

Home-Learning Guide

The *Finding God* for Junior High Home-Learning Guide provides you with an opportunity to work with your junior-high child to grow together in faith. Whether you are doing home catechesis with your children or are seeking to be more deeply involved in their faith growth, the Home-Learning Guide will give you the tools you need.

The Home-Learning Guide can assist you if you find yourself in one of the following situations:

- In cooperation with your parish director of religious education, you have chosen to work on *Finding God* for junior high lessons with your child at home as part of the parish religious education program.
- Because of travel, illness, or injury, your child misses parish religious education sessions, and you wish to work with him or her at home in the interim.

GOING THROUGH A CHAPTER WITH YOUR JUNIOR-HIGH CHILD

By following the step-by-step process outlined below, you can go through the chapters of your junior high child's book, helping him or her to grow in faith. Follow these simple steps:

Begin each unit by inviting your child to read aloud the two-page introduction that describes the focus of the unit.

In each chapter, follow these four simple steps:

Step One: ENGAGE (the first page of the chapter)

Before beginning, review the information on the charts that follow, which tells you what to help your child know or do on each page. Set aside space for this important time. Work together on the first page of the chapter, inviting your child into conversation about aspects of his or her life that are connected to the theme of the chapter. Have your child complete the activity at the bottom of this page.

Step Two: EXPLORE (the second through the sixth or seventh page of each chapter)

Work with your child on the four or five pages of this section. Take turns reading aloud the two main articles in each chapter. Occasionally, invite your child to read an article quietly. Have your child highlight or underline key words and phrases that you wish to emphasize. Keep in mind the information from the charts that tells you what to help your child know or do on each page. When you are finished with the two main articles, go back and read the Sidebars and TidBytes (shorter features) throughout the chapter. Take time to look at the artwork, illustrations, and photographs and to talk about how they connect with the content on the page.

Step Three: REFLECT (the seventh or eighth page of each chapter)

Invite your child to prepare for reflective prayer with you. Slowly read the text on the prayer page(s), pausing after each sentence and praying along with your child. Encourage your child to imagine himself or herself in God's presence and to talk with God as one would talk with a friend. Allow some quiet time for both of you to do this. Together, take a minute or two at the end of the reflection to spend some silent time with God.

Step Four: RESPOND (the ninth page of each chapter)

Work with your child to read and complete the What's What?, Say What?, So What?, Now What?, and Here's What the Catholic Church Teaches features. These features help you and your child to review the main points of the chapter and invite your child to consider how he or she can apply what was learned to daily living. Be sure to have your child locate in the Glossary the definitions of the words listed under Say What? Since the 10th page of each chapter is an activity page for working in groups, you can skip this page.

End each unit by working together with your child on the Faith in Action feature (two pages at the end of each unit) to explore ways of putting into practice what was learned in the unit.

Unit I: God, Chapter I

Following Jesus: God's Revelation

The Old Testament tells us how God entered into a covenant with the Jewish people and prepared them to accept the salvation that was destined for all humanity. The old covenant has never been revoked. The Church insists that the Old Testament books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, reaffirmed by Jesus himself. The New Testament is to be read in light of the Old Testament.

God is the author of Sacred Scripture, written down by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Church accepts as inspired 46 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament. The Scriptures teach faithfully and without error the truth that God wished us to know for our salvation.

The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church. The pope and the bishops in communion comprise this teaching office, which we call the Magisterium.

ENGAGE

On page 11, help your child

- relate the experience of passing on family history to the way we learn about God in the Bible.

EXPLORE

On pages 12–16, help your child

- identify the Bible as a personal message from God.
- describe how the Gospel of John shows that the Revelation of God is fulfilled in Jesus.
- explain that in the Bible we come to know the truth about our relationship with God.
- identify the New American Bible as the official translation of the Bible for American Catholics.
- explain that both the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God.
- define *Abraham*, *Catholic Social Teaching*, *Covenant*, *inerrancy*, and *Revelation*.

REFLECT

On pages 17–18, help your child

- pray reflectively on God's presence, his invitation, and our response.

RESPOND

On page 19, help your child

- identify ways to act on God's invitation in everyday living.

Celebrating Church: We Trust in God's Goodness

Faith is a gift from God; through it, we learn to trust in God's goodness and care for us. In the first story of Creation, which we find in Genesis 1:1–2:4, we learn that all of God's creation is good and that he entrusted us with caring for it. While in exile in Babylon, the people of Israel would tell the story of a God who created everything good and never stopped caring for them.

They would also remember God's care for them by recalling how he saved them from slavery in Egypt, taught them the Ten Commandments, and gave them the Promised Land. God then formed this people, through the prophets, in the expectation of a new and everlasting covenant when he would gather all his children into the unity of the Church.

Our faith is the faith that was received and handed down by the Church. We share this faith in God's continuing love and care for us in good times and in bad. But faith is not a gift to be hidden. We are to act on it and share it with others.

ENGAGE

On page 11, help your child

- relate an experience of receiving a gift to the concept of recognizing creation as a gift from God.

EXPLORE

On pages 12–17, help your child

- explain that the story of Creation in Genesis teaches us that God created everything good.
- express an understanding of God's love for each of us individually and personally.
- explain that faith is a gift given to us freely by God.
- define *communal prayer*, *Exile*, *faith*, *personal prayer*, *Promised Land*, *Temple*, and *Ten Commandments*.
- explain the use of figurative language in the Bible.
- describe the role of hope in the Exile experience.

REFLECT

On page 18, help your child

- pray reflectively on God's presence, his invitation, and our response.

RESPOND

On page 19, help your child

- identify ways to act on God's invitation in everyday living.

Unit 1: God, Chapter 2

Following Jesus: The Gospels: Portraits of Jesus

Because Jesus Christ is their focus, the four Gospels occupy a central place in the Bible. The Church identifies three stages in the formation of the Gospels. The first stage is the life and teaching of Jesus. The second stage is the oral tradition in which the original witnesses to Jesus' life and Resurrection, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, passed on what he had said and done and what his words and actions mean for us. The final stage is the written Gospel. All these stages took place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Each of the four Gospels gives a unique portrait of Jesus as it teaches the essential truth that Jesus is the Son of God become man for our salvation.

The Virgin Mary embodies the obedience of faith perfectly. Throughout her life, even when Jesus her Son died on the cross, Mary's faith never wavered. The Gospel of John reveals to us how at Cana, Mary tells her son about the shortage of wine at the wedding feast. At the foot of the cross, Jesus gives Mary to the beloved disciple, who is a symbol of the whole Church, to be his mother. Mary is the new Eve, the true "Mother of all the living" (CCC 2618) and the Mother of the Church.

ENGAGE

On page 21, help your child

- relate the experience of learning from stories about our families to learning about Jesus from the Gospels.

EXPLORE

On pages 22–27, help your child

- identify the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and describe the process the Gospels and New Testament went through to reach their final forms.
- explain that Jesus is the center of the Gospels.
- identify Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the model of faith.
- relate the story of Jesus' first miracle at the wedding at Cana.
- describe the role of signs in the Gospel of John.
- define *Evangelists*, *Gospels*, *lectio divina*, *rights and responsibilities*, and *Tradition*.

REFLECT

On page 28, help your child

- pray reflectively on God's presence, his invitation, and our response.

RESPOND

On page 29, help your child

- identify ways to act on God's invitation in everyday living.

Celebrating Church: Jesus, God's Gift

In contemporary thinking, a mystery is something to be solved. According to biblical thought, a mystery is something that is revealed and yet remains hidden. This is our understanding of God. Throughout salvation history, God has been revealing himself to us in word and deed. Yet God remains hidden, almost as though a veil is placed between us and God through which we occasionally catch a glimpse. These glimpses are enough to transform our lives and to compel us to want to enter more deeply into this mystery.

Scripture tells us that God has been revealing himself and his love for us progressively, through the prophets and through his saving actions. God's revelation is brought to completion through the Incarnation—the sending of his only Son, Jesus, who came to reveal the Father to us. Through Jesus' Paschal Mystery—his life, suffering, death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension—we come to know God and are redeemed. Jesus teaches us to approach the Father in prayer, praising God's name and asking for all that we need. Who would not want to approach a Father who is so loving that he gave us his only Son so that we might have eternal life?

ENGAGE

On page 21, help your child

- relate the idea of revealing some information about himself or herself to God's self-revelation.

EXPLORE

On pages 22–26, help your child

- express an understanding of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Revelation.
- describe how, through the Lord's Prayer, we come to know God as our Father.
- define *salvation*, *solidarity*, and *temptation*.
- express an understanding of forgiveness of others as a way of showing love for God.
- explain original sin as our vulnerability to temptation.

REFLECT

On pages 27–28, help your child

- pray reflectively on God's presence, his invitation, and our response.

RESPOND

On page 29, help your child

- identify ways to act on God's invitation in everyday living.

Unit 1: God, Chapter 3

Following Jesus: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

We learn from Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus in Chapter 3 of John's Gospel that when we are born through water and the Holy Spirit, we are brought into the close relationship of the Father and the Son through the Spirit they send to us.

The mystery of the Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith. God made it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Trinity, the three Persons are inseparable in what they are and in what they do. The word *Person* is used to designate the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as truly distinct from one another. The word *relation* is used to designate that their distinction lies in the relationship of each to the other two.

The Trinity is a mystery that we will never fully understand; however, through Jesus' Paschal Mystery, we are brought into God's own life. We are baptized into Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit so that with them we can praise the Father. The mystery of the Trinity is not a puzzle to be figured out but an opportunity to explore who God is in our lives and to immerse ourselves in the life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

ENGAGE

On page 31, help your child

- relate his or her understanding of mystery to the mystery of the Trinity.

EXPLORE

On pages 32–37, help your child

- explain that God loves us as a Father and sent us his only Son, Jesus.
- relate an understanding of the Holy Spirit as sent by Jesus and the Father.
- state the mystery of the Trinity as three Persons in one God.
- describe creation as the first sign of God's love for us.
- define *mystery* and *Pharisee*.

REFLECT

On page 38, help your child

- pray reflectively on God's presence, his invitation, and our response.

RESPOND

On page 39, help your child

- identify ways to act on God's invitation in everyday living.

Celebrating Church: The Holy Spirit, Our Guide

The Holy Spirit builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. When teaching, reconciling, and celebrating the sacraments, the Church is acting out the life given by the Holy Spirit. So the Spirit is at the core of our life as Christians. The Holy Spirit in the Church communicates to us the life that originated in the Father and is offered to us in Jesus. We can truly say that the Holy Spirit reveals to us who Jesus is.

The Trinity is the central mystery of our faith. God is one but not solitary. The Trinity is the perfect community. We can never hope to fully understand the Trinity. We are baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" and are called to share in the life of the Trinity.

Prayer and Christian life are inseparable. The Holy Spirit teaches us to pray, especially through the believing and praying Church. There is nothing complicated about prayer. It is a loving, honest conversation with God. Prayer is about more than just saying certain words. It is also about listening and moving beyond words to silence. When we are attentive, the Holy Spirit can inspire us to pray through the events of each day.

ENGAGE

On page 31, help your child

- relate the experience of being part of a crowd that showed a lot of spirit to the effect that the Holy Spirit has in our lives.

EXPLORE

On pages 32–37, help your child

- express an understanding of growing in the Holy Spirit as related to growing in the Church.
- describe prayer as a loving, honest conversation with God made possible by the Holy Spirit.
- define *Trinity*.
- identify symbols of the Holy Spirit, including water, anointing, fire, wind, and light.
- explain how, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is truly present with us.

REFLECT

On page 38, help your child

- pray reflectively on God's presence, his invitation, and our response.

RESPOND

On page 39, help your child

- identify ways to act on God's invitation in everyday living.

Unit I: God, Chapter 4

Following Jesus: Faith in Jesus

John's Gospel uses Jesus' healing of a man born blind to present an explanation of what it means to see with the eyes of faith. Jesus heals a man who has been blind since birth. As the story progresses, the blind man comes to believe in Jesus. Jesus asks him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" When he realizes that Jesus is the Son of Man, he replies, "I do believe, Lord," and worships him.

To entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe completely in what he says is to have faith. Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, we need the help of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and opens the eyes of the mind. But for faith to be complete, we must respond. The Church received the faith from the apostles and guards it with care. The Church's message is the same throughout the whole world. The Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports, and nourishes our faith.

People who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church may achieve salvation, as long as they seek God with a sincere heart and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience.

ENGAGE

On page 41, help your child

- relate the experience of needing clues from others to the experience of faith.

EXPLORE

On pages 42–46, help your child

- tell the story of Jesus' healing of a man born blind.
- explain that faith is a gift from God that helps us see and know God.
- describe Saint Augustine's search for truth.
- describe faith as a free human choice that needs to be lived by serving others.
- identify the Church as the source of support and nourishment for our faith.
- explain that faith in Jesus is necessary for salvation.
- define *synagogue*, *grace*, and *actual grace*.

REFLECT

On pages 47–48, help your child

- pray reflectively on God's presence, his invitation, and our response.

RESPOND

On page 49, help your child

- identify ways to act on God's invitation in everyday living.

Celebrating Church: God Is Always Near

As science began to help us understand the universe, some people began to question whether the universe was governed by chance and blind fate rather than by a transcendent, intelligent, and loving God. Some people came to think that even if there was a God who created the universe, he was no longer involved with it, and the universe ran by itself. They concluded that science could answer all our questions.

We need science to help us understand the nature of the world we live in, the process of how it came to be, and the process of how we and everything in it have developed over time. However, it is through faith in God that we understand God's loving action in creating and sustaining all things. This understanding invites us to deepen our appreciation for the greatness of the Creator.

We create things, but God is the true Creator. He not only creates us, but at every moment he upholds and sustains us through his Word, Jesus, and the Spirit, the giver of life. He does not abandon us. As creatures, we share in God's truth, goodness, and beauty. That sharing is the glory for which God created us. His glory is made visible in us and in the world he created.

ENGAGE

On page 41, help your child

- relate examples of information we "take on faith" to our faith in God.

EXPLORE

On pages 42–46, help your child

- describe how the Enlightenment encouraged an understanding of God as a distant being.
- explain the Catholic understanding of the relationship between science and religion.
- express our understanding that God created us and sustains us.
- articulate a Catholic interpretation of the Genesis stories of Creation that finds no contradiction with evolution.
- define *fundamentalism* and *rationalism*.

REFLECT

On pages 47–48, help your child

- pray reflectively on God's presence, his invitation, and our response.

RESPOND

On page 49, help your child

- identify ways to act on God's invitation in everyday living.

Unit 1: God, Chapter 5

Following Jesus: New Life in the Spirit

In the Gospel of John, Jesus spends a long time at his last meal with his disciples, assuring them that he will not leave them orphans when he returns to his Father. Jesus will send them an Advocate to remind them of all that he said and did. The teaching that he entrusted to the apostles, they in turn will hand on by their preaching and writing to all generations, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. From the beginning to the end of time, the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit is conjoined. Jesus continues to be present in the Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

To follow Jesus is to live in the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sent. Every time we pray to Jesus, it is the Holy Spirit who draws us to pray and teaches us to pray. “[N]o one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3)

In the beginning of his Gospel, John tells us that Jesus is the light of the world, full of grace and truth. As Jesus’ disciples, we are no longer in darkness. We are called to walk in the light and to know the truth.

ENGAGE

On page 51, help your child

- relate the experience of making promises to Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit.

EXPLORE

On pages 52–56, help your child

- explain how the Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus and the Father to guide us and to teach us.
- describe how the work of spreading the Good News continues today.
- describe *truth* as referring to the reliability of the person and to the reliability of the message.
- identify Saint John Vianney as someone who recognized the Holy Spirit as the center of his life.
- describe what being open to the Holy Spirit means.
- define *Advocate* and *option for the poor*.

REFLECT

On pages 57–58, help your child

- pray reflectively on God’s presence, his invitation, and our response.

RESPOND

On page 59, help your child

- identify ways to act on God’s invitation in everyday living.

Celebrating Church: God for All People

Jesus died for everyone. This means that all human beings are equally important, and we are to look upon our neighbor as another self. In other words, everyone is entitled to the same dignity we expect for ourselves.

The equal dignity of all people requires us to work as individuals and with civil authorities to see that the goods of creation, which are destined for all, are shared by all. Also, because we look upon our neighbor as another self, all citizens and all governments are obliged to work to avoid war.

All people of good will are related in various ways to the Catholic Church. The Jewish people are the ones with whom God first made a covenant. Muslims hold the faith of Abraham along with us and adore the one and merciful God. God is not distant from people who in many other ways seek God and try to do his will as they know it through their consciences. Even people who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at a clear understanding of God are not denied the help necessary for salvation. For God gives life to all, and Jesus wills that all be saved.

ENGAGE

On page 51, help your child

- relate experiences of pluralism from his or her own life to Jesus’ message to love all people.

EXPLORE

On pages 52–57, help your child

- describe how we can make God’s concern for all people visible in the world.
- demonstrate an understanding of our call to interreligious dialogue.
- express an understanding of Jesus’ mission to save the whole human family.
- express an understanding that those outside the Church may receive salvation.
- define *Buddhism*, *Council of Jerusalem*, *ecumenism*, *Gentile*, *interreligious dialogue*, *Islam*, and *Judaism*.

REFLECT

On page 58, help your child

- pray reflectively on God’s presence, his invitation, and our response.

RESPOND

On page 59, help your child

- identify ways to act on God’s invitation in everyday living.