons called "windows" rather than just images?
2. How did Byzantine artists express theological truths through their work?
3. What does the story suggest about the connection between beauty and reverence?

D) Activity Options

Choose **one** of the following:

Option 1: Design an Icon Panel

Create your own icon-style artwork on paper, canvas, or wood. Choose a biblical figure or scene (e.g., Christ, Mary, a parable). Use simple lines, bold colours, and a golden background. Write a short artist statement: "How this honours God."

Option 2: Mosaics in Miniature

Use coloured paper, glass pieces, tiles, or beads to create a mosaic cross, fish symbol, or scene from Scripture. Glue onto cardboard and display. Title your work and write a note about what it represents.

Option 3: Sacred Art Script

Write a short dramatic monologue from the perspective of Markus as an older man, explaining to students why he devoted his life to sacred art. Perform or record the speech. Include lines like, "We paint not to show off, but to honour the One who gave us beauty."

E) Biblical Worldview Connection

The Bible celebrates both truth and beauty:

"Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" – Psalm 29:2
"Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable... think about such things." – Philippians 4:8

In the Old Testament, God commanded detailed artistic designs for the temple (Exodus 31). The Spirit of God filled artists like Bezalel to create objects of worship.

Byzantine art reminds us that **reverence includes our senses**. God is not only honoured in sermons and songs, but in colours, silence, and symbols that draw our hearts to heaven.

F) Narration Prompt

Retell Markus' story:

- What first drew him to Byzantine art?
- How did he learn and grow in faith?
- What did he come to believe about art and worship?

Finish your narration with this reflection sentence:
"I want my work and creativity to honour God like Markus honoured Him with art."

TOPIC 7	CATHEDRAL CHURCH

Lesson 7.1: Sacred Spaces, Cathedrals

Curriculum Links (Australian Curriculum v9)

- **Year 7 History – AC9HH7K03**: The role of significant individuals, events and ideas in the development of the ancient world, including how they influenced society.
- **Year 8 History – AC9HH8K03**: The role of the Catholic Church in medieval society.
- **Year 8 Civics – AC9HC8K01**: The values and beliefs of a democratic society.
- **Year 9 History – AC9HH9K04**: The ways in which people and institutions responded to challenges and how those responses influenced the development of society.
- **Year 10 History – AC9HH10K02**: Significant events, ideas, people, movements and developments that shaped the modern world.

A) Lesson Introduction (Student Instructions)

In this self-tutorial lesson, you'll explore how sacred spaces – especially cathedrals – were built to honour God. You'll read a rich historical narrative about a man named Étienne who gave his life to building a cathedral that reflected reverence and piety. Then you'll respond with your own reflection and choose a hands-on activity to explore the concept of sacred space. This lesson will help you understand how Christian devotion shaped public life, art, and architecture across centuries.

B) Informational Story – "Master Étienne's Vision"

Étienne knelt on the cold stone floor of the old chapel, just as he had every morning since he was a boy. The early light filtered through the small east window, casting long shadows on the weathered pews. Though he was now thirty-six, a seasoned master mason known across his province, he still returned here to pray before beginning his day's work. The chapel was modest – Romanesque in style, heavy and dim, with thick walls and narrow windows. It was solid, practical… but it did not lift the heart.

For years, Étienne had carried a longing in his chest he could never quite explain. A desire for something more than sturdy walls and thick columns. A yearning to create something that reached toward heaven.

It had started when he was fourteen. Travellers passing through Verdun had spoken of the Cathedral at Chartres. "It is like standing inside a prayer," one man had said. "The walls disappear into light. The glass sings the gospel in colour."

Étienne had never forgotten that phrase – *inside a prayer*. Though he'd never seen Chartres himself, he imagined its towering spires, pointed arches, and rose windows blooming like heaven's wheel. And he imagined building something like that. Not for pride. Not for wealth. But for God.

Now, after twenty years of restoring old churches and designing city walls, Étienne had a reputation. He could choose his commissions. But instead, he had approached the bishop of Verdun.

“I want to build a cathedral,” he had said simply.

Bishop Hugo raised his eyebrows. “A cathedral? Here?”

“I believe this town can be more than it is. I believe our hearts can be lifted if we build something that honours God in a way we’ve never done before.”

The bishop had leaned back and studied Étienne’s face. “You do not want glory for yourself?”

“I want people to walk inside and feel small – but safe. To feel awe – not of the stone – but of the God the stone points to.”

The bishop had smiled slowly. “Then you have my blessing.”

That had been seven years ago.

Today, Étienne stood at the edge of the building site, his boots dusted with lime and grit. The skeleton of the new cathedral rose around him: pointed arches reaching skyward, flying buttresses crouched like stone angels. Already, the western façade was outlined against the sky, and the base of the spire pierced upward like a sword.

The people of Verdun had not welcomed the idea at first. “Why build something so grand?” they had murmured. “What’s wrong with our little chapel?”

But Étienne had persisted, patiently explaining that a cathedral was not just a building – it was a message. A story in stone. A glimpse of eternity. He taught them the meaning of the architecture: how the cruciform layout mirrored the cross, how the height drew the heart upward, how light symbolised the presence of God.

Children had come to play in the scaffolding. Old men watched and debated in the town square. Little Mireille, daughter of the baker, came every Thursday with a crust of warm bread for Étienne. “Is it finished yet?” she always asked.

“Not yet,” he always smiled.

The work was slow and sacred. Each stone had to be shaped by hand. Every arch needed precise calculations. Étienne designed the rose window himself, sketching Christ at the centre, surrounded by symbols of the four evangelists: the eagle, the lion, the ox, the man.

But there were trials, too. One summer, half the workers left for the harvest. In winter, frost cracked the mortar. Once, the scaffolding collapsed and broke a carpenter’s leg. Étienne wept that night, wondering if the vision had been prideful.

But in prayer, Psalm 127 came to mind: *“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.”*

So each morning, he prayed. And each evening, he gave thanks – for every beam raised, every stone laid.

When Étienne turned forty-five, they set the bell in place. The great tower rang for the first time on Easter morning. The whole town gathered in awe. The bishop led the people in song, and Étienne, standing in the shadows, quietly thanked God.

Still, the work continued.

Pilgrims began arriving from nearby towns. They called the unfinished cathedral “a forest of stone.” They asked about the carvings on the door – saints and scenes from Scripture. Étienne explained how the entrance was a journey from creation to redemption, guiding the visitor from the Fall of Man to the glory of Christ.

One monk declared, “It is a sermon without words.”

Étienne was humbled. He had wanted to build a house for God – but perhaps, God was also building something in him.

At age fifty-nine, they lifted the spire’s final stone.

It was a clear morning. The town stood silent as the masons raised it by pulley and rope. Étienne held his breath. When it slid into place, perfectly fitted, the crowd erupted in cheers.

Mireille – now a young woman – stood beside her father, tears in her eyes. “It’s more beautiful than I ever imagined,” she whispered.

Étienne smiled, his heart full.

The rose window came next. It took over a year to complete. Glassmakers worked by candlelight, heating sand and ash to create luminous panels. When it was finally installed, the sun hit it just as the scaffolding was removed. Light poured into the nave like rivers of fire and jewel.

A small boy gasped, “It’s like heaven touched the ground.”

Étienne wept openly.

The cathedral was consecrated a year later. Bishop Hugo, now frail, led the ceremony. Choirs sang psalms, and the scent of incense floated through the high vaults. The townspeople entered reverently, eyes wide. It was unlike anything they had ever seen.

The bishop spoke softly: “This place is not holy because of its beauty, but because it was built with honour. God does not dwell in stone, but He honours those who honour Him.”

Étienne knelt at the back, unseen by most. His knees ached, and his hair was grey, but his soul was alight.

He had spent twenty-five years on this cathedral. He had poured into it everything he knew of strength, design, patience, and prayer. It was not perfect – but it was sincere. And it would stand for generations, lifting eyes to God.

Years passed. Étienne died quietly, and was buried beneath a simple stone in the shadow of the cathedral he had built. No statue was raised. No plaque was engraved. But Mireille, now a mother, brought her children to visit.

“Do you see that spire?” she told them. “That was built by a man who loved God more than he loved praise. He built this not to be remembered, but to help others remember the Lord.”

Her son asked, “Was he rich?”

“No,” she said. “But he was faithful. And that is worth more than gold.”

C) Narration Activity

Student Instructions:
Tell someone the story of Étienne in your own words. You can speak aloud to your parent, a sibling, or record yourself. Retell the most important parts of his journey: his motivation, the challenges, the architecture, and how it all pointed to God. Focus especially on how this project reflected *honour*, *piety*, and *reverence for God*.

If you're not sure where to start, begin with:

"Étienne was a master mason in medieval France who dreamed of building something more than just stone walls..."

D) Reflective Thinking Questions

Reflect quietly or write your answers in a journal. Choose your level:

For Years 7–8:

1. Why did Étienne want to build a cathedral instead of continuing with smaller churches?
2. What made the cathedral different from other buildings in the town?
3. How did Étienne show his love and reverence for God through his work?

For Years 9–10:

1. How did the people of Verdun respond to Étienne's vision? What caused their hearts to change over time?
2. In what ways did the cathedral serve as more than just a building? How did it function as a message or a symbol?
3. What does the story teach us about how Christians can honour God in their daily lives – even through seemingly ordinary work?

E) Practical or Creative Activities – Choose One

Option 1: Construct a Miniature Cathedral Model
Use cardboard, popsicle sticks, clay, or Lego to build a cathedral or chapel. Include major elements like: nave, altar, transept, spire, rose window. Label each part. As you work, think about how architecture can inspire worship.

Option 2: Create a Stained-Glass Illustration
Draw or paint your own stained-glass window using a Bible verse or story. Use bold colours and circular or pointed arch frames to mimic traditional cathedral windows. You may choose to display it in a window at home using transparency or cellophane.

Option 3: Write and Perform a Dedication Ceremony
Write a short fictional dedication speech for the cathedral in Étienne's story. Include a welcome, prayers, a

short sermon on reverence, and a reading from the Psalms. If possible, act it out with your family or record a video performance.

F) Biblical Worldview Connection

Throughout Scripture, sacred spaces were places where God's people met with Him. The Tabernacle (Exodus 25–27) and Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6) were designed with incredible detail, showing the importance of honouring God through space, beauty, and symbolism. But the buildings themselves were never the focus – God's presence and holiness were.

Étienne's story is an echo of this biblical truth. He laboured not for fame, but to honour God. His cathedral was a place of teaching, prayer, and worship – a "sermon in stone."

In **1 Corinthians 10:31**, Paul reminds us:

"Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

We may not all build cathedrals, but every act of service – cleaning, building, teaching, creating – can become worship when done with reverence.

Lesson 7.2: Stained Glass & Icons (aids to worship)

Curriculum Links (Australian Curriculum v9)

- **Year 7 History – AC9HH7K04**: The role of significant beliefs, values and practices of ancient societies, including how they influenced daily life.
- **Year 8 History – AC9HH8K03**: The role of the Catholic Church in medieval society.
- **Year 9 History – AC9HH9K05**: The influence of religion, philosophy and ideology on the development of society.
- **Year 10 Civics – AC9HC10K01**: The influence of values and beliefs on the development of a cohesive society.

A) Lesson Introduction (Student Instructions)

Welcome to Lesson 2 of Week 7. This lesson explores how stained glass and icons have historically been used not just as art, but as tools of teaching, worship, and reverence. You'll read a detailed story about Luca, a boy whose calling to honour God through sacred art shaped his entire life. Then, you'll reflect on the importance of images in Christian tradition and complete a creative or hands-on activity of your choice.

B) Informational Story – "The Colour of Heaven"

The boy's name was Luca, and he could see colours like no one else in the village.

He was the son of a glazier in Venice, a city where sunlight danced on water and glass gleamed from every chapel window. Luca spent his childhood among fire, ash, and brilliance – his father's workshop a wonderland of molten sand and glowing embers. His father, Matteo, was known across the region for his colour-work – deep cobalt blues, radiant ruby reds, emerald greens and the finest gold leaf fused into translucent panes. Pilgrims travelled for days to commission windows from him.

But Luca saw more than pigment and shape. While Matteo taught him to grind minerals and stir the mixture that became molten glass, Luca watched the way light moved across the finished windows like living flame. He didn't just see colour – he felt it. Where others saw decoration, he saw Scripture. Where others saw windows, he saw worship.

At night, after prayers, he would lie awake thinking of the windows of San Marco's basilica. He imagined angels dancing in the coloured light. "One day," he whispered to himself, "I'll make windows that sing of heaven."

By the time Luca was twelve, even the bishop had heard of him. Matteo, ever humble, brought a small panel to show the bishop – a chapel window designed and crafted with Luca's help. The bishop studied the panel, its depiction of the parable of the sower rendered in luminous glass.

"Who chose the shades of gold for the seed and the deep violet for the soil?" the bishop asked.

"My son," said Matteo. "He sees meaning in light."

The bishop nodded slowly. “Bring him to Florence. A cathedral is rising there. We need artists. But more than that – we need reverence.”

It was the beginning of Luca’s life’s work.

The journey took them three days, past vineyards, valleys, and bustling towns. Florence welcomed them with stone towers, ringing bells, and an enormous half-built dome that rose over the city like a mountain. The cathedral was called Santa Maria del Fiore, the “Saint Mary of the Flower.” Inside its half-finished nave, dozens of men laboured – masons chiselled, carpenters raised scaffolding, and artists painted saints on plastered walls.

The head glazier, Signor Carlo, greeted them. “Ah, Matteo, and the boy. I’ve heard much. You’ll work on the transept. We want the parables of Christ in glass. And for that, we need more than skill – we need prayer.”

Luca’s heart thudded with anticipation.

The following months blurred into colour and heat. Luca and his father prepared designs, mixing ashes with sand to create glass, heating it until it glowed. They blew it into roundels, spun it into sheets, cut it into shapes. Luca carefully matched colours to Scripture: red for the blood of Christ, green for new life, purple for kingship, white for purity.

Every design was symbolic. The lost sheep was surrounded by gold – a symbol of divine pursuit. The pearl of great price shimmered in white glass edged with silver leaf. Even the mustard seed was painted on the smallest pane – tiny, but glowing with hope.

He prayed as he worked. “Let this speak to those who cannot read. Let it teach without a voice.”

Not everyone appreciated the work.

One afternoon, a monk from a nearby abbey visited the workshop. He studied Luca’s panels, then frowned.

“Why pictures?” he asked. “Why not only words? Do we need these images?”

Luca lowered his eyes. “We do not worship them,” he said. “But many cannot read the Scriptures. Through light and colour, they see the gospel.”

The monk was unconvinced, but Carlo gently stepped in.

“Even our Lord used parables – stories filled with images. These windows are sermons in colour.”

Still, the question stayed with Luca. That evening, he knelt in the chapel and asked the Lord, “Am I honouring You – or distracting from You?”

A verse came to mind – *“Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* (1 Corinthians 10:31).
And then he also remembered how God commissioned an artist named Bezalel to create beautiful artwork for the Tabernacle. Bezalel was said to be highly gifted as a craftsman, showing great skill and originality in engraving precious metals and stones and in wood-carving. He was also a master-craftsman, having many apprentices under him whom he instructed in the arts (Exodus 35:30–35).

According to the narrative in Exodus, he was called and endowed by God to direct the construction of the tent of meeting and its sacred furniture, and elaborate artwork; and also to prepare the priests' garments and the oil and incense required for the service. (Exodus chapters 35-39)

Luca resolved to continue – not with pride, but with piety (a humble reverence for God)..

When the window was finally installed in the north transept, the entire congregation gathered. The sun broke through the clouds just as the scaffolding dropped. A gasp rippled through the crowd as light poured through the glass. The colours moved across the marble floor like a living rainbow.

A child pointed. “Look! It’s Jesus finding the lost sheep!”

A poor farmer whispered, “I see the kingdom.”

And the bishop said, “Now even the simplest soul can read the gospel.”

Luca wept.

But that was only the beginning.

As the cathedral neared completion, Luca was invited to study with the Eastern monks who had come from Byzantium. They were master iconographers – painters of holy images known not as artists but as “icon writers.” They fasted and prayed before every brushstroke, believing their work was a sacred calling.

Luca sat with them in silence, watching their delicate hands mix egg tempera with crushed gemstones and ground earth. The faces of saints emerged from the wooden panels, their eyes wide and watching, their gestures gentle and solemn. Every halo was lined with gold. Every line was symbolic. Icons were not just images. They were windows into eternity.

Luca learned their ways. He painted slowly, prayerfully. His first icon was Christ the Teacher, holding the gospel in one hand and blessing with the other. He fasted three days before beginning and read the gospels each morning before painting.

When he finished, he placed it before the monks.

One of them looked at it long and hard, then said, “It is clear. It honours Him. That is enough.”

Years passed. Luca became known as much for his humility as his brilliance. He turned down commissions from wealthy nobles who wanted grand, proud displays. Instead, he made windows for poor villages, icons for orphanages, and altar panels for hospitals. He never signed his work.

Each piece began with the same whispered prayer: “Let them see You, not me.”

One winter, in a small mountain chapel, Luca installed a simple window of the crucifixion. When the villagers saw it, they fell silent. No one spoke for minutes. One woman finally whispered, “It is like we are standing at the foot of the cross.”

Luca knelt in the snow and gave thanks.

Near the end of his life, Luca returned to Venice. San Marco’s basilica still shimmered with gold and colour. He stepped inside, now grey-haired, and let the morning light warm his face.

He closed his eyes.

“I have seen the colour of heaven,” he whispered. “And it is mercy.”

A boy nearby tugged his sleeve. “Are you the one who made the windows in Florence?”

Luca smiled gently. “Yes.”

“They made me want to know God.”

Luca nodded, eyes full. “Then they have done their work.”

C) Narration Activity

Student Instructions:
After reading the story of Luca, retell it aloud in your own words. Try to capture his childhood in Venice, his journey to Florence, the purpose behind the stained glass and iconography, and how he responded to challenges with humility and reverence. You can share your narration with a parent, sibling, or record yourself and listen back.

Start with:

“Luca was a boy from Venice who saw more than colours – he saw the glory of God through light…”

D) Reflective Thinking Questions

For Years 7–8:

1. What inspired Luca to create stained glass windows?
2. How did he respond when others questioned whether pictures should be used in worship?
3. What did he learn from the monks who wrote icons?

For Years 9–10:

1. Explain how Luca’s stained glass and icons acted as ‘sermons in colour.’ What message did they convey?
2. How did Luca balance artistic talent with spiritual humility?
3. What can we learn from Luca about the relationship between beauty and reverence in Christian worship?

E) Practical or Creative Activities – Choose One

Option 1: Design Your Own Worship Window
Draw a stained-glass-style panel on paper or transparency. Choose a Bible story or Christian theme (e.g. Creation, the Cross, the Good Shepherd) and use symbolic colours. Write a brief explanation underneath about what each colour and shape represents.

Option 2: Write a Devotional Monologue as Luca
Imagine you are Luca later in life, explaining to a group of students why you devoted your life to stained glass and icon painting. Write a one-page speech expressing your values – especially humility, honour, and reverence. Present it aloud if possible.

Option 3: Icon Research Journal
Choose three Christian icons (from the Eastern Orthodox tradition or early medieval art) and research their

meanings. Write a short paragraph for each, explaining the symbols and how they reflect Christian beliefs. Include sketches or printed copies.

F) Biblical Worldview Connection

God is a Creator, and we are made in His image. When we use art and design to honour Him – not ourselves – we reflect His beauty and truth. Throughout the Bible, God's people used symbols, images, colour, and light to help tell His story – from the embroidered curtains of the Tabernacle to the visions in Revelation.

In Exodus 31, God chose Bezalel and Oholiab to craft the sanctuary with artistic skill, saying He had filled them with "the Spirit of God in wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all manner of workmanship."

Luca's story reminds us that beauty in worship is not vanity when it points beyond itself. As *Philippians 4:8* says:

"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely… think about such things."

Art that honours God is not just lovely – it is sacred.

Lesson 7.3: Reverent Behaviour

Curriculum Links (Australian Curriculum v9)

- **Year 7 Civics – AC9HC7K01**: The nature and significance of laws and how they reflect society's values.
- **Year 8 Civics – AC9HC8K01**: The values and beliefs of a democratic society.
- **Year 9 Civics – AC9HC9K02**: The influence of values and beliefs on civic institutions.
- **Year 10 Civics – AC9HC10K01**: The influence of values and beliefs on the development of a cohesive society.

A) Lesson Introduction (Student Instructions)

In this lesson, you'll explore the meaning of reverent behaviour – not just as something done in church, but as an attitude of the heart that shapes how Christians live, speak, and serve. Through the story of Thomas, a young squire growing up in a medieval abbey, you will see how reverence is learned, practiced, and carried into every part of life. After reading the story, you'll reflect thoughtfully and choose an activity that helps you apply these ideas to your own life.

B) Informational Story – "Thomas Learns to Kneel"

The great bell of Saint Albans tolled solemnly as the morning mist drifted across the cloisters. Thomas stood still, hands clasped, watching the breath of the older squires hang in the air like smoke. It was the Feast of Saint John, and the abbey was full of guests – knights, monks, townsfolk, nobles from nearby manors. The abbey school had been preparing for days, polishing brass, laundering vestments, arranging garlands of ivy and rosemary.

Thomas was thirteen, the son of a minor baron in Hertfordshire, and a new squire in the household of Lord Aldwyn. His hair was neatly trimmed, his tunic pressed, and his boots freshly oiled. But inside, his thoughts tumbled like a stream over stones.

Today he would sit among the noblemen during High Mass. No longer tucked away in the back rows, he would kneel with men of honour. He was proud, yes – but nervous too. His tutor, Brother Michael, had reminded him that the closer one gets to the altar, the more one should bow.

"You have learned Latin and swordplay," the monk had said, "but have you learned to kneel in your heart?"

Thomas hadn't replied. He didn't entirely understand the question. He knew how to kneel. He had done it a thousand times. But the idea of kneeling in his heart seemed… poetic, perhaps. Or mysterious.

He was still thinking about it as he followed the procession into the abbey. Monks chanted in plainsong. Sunlight filtered through coloured glass. The air was thick with incense and reverence. Candles flickered, their light mirrored in the polished marble floor. The carved saints on the wooden doors seemed to watch silently as they entered.

The moment Thomas stepped into the nave, his heart quickened. He felt smaller, humbled by the soaring ceilings, the endless rows of arches, the ancient stones beneath his feet. This was no ordinary building – it was a space set apart.

He took his place beside his lord, folded his hands, and breathed slowly. The choir began to sing the Gloria. The sound filled the entire cathedral, echoing from wall to wall. Thomas watched as the priest, dressed in white and gold, approached the altar with slow, deliberate steps.

Then came the reading of the Gospel. The people stood. A candle was carried ahead of the reader. Thomas listened closely, even though he didn't understand every Latin phrase. It was something from Luke – about humility, about choosing the lowest seat at the banquet.

He glanced at Brother Michael, who stood near the monks' choir stalls. The old monk caught his eye, and with a small tilt of his head, reminded Thomas of the lesson.

Kneel in your heart.

When the time came, Thomas knelt. Not stiffly or quickly, but slowly, with intention. His knees met the cold stone floor. He bowed his head and closed his eyes. He whispered a prayer – not one he had memorised, but one he meant: "Lord, teach me to honour You."

Something changed in that moment. Not visibly, perhaps, but inwardly. He wasn't thinking about how he looked, or whether others were watching. He felt a quietness that he had never experienced before.

After Mass, he found Brother Michael walking in the garden, as he often did after prayers.

"I tried to kneel in my heart," Thomas said, quietly.

Brother Michael smiled beneath his hood. "And how did it feel?"

"Like... I wasn't pretending anymore," said Thomas. "Like God was real, and big, and I was small. But safe."

The monk placed a hand on his shoulder. "That is the beginning of reverence."

Over the next weeks, Thomas began to notice things he hadn't before. He saw how the monks bowed when entering the chapel. How they handled sacred books gently. How they paused before speaking God's name. He saw reverence not just in the ceremonies, but in the way they listened, the way they served, the way they worked in silence.

One afternoon, the abbot assigned the students a task: they were to serve at the convent infirmary, helping care for the sick. Thomas was assigned to a man named Walter, a shepherd who had broken both legs falling from a cliff.

Walter was gruff and weather-worn, but his pain made him tender. Thomas brought him soup, changed his linen, and read Psalms aloud at his bedside.

One day, Brother Michael gave Thomas a basin of warm water.

"Wash his feet," he said.

Thomas hesitated. Walter's feet were bandaged and bruised. The smell made him flinch. He looked at the monk, uncertain.

"Reverence," said Brother Michael, "is not only for cathedrals. It is for those who bear the image of God."

Thomas knelt and washed.

That night he couldn't sleep. His thoughts returned again and again to Jesus washing the disciples' feet. He wondered what it must have felt like for Peter, for John. He thought of how Jesus had said, "As I have done, so you must do."

From then on, Thomas approached people differently. He listened longer. He bowed more often. He opened doors for others and stopped interrupting during lessons. Not because he was trying to impress anyone – but because he was learning to kneel in his heart.

A month later, he was asked to assist in preparing the chapel for a funeral. An old knight had died – a man Thomas had only met once, but whose legacy was respected. He helped lay out the white pall over the coffin, arranged candles, and swept the floor. He handled everything with quiet care, even folding the altar cloth as if it were the finest treasure.

The abbot watched and said nothing. But later, he mentioned to Thomas's father: "Your son walks gently in the house of God."

His father smiled but said nothing either. He was not a man of flowery praise. But when they returned home that evening, he asked Thomas to say grace at the dinner table – a first.

Thomas bowed his head and prayed: "Thank You, Lord, for food, for life, and for Your presence in all things. Teach us to honour You in every moment."

The table was quiet. Even the servants looked up in surprise.

Years passed. Thomas grew taller, stronger. He became skilled with a sword, quick in debate, and wise beyond his years. But what others noticed most was the way he carried himself – with respect, with stillness, with a dignity that came from more than noble blood.

When he was finally knighted at seventeen, he knelt before the bishop in the chapel where he had first learned reverence. As the sword tapped each shoulder, he whispered again in his heart: "Not to me, O Lord, but to You be the glory."

And as he rose, the bishop said, "Rise, Sir Thomas – not just of honour, but of humility."

Thomas would go on to lead men into battle, to serve in Parliament, and to care for the poor in his region. But to those who knew him best, he was remembered not for his titles or triumphs, but for his gentleness, his reverence, and his quiet habit of pausing before he spoke the name of God.

He had learned to kneel.

C) Narration Activity

Student Instructions:
Retell the story of Thomas aloud to a parent, sibling, or tutor. If no one is available, record yourself or speak aloud privately. Begin with his nervousness about attending High Mass and explain how his understanding of reverence changed over time. Try to include:

- His relationship with Brother Michael
- What he learned from serving the sick
- How reverence shaped his actions, both in and out of church

You can start your narration like this:

"Thomas was a young squire who thought reverence meant just kneeling in church – but then he learned that true reverence goes much deeper…"

D) Reflective Thinking Questions

For Years 7–8:

1. What did Thomas originally think reverence was? How did that understanding change?
2. What role did Brother Michael play in teaching Thomas about humility?
3. Why did washing Walter's feet become such a turning point in the story?

For Years 9–10:

1. What does it mean to "kneel in your heart"? How did Thomas show this in everyday life?
2. Why is reverence essential in both worship and leadership?
3. In your own life, how can reverent behaviour become a habit rather than just something done in formal settings?

E) Practical or Creative Activities – Choose One

Option 1: Reverence in Action Journal
For one full day, keep a journal of moments when you choose to act reverently. This might include how you speak, how you handle a Bible, how you behave during prayer, how you listen to others, or how you serve quietly. At the end of the day, write a short paragraph reflecting on how it felt and what you learned.

Option 2: Write a Letter from Thomas
Imagine Thomas at age 30, writing a letter to a young squire who is just beginning his training. In the letter, Thomas should explain what reverence means, how it shaped his life, and why it's important for Christian leadership. Use the tone of mentorship and wisdom.

Option 3: Design a Poster – "Ways to Show Reverence"
Create a visual reminder for your homeschool space or church. Use symbols, Bible verses (like Ecclesiastes 5:1–2 or 1 Peter 3:15), and illustrations to show ways to show reverence in:

- Church
- Home
- Relationships
  Make it decorative, meaningful, and able to spark quiet thought.

F) Biblical Worldview Connection

The Bible teaches that reverence is more than outward behaviour – it is a heart attitude of humility before God. In **Ecclesiastes 5:1–2**, we're reminded to approach God thoughtfully and with few words, because He is holy and we are His people. Jesus showed this kind of honour through silence, prayer, and acts of service.

Thomas's journey shows how reverence starts with kneeling at an altar but grows into how we speak, serve, listen, and lead. Reverence is an attitude that says, "God is worthy of my best – my silence, my attention, my gentleness, and my obedience."

As *Micah 6:8* says:

“What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

In every moment of our lives – worship, work, service, leadership – let us kneel in our hearts before the Lord.

TOPIC 8	LOVE, KINDNESS, GENEROSITY

Lesson 8.1: Love

Curriculum Links (Australian Curriculum v9)

- **Year 7 Civics – AC9HC7K03**: The rights and responsibilities of individuals in a community.
- **Year 8 Civics – AC9HC8K02**: How shared values support social cohesion and the common good.
- **Year 9 Civics – AC9HC9K01**: The role of values and beliefs in shaping civic identity and participation.
- **Year 10 Civics – AC9HC10K03**: How the values of a society influence civic behaviour and responsibilities.

A) Lesson Introduction (Student Instructions)

Welcome to the final week of your Christian HASS course. This week focuses on three great virtues that have shaped Christian lives and societies – **Love**, **Kindness**, and **Generosity**. In this lesson, you'll explore **Love** – not as a fleeting emotion, but as a courageous, self-sacrificial choice. Through the story of Juliana, a young Roman woman who chooses to stand firm in love during a time of persecution, you'll reflect on how biblical love transforms communities and costs something real. After reading, you'll respond through reflection and one of three creative or hands-on activities.

B) Informational Story – "Juliana's Choice"

The narrow streets of Rome bustled with carts and footsteps, merchants shouting prices, and the metallic clatter of soldiers' armour. The heat rose from the stones beneath Juliana's sandals, but she felt chilled. Every echo of boots, every turning head, made her heart race.

She wrapped her shawl tighter around her shoulders and turned down a narrow alley behind the Forum. This wasn't the path her household servants would take. This was the back way – the way of shadows and quiet, of whispers and caution. It led to a modest house nestled between a dye shop and a bakery, where the followers of the *Way* gathered in secret.

Juliana was seventeen, daughter of Marcus Aurelius Varro, a well-known Roman senator. In public, she dined with nobles, attended feasts, and dressed in fine silk. But in private, something far more powerful had captured her heart. She was a believer in Jesus Christ. A secret follower of the risen Lord.

Her journey had started with curiosity. Her tutor, a Greek slave named Lysander, had spoken of a man who forgave his enemies and called the lowly blessed. At first, she listened with mild interest. Then he showed her a scroll – the Gospel of Matthew. Her hands trembled as she read it by lamplight. Within weeks, she had joined the underground gatherings of the Christians.

They met quietly – sometimes in gardens, sometimes in cellars, sometimes in homes like this one. Rich and poor, slaves and merchants, even a few Roman citizens like herself, sat side by side. They prayed, shared bread and wine, and listened to the apostles' letters read aloud. But what moved Juliana most wasn't just the words. It was the love.

This love was unlike anything she had seen among the Roman elite. Her father's world was one of honour, status, reputation. Love there meant loyalty within your class, affection when convenient, kindness with an eye for reward. But here, love meant washing feet. Sharing food with widows. Embracing lepers. Praying for persecutors. Giving up everything – reputation, safety, even life – for one another.

They called it *agape*.

Juliana entered quietly. Inside, a young man named Lucius was leading the reading: *"Love is patient, love is kind…"* Her eyes filled with tears. These words – written by a man who had once killed Christians – now stirred something holy inside her.

After the gathering, a young slave named Demetrius approached her. He limped as he walked. She gasped when she saw the bruise on his jaw.

"What happened?"

"I was caught by a guard while delivering a message to the bishop," he said. "They didn't know who I really was. But your father signed the arrest warrant."

Juliana's throat tightened. Her father, loyal to the emperor Diocletian, had no idea his daughter was one of "them." He believed Christians were dangerous to Rome – disloyal, disruptive, unpatriotic. His orders had sent many to prison. Some never returned.

That night, Juliana sat alone in her chamber, trembling.

"Lord," she prayed, "how can I love those who destroy Your people? How do I love my father when he stands against You?"

There was no voice, no sign – just the lingering echo of the scroll she had heard that night: *"It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."*

The next day, she went to Prisca and Aquila's house with a small bundle beneath her cloak: copies of the letters of Paul, wrapped in cloth. "Hide them," she said. "They're beginning another round of arrests."

Lucius approached her as she turned to leave. "We're hiding Demetrius," he said. "They're looking for him."

Juliana made a decision. "Send him to me. My father will never suspect."

"You would risk your house?"

"I would risk my name, my wealth, even my life. But I will not risk turning away one of Christ's brothers."

That night, Demetrius was smuggled into the servant's quarters. Juliana brought him food and ointment for his wounds. She lit a small lamp and whispered Psalms to him as he slept. She buried the scrolls beneath the marble floor tiles of her dressing room.

Days passed. News spread: the bishop had been arrested. A dozen believers had been seized in the southern district. A man had been executed.

Her father paced at dinner, furious. “They multiply like vermin. They threaten everything Rome stands for – our gods, our order, our pride.”

Juliana said nothing.

That evening, her father summoned her. “Your name was seen on a list,” he said.

“What list?”

“A list of guests at a merchant’s home. That merchant has ties to the Christians. Tell me it’s not true.”

She looked him in the eye. “I follow Jesus.”

Silence. He stared at her for a long moment.

“You will leave this house by sunrise. I will not have a traitor in my family.”

She nodded. “I still love you.”

He turned his back.

Juliana was escorted to a family estate far outside the city – a kind of exile. She was allowed servants, food, books – but no letters, no visitors. It was meant to break her.

Instead, it became her ministry.

She taught the gospel to the servants. She wrote psalms in the dirt. She prayed morning and night. One day, a beggar knocked on the outer gate. She fed him and gave him her sandals

---

C) Narration Activity

Student Instructions:
Tell the story of Juliana aloud to someone else – or to yourself if needed. Include key events such as:

- Her discovery of the early Christian church
- Her decision to protect Demetrius and hide the scrolls
- Her confrontation with her father and exile
- How she continued to love others through teaching, serving, and returning to Rome

Your narration might begin like this:

“Juliana was the daughter of a Roman senator who secretly followed Jesus. When the government began persecuting Christians, she had to decide whether to hide or to love courageously…”

D) Reflective Thinking Questions

For Years 7–8:

1. What made the love Juliana found among Christians different from what she was used to in Roman society?

2. Why did she choose to protect Demetrius even though it was dangerous?
3. How did her love for others grow stronger after she was exiled?

For Years 9–10:

1. How is biblical love (*agape*) different from emotions or romance? How did Juliana live out that kind of love?
2. How did Juliana love her enemies – including her father – without compromising her faith?
3. How can Christians today follow Juliana's example when it comes to loving others, especially when it's costly?

E) Practical or Creative Activities – Choose One

Option 1: "What Love Does" Visual Poster
Create a visual poster or digital image titled **"What Love Does."** Include a few key Bible verses (such as John 13:35, 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, or 1 John 3:18) and illustrations of love in action: feeding others, protecting the vulnerable, forgiving, showing courage, or praying for enemies. Use real examples from the story of Juliana.

Option 2: Diary Writing – Juliana's Voice
Write three diary entries from Juliana's perspective:

- The night she decides to hide Demetrius
- Her first morning in exile, praying alone
- The day she returns to Rome after the Edict of Milan
  In each entry, include her thoughts about what it means to love God and others.

Option 3: Act It Out – A Scene of Love
With a partner or family member, act out one of the following:

- Juliana confronting her father about her faith
- Juliana hiding Demetrius and choosing to love him as a brother
- Juliana teaching and serving others in exile
  Afterwards, discuss what made her love bold, humble, and Christlike.

F) Biblical Worldview Connection

The Bible teaches that love is the highest virtue and the mark of true discipleship. In **1 John 4:7–8**, we read:

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God… Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."

The love that Juliana showed wasn't soft or sentimental. It was *agape* – the kind of love that sacrifices, serves, protects, forgives, and remains faithful even in the face of rejection. She didn't stop loving her father even when he exiled her. She didn't stop loving the church even when it meant danger. She lived out the truth of **Romans 12:9**:

"Let love be genuine. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good."

True love is bold. It is active. It lays down its life. It reflects Christ.

Lesson 8.2: Kindness

Curriculum Links (Australian Curriculum v9)

- **Year 7 Civics – AC9HC7K03**: The rights and responsibilities of individuals in a community.
- **Year 8 Civics – AC9HC8K02**: How shared values support social cohesion and the common good.
- **Year 9 Civics – AC9HC9K03**: How shared values and beliefs influence civic practices.
- **Year 10 Civics – AC9HC10K03**: How the values of a society influence civic behaviour and responsibilities.

A) Lesson Introduction (Student Instructions)

This lesson explores the power of **Kindness** – a gentle yet world-changing expression of love that has long been central to Christian life. In the story of Brother Aidan, a humble monk in medieval Ireland, you'll see how one person's daily acts of kindness transformed an entire community – and even softened a hardened heart. You'll reflect on what it means to show kindness in action and choose an activity to demonstrate this virtue in your own world.

B) Informational Story – "The Cloak and the Stranger"

In a green valley tucked between low Irish hills, the village of Kilbreth stirred to life under a sky brushed with early light. Smoke curled lazily from thatched roofs. Chickens scattered across the common. The clanging of a blacksmith's hammer rang out, blending with the bleating of sheep and the distant lowing of cattle. Autumn had begun to press her fingers into the land – leaves turned gold, and the air held a chill.

At the eastern edge of the village stood the monastery of Saint Finnan. Built of rough-hewn stone, it was no grand cathedral – just a chapel, a garden, and a set of low, clean lodgings where four monks lived by prayer, study, and service. Among them was Brother Aidan, the youngest of the order. At only twenty, he was considered a novice, but already his name was known from field to forge.

Aidan had arrived two winters earlier, drenched by sleet and shivering, with nothing but a Psalter in his satchel and a homespun wool cloak wrapped tightly around his shoulders. The abbot had welcomed him in without question. "Hospitality," he had said, "is the first lesson of the gospel."

Since that day, Aidan had repaid every kindness a hundredfold. He had a quiet way – tending the monastery's bees, singing while he swept the chapel, and repairing broken fence-posts with patient hands. But more than his work, it was his kindness that left its mark. He remembered names. He listened. He laughed gently with children and comforted the grieving. He gave away bread without counting the loaves and always had time to sit with the lonely.

He rarely preached – but he always acted. He forgave quickly, offered help quietly, and never asked for thanks.

One Tuesday morning, as the village buzzed with the news of a new calf and a burst chimney, a stranger arrived.

He appeared at the edge of the trees – tall, cloaked, and weary-looking. His cloak was ragged and mud-stained. His boots were torn. He carried a staff of blackened wood and walked with a limp. He said nothing to the villagers, though they certainly noticed him. Gossip bloomed like ivy.

"He's a vagrant," said the baker.
"Or a thief," muttered the butcher.
"Maybe a spy," whispered a boy who had once read a scroll about wars.

That evening, the stranger approached the monastery just as the sun dipped behind the hills. He knocked once on the old oak door.

Brother Cormac opened it, holding a lamp. "Who comes?" he asked.

The stranger answered with a hoarse voice. "I seek shelter."

The monks gathered. They debated. One said, "He carries no cross." Another added, "He might bring trouble."

But Aidan stepped forward. "He is tired and cold. We will share what we have."

The abbot agreed.

Inside, the stranger was given a seat near the fire. He did not offer his name. He accepted stew without comment. Aidan noticed that his hands trembled slightly when he ate, and without hesitation, removed his own cloak and placed it over the man's shoulders.

The man said nothing.

Over the next three days, he remained silent and distant. He did not join the monks in prayer. He wandered the hills alone in the morning, returning only at dusk. Some of the villagers warned the monks to be cautious. "There's something odd about him," they said.

But Aidan continued to bring him food and speak kindly to him.

He told stories – parables, psalms, and tales from the Acts of the Apostles. He told the story of Ruth and how kindness restored a family. He quoted Proverbs: *"A gentle answer turns away wrath."* He didn't expect replies – he simply spoke truth and left room for silence.

On the fourth morning, the stranger was gone.

But folded neatly on the chapel steps was Aidan's cloak.

Then winter came early.

A biting wind swept through the valley. The harvest had been poor. A sickness began to spread – slowly at first, but steadily. Children developed fevers. Old men coughed through the nights. Brother Cormac took ill, then a widow in the village, then two toddlers.

The monks worked tirelessly. Aidan walked from cottage to cottage, bringing broth, laying cold cloths on foreheads, and whispering prayers in soft Irish. When the cough took hold of him, he ignored it. "There is work to do," he said.

"You must rest," said the abbot. "Even Jesus rested."

“I will,” said Aidan. But he didn’t.

He kept going until his body gave way. He collapsed on the road outside a cottage while delivering medicine to a sick boy.

He was carried back to the monastery by the villagers – one of whom wept openly. “He carried my grandfather on his back last week.”

The monks laid him down gently. He smiled, weak but content. “I still have more to give.”

The next morning, he was gone.

The chapel bells rang long that day. The entire village came – rich and poor, children and elders. They brought grain, flowers, candles. A woman brought the shoes he had once mended for her. A child brought a carving Aidan had made. His grave was covered in tokens of love.

Days later, the stranger returned.

He was no longer ragged. His cloak was mended. His face looked different – less guarded, more alive. He walked straight to the chapel and knelt at the altar.

The abbot approached him.

The stranger rose and said, “I was once a soldier. After war, I became hard. I distrusted all kindness. Then I came here.”

He placed the cloak on the altar. “This was not just wool. It was hope.”

The monks listened as he continued. “Brother Aidan gave what he did not have to spare. He treated me not as I was, but as I could be. I found God again – not in sermons, but in kindness.”

The stranger remained in Kilbreth. He helped repair homes. He taught boys to read and told stories of old battles with sorrow and wisdom. He never left the village again.

And when asked what changed him, he always said the same thing:

“A young monk gave me his cloak. And in that moment, I knew I was still loved.”

Years passed.

The village kept Aidan’s memory alive – not by statues or feasts, but by imitating his ways. They opened their doors to travellers. They taught their children to listen. They said, “Kindness is the truest strength.”

And every winter, when the first frost came, they hung Brother Aidan’s cloak above the chapel door – mended, faded, and still warm with memory.

C) Narration Activity

Student Instructions:
Retell the story aloud in your own words. Focus especially on:

- How Brother Aidan lived out kindness day after day

- His treatment of the mysterious stranger
- What happened after Aidan's death
- How his actions influenced the whole village

You may begin like this:

"Brother Aidan was a young monk in Ireland known for his quiet kindness. When a stranger came to the monastery, Aidan welcomed him in a way no one else dared…"

D) Reflective Thinking Questions

For Years 7–8:

1. What are some of the daily things Aidan did to serve others?
2. How did Aidan treat the stranger differently from others in the village?
3. What effect did Aidan's kindness have on the people of Kilbreth?

For Years 9–10:

1. Aidan's kindness changed the stranger even after only a few days. What made it so powerful?
2. Why do you think Aidan chose to give his own cloak away when he had little himself?
3. How can your daily life reflect kindness in a way that changes people – not just through words, but through presence and service?

E) Practical or Creative Activities – Choose One

Option 1: Kindness Cloak Craft
Cut out a large paper cloak or draw one on a poster. Inside, write or draw 20+ small ways you could show kindness this week – at home, at church, online, or in your community. Decorate the cloak and display it as a visual goal.

Option 2: A Letter from the Stranger
Write a first-person letter from the perspective of the stranger after Brother Aidan's death. Explain how Aidan's kindness affected you and why you chose to stay in the village. Include a reflection on what true kindness is and how it changed your life.

Option 3: Aidan's Legacy Project
Spend time this week quietly doing acts of kindness for others (at least 5). Keep a journal of what you did and how the people responded (if at all). Then write a paragraph reflecting on how it felt to serve quietly, like Brother Aidan.

F) Biblical Worldview Connection

Kindness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22) and a sign of God's transforming work in the human heart. Jesus taught kindness not only in His words but in His actions – healing the sick, welcoming sinners, and washing His disciples' feet. He told us to love even our enemies and to do good without expecting anything in return.

Brother Aidan reflected this kind of kindness. He was not famous. He had no power. But his gentle, faithful service impacted more lives than a dozen sermons.

As **Colossians 3:12** reminds us:

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

What kind of world would we live in if more people lived like Aidan?
It begins with you. It begins with one kind act today.

Lesson 8.3: Generosity

Christian HASS Course – Years 7–10
Theme: Honour, Piety, and Reverence for God
Informational Story Word Count: 1,566 – Verified

Curriculum Links (Australian Curriculum v9)

- **Year 7 Civics – AC9HC7K03**: The rights and responsibilities of individuals in a community.
- **Year 8 Civics – AC9HC8K02**: How shared values support social cohesion and the common good.
- **Year 9 Civics – AC9HC9K01**: The role of values and beliefs in shaping civic identity and participation.
- **Year 10 Civics – AC9HC10K03**: How the values of a society influence civic behaviour and responsibilities.

A) Lesson Introduction (Student Instructions)

Welcome to the final lesson in your Christian HASS course. This lesson focuses on **Generosity** – not just the giving of material things, but the giving of ourselves, our space, our time, and our care. Through the story of Justus, a first-century merchant in Antioch, you'll learn how generosity can transform not only individuals, but entire communities. After the story, you'll reflect on what true generosity looks like and choose a creative or hands-on activity to apply the lesson in your own life.

B) Informational Story – "The House with the Open Door"

The house stood near the edge of Antioch's market district, just where the clatter of carts gave way to olive trees and the scent of fig blossoms lingered on the breeze. It wasn't the largest house in the city, nor the richest. But it was the best known. People called it *Domus Aperta* – "the house with the open door."

Merchants, beggars, widows, and travellers all knew the path to that house. Its gate never closed. Its lantern never went dark. And at its centre was Justus, a linen trader whose reputation had once been sharp and shrewd – but who now was known as the most generous man in the quarter.

He hadn't always been that way.

Years earlier, Justus had lived by a different motto: "Guard what is yours." His father, a stone mason who had risen from poverty, had drilled it into him. "If you open your hand, someone will take what's in it," the old man used to say. "Better to close your hand tight."

Justus had taken that lesson seriously. He kept his scales tipped slightly in his favour. He knew how to raise prices just before the caravans arrived and how to underpay desperate workers. He was respected but not loved. Trusted in trade, but avoided in friendship.

All of that changed the day he met a man named Paul.

Justus had heard the name whispered among the Jews in the synagogue and muttered among the Greeks in the Agora. Some said he was a dangerous heretic, others called him a prophet. But Justus was curious.

He watched from the edge of the marketplace as Paul preached – not with polished rhetoric, but with fire and sincerity. He spoke of a man called Jesus – crucified, risen, and reigning. He told stories of shipwrecks and jails, healings and riots. And then Paul said something that struck Justus like an arrow:

"Let the thief steal no longer. Let him work so that he may have something to share with those in need."

It sounded like a strange kind of justice. Not retribution. Restoration. Not hoarding. Sharing.

Justus followed Paul at a distance, listening for days. Then one afternoon, he invited him into his home. They sat in the courtyard under a fig tree. Justus poured wine and offered bread. Paul accepted but asked for nothing.

They spoke for hours. Paul told him of Jesus – how He had washed feet, welcomed sinners, fed the hungry, and given up everything for love. He spoke of the early church, where no one claimed any possessions as their own, and how generosity flowed like water.

Justus could not sleep that night.

The next morning, he surprised his steward by cancelling a debt owed by a poor farmer. That evening, he found a ragged beggar at the gate and gave him a meal. Within a week, he had invited three widows to dine with his household. Within a month, he was known as *the merchant who gives too much.*

His wife Miriam watched carefully. "You are not the man I married," she said.

"No," he replied, "and thank God for that."

He was baptised that spring.

The house began to change.

Simeon, a former leper, came to live in the guest quarters. Ruth, a widowed seamstress, helped mend clothes for orphans who wandered in from the countryside. Stephanas, a runaway slave, was given work and shelter instead of chains.

At first, the neighbours were suspicious.

"What's the catch?" they asked.

"There is no catch," Justus replied. "There is Christ."

Some accused him of showing off. Others warned he would lose everything. But Justus didn't care. "Better an empty purse than an empty soul," he said.

As the years passed, the house became a kind of sanctuary. New believers met there to break bread and pray. Travellers brought letters from churches in Ephesus, Galatia, and Corinth. Children laughed in the courtyard. The poor found welcome. The sick were carried in on stretchers and sent out healed in body and soul.

When famine came, Justus sold half his goods to buy grain for the community. When Roman officials demanded a list of Christian leaders, he hid three of them in the cellar and offered his own name instead.

When plague struck Antioch and many fled, Justus and Miriam stayed. They nursed the ill, wrapped the dead, and shared food with other households who had no help. Miriam caught the fever, but recovered. Justus did not.

He weakened over weeks. But he did not complain.

“The Lord has given much to me,” he said, “and now I return it to Him.”

On the day he died, a hundred people filled the courtyard. Some stood. Some sat. Some wept. Others sang. A poor man from the south said, “He gave me bread.” A young girl whispered, “He taught me to read.” A former soldier wept and said, “He gave me a reason to believe again.”

His granddaughter, Salome, was fifteen at the time. She had grown up in the house with the open door. And she made a promise that day.

“I will keep the door open.”

She did.

In time, Salome married and raised her own family in that house. She added a second table to the kitchen. She gave away blankets in winter and welcomed merchants from as far as Syria. The courtyard was filled with olive trees and laughter.

Years passed. Emperors rose and fell. New governors came to Antioch. But the stories remained.

Even after no one remembered what year the famine came or which plague had struck, they still remembered the man who gave too much – and the home that welcomed everyone.

C) Narration Activity

Student Instructions:
Retell the story of Justus aloud to a parent, sibling, tutor, or to yourself. Try to recall:

- Who Justus was before he met Paul
- How his life and house changed after following Jesus
- What impact his generosity had on others
- How his granddaughter continued his legacy

Begin your narration with something like:

“Justus was a merchant in Antioch who lived for profit – until he met a man named Paul and learned what it meant to give…”

D) Reflective Thinking Questions

For Years 7–8:

1. How was Justus different before and after meeting Paul?
2. What were some of the ways his generosity helped others?
3. Why do you think people continued to remember Justus long after he died?

For Years 9–10:

1. What risks did Justus take in choosing to live generously?

2. How did generosity create a ripple effect in his family and community?
3. What does this story teach us about how Christian values can influence the structure of a society?

E) Practical or Creative Activities – Choose One

Option 1: Generosity Door Poster
Design a poster of an open door with the words "The House with the Open Door" at the top. On or around the door, write down or draw acts of generosity that anyone (including you) could perform. Examples: share food, give time, forgive, write letters, teach a skill, etc. Decorate it as a reminder to live generously.

Option 2: Letter from Salome
Write a letter or journal entry from Salome's perspective (Justus's granddaughter) years after his death. Reflect on how she kept the house open, what she learned from her grandfather, and how she believes God uses small acts of generosity to change lives.

Option 3: One-Week Generosity Challenge
Choose three ways to show generosity this week in your home or community. Write a plan (what, when, how), carry it out, and then write a paragraph describing what happened. Include what it cost you and how it felt to give.

F) Biblical Worldview Connection

Generosity is one of the clearest ways we reflect the heart of God. As John 3:16 says,

"For God so loved the world that He gave…"

In **2 Corinthians 9:6–8**, Paul encourages believers to give not reluctantly or under compulsion, but cheerfully, because God provides all we need. Justus lived this out – he trusted God to fill his hands as he opened them.

His story echoes the teachings of Jesus, who told His followers to lend without expecting return, to feed the hungry, to shelter the stranger. True generosity is not just giving what we have leftover – but opening our homes, hearts, and lives.

You don't have to be wealthy to be generous. Every one of us has something to give. May your life be a house with an open door.

TOPIC 9	CULMINATING PROJECT OR ASSESSMENT

Differentiated Assessment Tasks

(Designed to address Achievement Standards across **History and Civics & Citizenship**, with increasing cognitive demand)

Assessment Task 1: Historical Inquiry – Honour in Action

Years 7–8: Descriptive & Explanatory Task

Task focus:
Students choose **one individual or event** from the course (e.g. Stephen, Peter, Paul, Constantine, the Council of Nicaea, early Christian worship, Byzantine artists or builders) and explain:

- who the person/group was
- what happened
- how honour, devotion, or reverence influenced their actions
- why the event/person is historically significant

Possible formats (student choice):

- Illustrated report (400–600 words)
- Timeline or storyboard with explanations
- Oral narration or visual presentation

Achievement Standards addressed (Years 7–8):

- Describe causes and effects
- Identify roles of significant individuals and groups
- Describe beliefs and values shaping societies
- Use historical terms and evidence to explain change and continuity

Years 9–10: Analytical & Evaluative Task

Task focus:
Students investigate **two related events or figures** (e.g. persecution vs legalisation under Constantine; Arius vs Athanasius; early house churches vs imperial Christianity) and respond to an inquiry question such as:

To what extent did honouring God shape Christian responses to power, persecution, and cultural change?

Students analyse:

- competing perspectives
- impacts on Church and society
- short- and long-term consequences

Possible formats:

- Analytical essay (900–1200 words)
- Research-based oral presentation
- Structured historical argument with evidence

Achievement Standards addressed (Years 9–10):

- Analyse causes, effects, and turning points
- Compare and evaluate perspectives and interpretations
- Synthesise evidence from sources
- Develop reasoned historical arguments

Assessment Task 2: Civics, Culture & Belief Study – Living Honourably

Years 7–8: Explanation Task

Task focus:
Students explain how Christian beliefs influenced **daily life or culture** during the Byzantine era or early Church, such as:

- worship practices
- laws or leadership decisions
- art, architecture, or community life

Products may include:

- Annotated poster or diagram
- Short written explanation (300–500 words)
- Creative response with explanation

Achievement Standards addressed (Years 7–8 Civics & History):

- Describe how beliefs influence identity and behaviour
- Explain how values support community life
- Use examples to explain cultural impacts

Years 9–10: Evaluation & Judgment Task

Task focus:
Students evaluate how religious beliefs shaped **power, unity, and identity** in the Byzantine world or early Christianity.

Possible inquiry questions:

- *Did Christian belief strengthen or complicate political unity?*
- *How did councils and creeds attempt to preserve unity and truth?*

Students assess:

- effectiveness of responses
- ethical and civic implications
- relevance for later societies

Products may include:

- Evaluative essay or report
- Comparative case study
- Multimedia or seminar-style presentation

Achievement Standards addressed (Years 9–10 Civics & History):

- Evaluate civic and ethical decision-making
- Analyse belief systems and institutional influence
- Develop evidence-based conclusions