1 – Who is God?

Aim: Introduce YOUR CHILD TO the concept of a relationship with God through Jesus.

|  |
| --- |
| Welcome [1 minute] 8.35 / 8.20 pm |
| Welcome to the FHC parents' evening. Congratulations on getting here. I hope you have had a good few weeks since we last saw you.  We only want the best for our children. That is why you are here. It is why we are all here.  **In the first Family Handout, you will explore with your child who God is and what it means to have a relationship with him.**  We often think we know what we mean when we use the word “god”. Our image of God matters. It affects how we relate to God and trust him and his promises. Most importantly, it affects how we talk about God to our children; it can even affect our parenting. We will start to think about sin and reconciliation with our children. **The image of God we project onto our children matters, especially when we link it to sin.**  Something that might be helpful to start is to reflect on what motivates you regarding your faith: Is it fear or love? Everything we will explore leading up to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion begins and ends with a relationship with God – a God who loves us first. Do we love him back, or do we fear him back?  Therefore, that is where we are going to start. So, if you don’t mind, we’re going to:   * Share the story we want you to enjoy with your child when you explore Family Handout 1 together. * We’ll then dig a bit deeper in our small groups * Then, we will end with a time of prayer. |
| Opening Prayer [1 minute] 8.36 / 8.21 pm |
| Lord, thank you for safely gathering us here today/this evening.  We ask you to bless our time together, particularly our conversations.  Give us the ears to hear you tonight/this morning.  Amen |
| SMALL GROUP – ICE-BREAKER [15 minutes] 8.37 / 8.22 pm |
| * Ask participants to share with the group the “prop” they brought and what their child is passionate about. * What might your child think of when they hear God? |
| INTRODUCTION [3 minutes] 8.52 / 8.37 pm |
| **In this next section, we will discuss the message we would like you to share with your child when you explore Family Handout 1 together.** On the screen will be snapshots of some Family Handout pages for you to follow.  We often think we know what we mean when we use the word “god”. **Our image of God matters.** So, let us explore who God is and what it means to have a relationship with him.  The Christian faith centres around believing that God became a man in Jesus. Jesus reveals that God is real, powerful, merciful and loving. **God is not a man in the sky with a beard, looking down at us and judging us.** God is with us. God wants us to have a relationship with him. **We can only understand this when we trust and accept that God made us, knows and loves us.** God loves you!  Page 1  This description we’ve included in the handout finds its origin in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, specifically the first paragraph that reads:  “God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. – he moved first  He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. – asks us to respond to this love but never forces it  He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. – This is for everyone  To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Saviour. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.” (CCC, 1)  This is Christianity in a nutshell. It’s all about our relationship with God, who loves us first.  So, how do we start talking about a relationship with God with our children or help them foster their personal relationship with God?  The best way to foster your child’s relationship with God is at home. One way to think about it is this: I talked to a friend about her mum. She loves her mum so much that she intentionally creates opportunities for the relationship between her children and her mum, their grandmother, to grow, either through phone calls or visits. She also naturally talks lovingly about her mother in front of her children. As a result, her children have naturally grown to love their grandmother and now have a special relationship with her.  It is the same concerning our children’s relationship with God. We need to demonstrate to our children our relationship with God. Their special relationship with God will naturally develop through witnessing this and the intentional steps we take to foster it. **We need to foster our own personal relationship with God.** |
| IS GOD A MYSTERY [20 minutes] 8.55 / 8.40 pm |
| There are many ways to think about God. God can seem like a mystery. What does it mean to have a relationship with a God who is a mystery? Let’s watch this video.  Page 3 |
| Video camera outlineNOOMA - RYTHMn [11 minutes] ([vimeo.com/catholicparishguildford/nooma-rhythm](https://vimeo.com/catholicparishguildford/nooma-rhythm?share=copy)) |
| CAN WE KNOW GOD? |
| **It says in YouCat 4 Kids, Question 4**: Can we know God?  Page 3  “Not without his help. God is greater than any images or thoughts people make of him. God is a big mystery. But God reveals himself – he shows us who he is all the time. He shows us who is through creation, through loving people, but most clearly through Jesus.”  This is why, on page 4 of the family handout, we look at Jesus. Like Rob said in the video, “It can be difficult to relate to God, but Jesus, I can see that, I can relate to that, I can play that tune”.  Page 4  **Jesus came so that each of us can know and understand God in a personal way.** God created you. Not only that, he loves you so much, he knows you, and he wants you to know him now and spend eternity with him. He waits at the door for us to open our hearts to him.  To help you explore this further, we suggest reflecting with your child on the famous painting **“Light of the World”** by William Holman Hunt, which can be found hanging in St. Paul’s Cathedral. We will be reflecting on this at the end of the session.  It is easy to believe that God cares about our children because they are amazing! But we may find it hard to believe that God loves us personally. It is perhaps because we relate to him in an impersonal way, thinking of him as a far-away cosmic entity. The truth is that he knows each of your children by name and each of us by name. He knows all the details of our lives, even the number of hairs on our heads! He loves us and delights in us individually. Our children need to hear these truths.  **It says in 1 John 4:7-11**: “We must love each other. Love comes from God… God is love… God showed his love for us when he sent his only Son into the world to give us life. Real love is not our love for God but his love for us. God sent his Son to be the sacrifice by which our sins are forgiven… since God loved us this much, we must love each other.”  Page 5A  Accepting that we are loved changes everything, especially how we relate to each other.  **It says in YouCat 4 Kids, Question 6**: Believing in God – how do we do that? “Believing in God means: I put all my trust in the one who loves me the most. I accept what God reveals of himself. I try to do what he tells me. Believing in God means to feel secure in him. God loves us. We do not need to be afraid.”  Page 5B  **So, believing in God means putting all our trust in the one who loves me the most.** On page 6 of the handout, we have a lovely comic about “The Great Blondin” that helps explain what it means to put our trust in Jesus.  Page 6  **God offers his love freely; it is a gift. This gift is called grace. It is such good news.**  Page 7  When we receive his grace as a gift, if we accept that God loves us, it naturally pours out of us. We will naturally give it away to others. God is in the relationships we have with each other. When we show love to someone, God is there in the act of love because God is love. If we accept that we are loved, it changes everything.  In the **second half of page 7**, there is an opportunity to reflect on how we can share God’s love with others and be grace to others, thus becoming better followers of Jesus.  Page 7  **However, we *can* refuse God’s love.** God gave us the free will to do that. To genuinely understand the good that God offers, we should take a moment to look at the unfortunate effects that turning away from him (sin) has on our lives. Turning away from God through our sins is like refusing to accept His gift of love.  Page 8  We all do it - turn away from God by not loving others or ourselves as we should. **You can start talking about this with your children on this page. It is important to remind our children that even if we turn away from God, he still loves us.** As it says in the handout, “He carries on loving us no matter what, and he wants us to turn back to him.”  We can have a relationship with God through Jesus. Let’s look to Jesus then and see how God is described. **The parable of the prodigal son paints this image of a merciful and forgiving God beautifully for us.** It shows us how God waits for *us* to return to him after we sin, how he forgives and forgets *our* sins, and how he welcomes *us* back as his children.  Page 8  We’re going to spend some time now looking at this together. |
| SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION[[1]](#endnote-1) [25 minutes] |
| 9.15 / 9.00 pm |
| “If God can help people find things on sale, then why doesn’t God spend time on things that seem more important, like earthquakes, famines, or sickness?”  Q: What do you believe about God’s involvement in daily life?  Q: What images do you have of God?  Q: What or who has helped shape the images that you have?  “For many people, their concept of God is built around a God who’s outside of everything, a God who essentially is somewhere else, a God who made the world but then stands back and watches it from this other vantage point, a God who’s there, and then from time to time comes here.”  Q: Where is God?  “Jesus is like God in taking on flesh and blood, and so in his generosity and compassion, that’s what God’s like. In his telling of the truth, that’s what God’s like. In his love, forgiveness, and sacrifice, that’s what God’s like. That’s who God is. That’s how the song goes.”  Q: Is God compassionate, truthful, loving, and forgiving, or is God Compassion, Truth, Love, and Forgiveness?  Q: What about Jesus?  “The song is playing all around us all the time, the song is playing everywhere, it’s written on our hearts, and everybody is playing it. See, the question isn’t whether you’re playing a song; the question is, ‘Are you in tune?’”  Q: What does it mean for you to be in or out of tune with the song?  Q: Are you in tune?  “Some people talk as if they know everything about being a Christian, and yet they can seem way out of tune. And then others would say they don’t know much about the Christian faith, yet they can seem very in tune with the song.”  Q: Can you believe in God and be out of tune with the song?  Q: What is more important to Jesus: what we believe or do?  Q: What is one thing that you would like to share with your child about God following this session?  Parents can write this down in their parents' JOURNAL. THE PRODIGAL SON (OPTIONAL IF YOU HAVE TIME) You can refer to Family Handout 1, page 8. NOMINATE SOMEONE TO Read LUKE 15:11-32. Briefly discuss this passage and what it shows us about the father’s love. If the conversation doesn’t flow naturally, ask some of the following questions:  Q: The father agrees to give the son his inheritance. What does this say about the father’s character?  The father respects his son’s free will.  Supplementary question:  Q: Why do you suppose the son wanted to leave?  Maybe he saw the father, or his life at home, as restrictive or boring.  Q: Do you relate to the parable of the prodigal son? How?  The story of the prodigal son is the story of every person.  Q: What is significant about the father’s response?  Ring: The family ring indicates that he is a son (not a slave) and an heir. By claiming his inheritance, the son had cut ties with the family. By giving him this ring, the father restores his sonship.  Robe: The guest of honour received a robe at a celebration.  Sandals: Worn by free men and a symbol of freedom. The father recognises the son’s freedom to leave and to come back. He would have it no other way. He wanted his son to live freely – to choose to love him rather than being obliged to love him. |
| PLENARY & Final Prayer [5 Minute] 9.40 / 9.25 Pm |
| Reflect **on the “light of the world” image** as a final prayer. |
| Notices [1 minute] 9.45 / 9.30 pm |
| **Why not set up a prayer table at home**? Look **at page 41 in the Parent Booklet** for more information. \*Next session’s topic: Who is Jesus? |

1. Adapted NOOMA – RYTHMN

   Copyright © 2005 by Flannel, P.O. Box 3228, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-3228, USA. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)