

Unit B: Qualities of a Good Leader

Lesson 3: Understanding Beliefs and Belief Systems

Student Learning Objectives:

Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

1. Define the terms belief and belief system.
2. Identify personal beliefs and belief system.
3. Identify influencers of beliefs and belief systems.

Recommended Teaching Time: 1 hour

Resources:

Madigan, Timothy J. and Clifford, William K. *The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays*.
New York, New York: Prometheus Books, 1999.

List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities:

- Writing surface
- PowerPoint Projector
- PowerPoint Slides
- Transparency Masters
- Copies of student worksheets
- Markers
- Paper
- Pencils

Terms: The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- Belief
- Belief system

Interest Approach:

Script for Teacher: *Today we are going to begin by closing our eyes and envisioning some of the values and principles we all have developed from an early age. With all eyes closed, think of some of the lessons you learned as a toddler. Picture some of the discussions you had with parents or other family members at this age.*

Pause for approximately 10 seconds.

Script for Teacher: *Now think to a time in early school. Picture some of the life lessons shared by your teacher.*

Pause for approximately 10 seconds.

Script for Teacher: *Think about a time when you might have been at a place of spiritual worship or other religious activity. What specific memories can you remember that might shape the way you act today?*

Pause for approximately 10 seconds.

Script for Teacher: *Picture in your mind more recent events. How have you drawn upon some of these earlier principles, discussions with your parents, lessons from teachers or religious figures, to help shape the decisions you made?*

Pause for approximately 10 seconds.

Script for Teacher: *Now, with your eyes open, listen to the following story.*

Provide the students with WS: 3-1.

Script for Teacher: *The Rahmany's were a young couple struggling to make ends meet. They lived in a very modest rented apartment in the poorer section of a metropolitan area. Nasima worked at a local hotel cleaning rooms and Saboor was a guard for a security company. Together their income was just enough to pay for their rent and monthly essentials, but never enough to put any money into savings.*

Script for Teacher: *One day Nasima became ill and could no longer work. She was hospitalized for an extended period of time and soon their medical bills were more than Saboor could pay with his current job. Nasima was diagnosed with an illness that would slowly take her life. Some prescription drugs could prolong her life, but only one drug was known to sometimes send this illness into remission. This particular drug was very expensive, and Saboor's income could not cover the purchase of it. Many times Saboor had tried to negotiate with the pharmacist and the drug company to purchase the drug at a discounted rate or to set up a payment plan. Neither the drug company nor the pharmacist would compromise. Saboor continued to watch Nasima slowly slip away.*

Script for Teacher: *One day he decided he could no longer accept the fate that awaited Nasima. So one night, Saboor went to the pharmacy after closing and took the drug that just might reverse the effects of the disease that was taking Nasima's life. Unfortunately, Saboor got caught.*

Script for Teacher: *Remember all the things you were told as a child and young adult, how would you answer the following questions?*

Was it wrong for Saboor to have stolen the drug?

Based on what you were taught, what would you have done?

Should Saboor be punished for this crime? Why or why not?

SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Define the terms belief and belief system.

Anticipated Problem: What are beliefs? What are belief systems?

Ask students to share their definition of a belief and belief system. Challenge the students to be open and honest as they share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Script for Teacher: *In your head only, give the definition of a belief and belief system.*

Pause for ten seconds.

Script for Teacher: *Turn to a neighbor and share your thoughts.*

Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts with the class. This activity should take about five minutes. Continue by providing information on the definition of beliefs and belief systems by using the writing surface or TM: 3-1. This should take about five minutes.

(PowerPoint Slide 2)

- I. Belief
 - A. Acceptance of something as truth
 - B. A belief is generally formed around ethical premises
 - 1. Inquire—sufficient evidence to support your belief
 - 2. Authority—assumption that a belief, shared by another, is spoken in truth
 - 3. Inference—comparing what we might not know to what we have previously experienced

(PowerPoint Slide 3)

- II. Belief system
 - A. A structure or organization that helps form and encourage your beliefs
 - B. A structure or organization that helps process and support your beliefs

Objective 2: Identify personal beliefs and belief system.

Anticipated Problem: What are personal beliefs and belief system?

III. Activity to help identify belief and belief system.

After students finish capturing the previous information in their notes, ask them to think about the following questions and write their responses in their notebooks. Encourage them to reflect and be genuine. This activity should take about 10 to 15 minutes.

Script for Teacher: *What beliefs have you inquired evidence to support, trusted the authority about and compared against past experiences? Think about this for a moment then write your responses in your notes.*

Pause for about 30 seconds or until most students finish writing.

Script for Teacher: *Think for a moment about the belief system that helped form and support the belief you just wrote down. Write in your notes the structure or organization that supports your belief.*

Pause for about 30 seconds or until most students finish writing. Have the students draw a picture or symbol representing these beliefs and belief systems. When finished ask for a volunteer to share their picture with the class and explain its meaning.

Script for Teacher: *What picture or symbol could you draw that will help you remember these beliefs and belief system. Take the next couple of minutes to draw your picture or symbol. Be prepared to share.*

Objective 3: Identify influencers of beliefs and belief systems.

Anticipated Problem: Who are the influencers of beliefs and belief systems?

IV. Activity to help identify influencers of beliefs and belief system.

Use an interview to identify potential influencers of our beliefs and belief systems. You can take all students' suggestions and craft an unduplicated list on the writing surface. This activity should take about 10 minutes.

Script for Teacher: *All throughout this lesson you were asked to think back and reflect on your beliefs. It is important to know where these beliefs come from. So, for the next activity you will interview each other to determine what influences your belief systems. After each pair or group of three have finished interviewing each other, one of you will come to the front and record your answers on the writing surface.*

Review/Summary: Use PowerPoint Slide 4 to review the objectives of this lesson. Explain to the students that each one of them has a belief window within them that is constantly being challenged, affirmed, or receptive of something new. Ask them to write down something in their belief window that has challenged, affirmed, or was new for them today. Take about five minutes.

Application: Have the students create a personal belief statement that is a reflection of their belief system. Have them share this with their family or spiritual figurehead.

Evaluation: Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. A sample test is included.

Answers to Sample Test:

Part One: True or False

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. True

Part Two: Short Answer

Check answers against the students' interview list.

Beliefs and Belief Systems

Part One: True or False.

Read each statement and decide if it is true or false. Write the word “true” or “false” next to each statement.

1. A belief is the acceptance of something as truth.
2. A belief is generally formed around five ethical premises.
3. The ethical premise of inference is comparing what we might not know to what we have previously experienced.
4. The ethical premise of authority assumes that a belief, shared by another, is spoken in truth.
5. A belief system is a structure or organization that helps form, encourage, process, and support your beliefs.

Part Two: Short Answer.

Provide the information needed to answer the following questions.

List five ways our belief systems might be influenced.

BELIEF

- Acceptance of something as truth
- A belief is generally formed around ethical premises
- Use these three premises to test your beliefs
 - Inquire—sufficient evidence to support your belief
 - Authority—assumption that a belief, shared by another is spoken in truth
 - Inference—comparing what we might not know to what we have previously experienced

BELIEF SYSTEM

- A structure or organization that helps form and encourage your beliefs
- A structure or organization that helps process and support your beliefs

BELIEF SCENARIO

The Rahmany's were a young couple struggling to make ends meet. They lived in a very modest rented apartment in the poorer section of a metropolitan area. Nasima worked at a local hotel cleaning rooms and Saboor was a guard for a security company. Together their income was just enough to pay for their rent and monthly essentials, but never enough to put any money into savings.

One day Nasima became ill and could no longer work. She was hospitalized for an extended period of time and soon their medical bills were more than Saboor could pay with his current job. Nasima was diagnosed with an illness that would slowly take her life. Some prescription drugs could prolong her life, but only one drug was known to sometimes send this illness into remission. This particular drug was very expensive, and Saboor's income could not cover the purchase of it. Many times Saboor had tried to negotiate with the pharmacist and the drug company to purchase the drug at a discounted rate or to set up a payment plan. Neither the drug company nor the pharmacist would compromise. Saboor continued to watch Nasima slowly slip away.

One day he decided he could no longer accept the fate that awaited Nasima. So one night, Saboor went to the pharmacy after closing and took the drug that just might reverse the effects of the disease that was taking Nasima's life. Unfortunately, Saboor got caught.