

Can we imagine life after death? (8 – 12 years)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Emerging

- Offer one Christian belief about life after death
- Use the word 'resurrection' correctly in talking or writing

Expected

- Explain two Christian beliefs about life after death, based on a Christian teaching or Biblical passage
- Suggest, with evidence, the impact beliefs about life after death might have on someone's life

Exceeding

- Compare Christian beliefs about life after death with one other religion's beliefs
- Offer a view as to how far we can imagine life after death

Key words and concepts

- **Heaven** – Christian beliefs about the afterlife vary between denominations and individual Christians, but the vast majority of Christians believe in some kind of heaven, in which believers enjoy the presence of God and other believers and freedom from suffering and sin.
- **Hell** – There are different understandings about the nature of hell, but many Christians regard hell as the absence of God.
- **Jesus** – Christians believe that God became human through the person of Jesus.
- **Incarnation** – Christians believe that God became human through the person of Jesus.
- **Death and Afterlife** – Christians believe that after death there is an afterlife in which an individual's soul lives on and experiences new life with God.
- **Resurrection** – Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead.
- **Salvation** – 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.' John 3:16. 'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.'

Learning activities

- Set the learning activities in the context of a key question, such as, 'Can we imagine life after death?' or 'What happens when we die?'
- In this example we want to introduce pupils to ideas about heaven and hell, and what some people believe about whether it matters what sort of life we have lived.
- Ask pupils to think about what they already know or think about the idea of life after death. Give each table small pieces of paper to write on. Write the sentence starter 'life after death.....' on the board. Ask pupils to write everything they think about it on small pieces of paper. Then then look at all their words and generate three statements per group. Differing views can be presented from one group on different pieces of paper. Groups might like to colour-code their statements.
- Collate all statements on a large sheet of paper, such as from an old roll of wallpaper. Fix to the wall or a table top so all pupils can see.
- Using different coloured sticky notes ask pupils to make a note of the things they agree with, disagree with or find interesting in the statements. Add these to the large sheet.
- Using fresh sticky notes, ask pupils to work in pairs to complete the sentence, 'We were wondering....'
- Ask, 'I'm wondering if you know what some religious people would say about reincarnation....'
- Ask, 'I wonder if *everyone* believes in life after death?'
- Prompt further discussion with questions such as:
 - 'What do some people say about trying to live a good life?'
 - 'What do Christians think about life after death?'
 - 'Do you know other religious views if life after death?'
 - 'Do you know non-religious views of life after death?'
- Explain that Christians believe that God became a human being in the person of Jesus in order to give hope that there is a better life with God after death. Pupils could look at the African pictures of Jesus' birth and death. Pupils can ask their own questions about why Jesus was born and died. What do they think Christians might learn from the idea that God took human form? Encourage them to compare their questions with one other and to talk about which questions are the most important and why.

Provide pupils with quotes about Jesus' resurrection, e.g.,

John 11:25: '**Jesus** said to her, "I am the **resurrection** and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die". What do pupils think Christians might feel and believe when they hear this?
- Explain that many people wonder what happens when we die. Show pupil's examples of sculpture, e.g., Antony Gormley's Angels of the North and Henry Moore images. Using modelling clay such as Play-Doh, ask the pupils to create a shape which represents something they don't know the answer to. Ask them to think about what they are creating, talk to a partner about them and then share with the wider group.
- Show pupils the clip 'Becoming Me', by Martin Boroson (search You Tube) and ask pupils to describe what someone who believed in God might learn from this story. Explain that the story has been

recommended by many people of different faiths – why do they think this is? What difference might it make to anyone’s life if they believed what is in this film?

- Encourage pupils to ask their own questions about ‘Becoming Me’ and to suggest some answers (a) of their own and (b) that might be given by a follower of a different religion / set of beliefs from their own.